The Political Relation

Examination and development of Alasdair MacIntyre's account of civic friendship in critical conversation with Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine

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Ave, Regina caelorum,
Ave, Domina Angelorum:
Salve, radix, salve, porta
Ex qua mundo lux est orta

Luke 1:30-35;
Revelation 11:19-12:1-2, 5a

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 5
Short and Long Abstract 7
Prologue: Introducing the Issues to be Addressed 16

PART I

1 *MacIntyre and the Problem of Friendship in Politics* 20
1.1 Situating the modern friendship problem in *After Virtue* 31
1.2 Outlining the friendship account in *After Virtue* 41
1.3 Development 1: *Dependent Rational Animals* 48
1.4 Development 2: 'Is Friendship Possible?' 57
1.5 Nature, grace, and MacIntyre's theological friendship problem 67

2 *Friendship in the New Political Theologies — and Thomism* 75
2.1 From old to new political theologies: a Moltmannian taxonomy 80
2.2 Moltmann and the opening up of closed friendship 85
2.3 De Graaff and friendship as para-political 92
2.4 Meilaender and the idolatry of civic friendship 98
2.5 From new political theologies to modern political Thomism 104

PART II

3 *The Friendship Maxim in Plato* 120
3.1 Plato and other Pythagoreans? Introducing a Neoplatonic proposal 122
3.2 Methodology: definitions, demarcations, clarifications 125
3.3 The dual conditioning of politics: *Gorg*., *Lys*, *Phdr*., *Sym.*, *Tim*. 132
3.4 Justice as friendship in *Rep*.: noble lie, story of the metals, myth of Er 141
3.5 Nature, deification, and aporia in Plato's Socrates 151

4	*Property, Sharing, and Friendship in Aristotle*	158
4.1	Sharing, community, generosity — and the genus-species distinction	161
4.2	Domestic friendship in *NE*: the wise and their mothers	166
4.3	Civic friendship in *Pol.*: the bestness of the middle constitution	173
4.4	Virtue, advantage, and the challenge of concord	182
4.5	Decency, justice beyond justice, and Aristotle's paradox	187
5	*The Inclination to Politics in Augustine*	197
5.1	Pythagoras as a possible influence for the Milan ideal in *conf.*	202
5.2	Augustine's monastic inclination: escaping or entering politics?	209
5.3	Three friends, two commandments, one friendship	216
5.4	The politics of friendship in Augustine's *reg.*	220
5.5	Politics-as-monasticism: a eudaimonist-eschatological reading of *ciu.*	228

PART III

6	*Prolegomena to a Revolutionary Augustinianism*	239
6.1	Politics, justice, friendship — some MacIntyrean theses	249
6.2	Rawls and a possible epistemological crisis in political liberalism	254
6.3	Utilities companies, rivalling traditions, and the goods of conflict	261
6.4	Towards an adequate political imagination for modernity	268
6.5	Exercising theopolitical imagination: the Beguins as case study	278
7	*Objections, responses, conclusions*	284
7.1	Quasi-state, domination, self-sufficiency	286
7.2	Against Christian liberalisms: Stout (and Riordan)	286
7.3	Against Christian postliberalisms: Dreher and Deneen	290
7.4	Summary of argument(s)	295
7.5	Conclusions — and beginnings	302

APPENDICES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appendix 1. Thomistic Principles; Platonic Premises; MacIntyrean Theses	306
Appendix 2. Figure 1: A Twentieth Century Schema of Political Theology	309
Bibliography. Sources, Abbreviations, Translations	310

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SHORT ABSTRACT

According to Alasdair MacIntyre, friendship poses a problem to modern politics. Political communities are composed of citizens, and citizenship, MacIntyre tells us, consists in participation in civic friendship directed towards the achievement of common goods. But the liberal nation-state is unable to create and sustain such civic friendship. Thus the liberal nation-state has no citizens and cannot be a genuine political community. I situate this problem in *After Virtue* and then piece together and examine MacIntyre's account of friendship as this develops from *After Virtue* to *Dependent Rational Animals* and 'Is Friendship Possible?'. In doing so we find that friendship poses a problem to MacIntyre's political philosophy also. The creation and sustenance of civic friendship requires, according to MacIntyre, theological virtues; friendship itself is a grace. Yet MacIntyre seems adamant to retain political philosophy as a strictly secular discipline. To resolve this problem, I endeavour to develop MacIntyre's political philosophy by opening it to grace. Doing so will also contribute to the political theology literature, for in it we find no systematic account of civic friendship. My approach is MacIntyrean in that I bring the writings of classical and Christian thinkers — specifically Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine — to bear on modern issues. Drawing on their criticism and engagement with arguments concerning the nature of politics and friendship, I put forward a revised, systematised MacIntyrean account of civic friendship. This account comprises the abstract skeleton of MacIntyrean political communities which must be fleshed out among particular people at particular places. I make the case that, in modernity and under liberalism, a specifically theological sociology — that is, a sociology infused by a theological cosmology — offers a unique possibility for thus creating and sustaining political community.

LONG ABSTRACT

Alasdair MacIntyre argues that the liberal nation-state is incapable of creating and sustaining civic friendship — and that civic friendship is the political relation, *viz*. the essential and primary relation of political community *qua* political. Thus, modern politics is unable to create and sustain political community. I label this 'the friendship problem' of modern politics. However, both the argument and the conception of friendship which it postulates have eluded analysis by MacIntyre scholars. In this thesis, I therefore examine and develop MacIntyre's account of civic friendship, making the case that this account does not only point out a serious problem for the liberal nation-state, but that MacIntyre also offers the prospect of a sensible, albeit revolutionary, solution.

I begin Chapter 1 by situating the friendship problem in *After Virtue* and the political project that emerges from it. Specifically, I piece together and examine the beginnings of MacIntyre's Aristotelian friendship account as this is articulated in *After Virtue* and subsequently developed in *Dependent Rational Animals* and then 'Is Friendship Possible?' (I also explain why 'What Both the Bad and the Good Bring to Friendships in Their Strange Variety' does not contribute to this development). Upon considering this development, we find the outline of an account of civic friendship. We also find that friendship poses a problem to MacIntyre's political philosophy more generally. It seems that MacIntyrean political philosophy is only possible if it is practiced together with theology — the reason being that MacIntyre's friendship account relies on grace — yet MacIntyre insists that political

philosophy and theology must be rigidly separated. Put differently, in order to resolve this problem, MacIntyre's hard distinction between political philosophy and theology must be softened.

To probe into the prospect of thus developing MacIntyre's friendship account, I turn to political theology in Chapter 2. As a distinct academic discipline, political theology rose and fell with Carl Schmitt. If there was any hope of redeeming it, the discipline would have to be entirely renewed. A deep-seated and understudied feature of that renewal lies in the reconceptualisation of the political relation. Jürgen Moltmann as it were opened up Schmitt's closed friendship by separating classical and especially Aristotelian from Christian and typically Augustinian friendship. I examine this reconceptualisation and show that it is inadequate. Yet, in its essence, the reconceptualisation seems to represent dogma also in the new forms of political theologies that ensued from the renewal. I demonstrate this in reference to the friendship accounts of Gilbert Meilaender and Guido de Graaff. This has produced a significant lacuna in the literature: there is no systematic account of civic friendship on offer in contemporary political theology.

Positioned in that lacuna, I offer a critical perspective on political theology as an academic discipline before explaining how I intend to fill it: by shifting the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic political synthesis from Aristotle to Augustine. I propose to do so in accordance with eight Thomistic principles: (1) the political community is *per se* self-sufficient; (2) by virtue of being self-sufficient, the political community makes it possible for humans to achieve happiness; (3) happiness is achieved in the sharing of common goods pertaining to our nature as domestic and political animals; (4) sharing of common goods requires virtues, and specifically virtues pertaining to friendship; (5) by our own natural capacities, humans can only acquire natural virtues, which only makes it possible to achieve natural or imperfect happiness (and a corresponding self-sufficiency) — and such natural or imperfect happiness is only possible if it remains open to supernatural perfection; (6) charity is the form of *all* the virtues and thus perfects happiness, (7) charity is a kind of

friendship among God and humans; (8) charity is supernatural gift of grace. The proverb that friends share communally with one another, emphasised by Aquinas, is emblematic of these principles. And in emphasising the proverb, Aquinas points out the core of an argument about the nature of politics and friendship that runs from Plato through Aristotle to Augustine — an argument which is notably under-explored in classics and patristics. I therefore use the proverb as a hermeneutical focal point for executing my proposed Aristotelian-Augustinian resynthesis. To do so, I begin with Plato, whom I turn to in Chapter 3.

Plato's guardian class is modelled on the proverb; I make the case that friendship is the constitutive maxim of Kallipolis. In the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition, this connected Plato to Pythagoreanism, the alleged source of the proverb. I propose, *pace* Peter Garnsey, that Plato does indeed develop the friendship maxim within a distinctly Pythagorean tradition. Coenobitic asceticism for the sake of divine friendship was intrinsically political for the Pythagoreans, and the guardian class is modelled upon their way of life. I examine the manner by which friendship in the cosmos and the soul conditions politics with reference to the *Gorgias*, *Lysis*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Timaeus*. We discover a threefold friendship argument: first, the soul must participate in the divine order and perfection of the universe; second, the divine order and perfection of the universe just is friendship; third, participation in this kind of friendship requires that we engage in politics. That argument enables us to appreciate the significance of friendship in three key passages in the *Republic* and consider anew an old tension in Plato's political theory: friendship is a precondition for politics, and politics aims at the perfection of such friendship, but since politics necessitates coercion, and friendship is inconsistent with coercion, politics is incapable of reaching its own end.

Plato's argument lays the premises for further argumentation about the issue in eight important ways: (1) genuine (or true or real) politics must be differentiated from counterfeit (or phantom or *ersatz*) politics; (2) politics, if genuine, is con-

cerned with completing human nature; (3) human nature is completed in self-sufficiency; (4) self-sufficiency consists in friendship with the One; (5) friendship with the One can only be achieved through ascending to the One by way of intellectual contemplation and moral development; (6) to ascend to the One, it is necessary to befriend the many in which the One exists, and specifically one's fellow citizens — for the political community mirrors the One; (7) befriending fellow citizens consists in participating in a good, just, and pious city that ascends *communally* towards the One via study, virtue, and ritual; (8) participating in a good, just, and pious city is only possible insofar as the citizens share life as one under the same law.

The image of this kind of politics is a journey. The guardians lead by way of example, that is, as exemplars of moral and intellectual perfection, towards self-sufficiency. The guardians are in a position where they behold the One and can thus communicate its goodness and authority to the other classes. In thus moving towards the One, the difference between ruler and ruled is blurred. Just as the rational part *is* the soul, such that the other parts merge with the rational part in and by perfection, the ruling element *is* the city, and in moving towards the One, the other elements are united with it in and by friendship.

In Chapter 4, I move on to Aristotle, who accepts the eight important premises about the nature of politics, and its connection to friendship, with three important caveats. Firstly, Aristotle makes it evident that there can be no conflict between the completion of an individual human life, *i.e.* happiness, and the completion of that individual's political community, *viz*. self-sufficiency. Secondly, Aristotle differentiates friendship as a genus from its species. The friendship genus, according to Aristotle, is a shared recognition and pursuit of the good, and various species of friendship can be differentiated with respect to the good in question — which also means that different friendships will be affiliated with different kinds of unity or oneness. Thirdly, Aristotle reconceptualises friendship as a natural rather than divine relation. Friendship actualises human, not godly, potential. And domestic friendship is integral to such actualisation.

Aristotle thus offers a revised variant of Plato's friendship argument by which cosmological-theological concerns are pushed to the background: friendship is the essential and primary relation of the city *qua* city since both domestic and civic friendship are integral to happiness and self-sufficiency; thus the city must aim at both domestic and civic friendship. On this basis, I make the case against various commentators — *e.g.* Julia Annas, Kazutaka Inamura, and David J. Riesbeck — that virtue friendship is the central concept in Aristotle's political theory and, for that very reason, justice is grounded in virtue friendship.

Aristotle reckons that political authority must be decentralised compared to Kallipolis: the guardian class must be laicised in terms of a virtuous aristocracy. This aristocracy can only be brought forth from the household. However, the aristocracy retains some of the characteristic features of the guardian class. Theirs is also a life of quasi-ascetic and quasi-coenobitic elements, and crucially, it is modelled on the proverb that friends share everything communally. As such, Aristotle's political theory seems to avoid the Platonic friendship aporia — by diversifying and naturalising friendship — but only to find it arise again in a new shape, as an Aristotelian paradox: the more politics, as an architectonic discipline, is exercised, the less likely it is to achieve the end of friendship. That is because politics wields the instruments of justice, and justice is only needed in the absence of sufficient friendship, yet in that absence, such wielding of 'justice' typically serves to further undermine friendship.

Plato's and Aristotle's arguments are developed and subverted in interesting ways by Augustine's monasticism, to which I turn in Chapter 5. This might come as a surprise, for it is commonplace to understand Augustine's monastic impulse along the lines proposed by R. J. Halliburton: as an inclination to retreat from world, city, and politics. I demonstrate that this understanding is wanting at best. I then consider a passage from *Confessions* that is often noted but seldomly scrutinized by commentators: the proverbial ideal to live coenobitically and possibly ascetically. In

doing so, we come to recognise Pythagoras as a crucial influence for Augustine's monasticism, for whom such coenobitic asceticism was intrinsically political. We then identify the proverb as the cornerstone of Augustine's *Rule* — I contend, in reference to the *City of God*, that the monastery is Augustine's paradigmatic political community.

Notably, the eight Platonic premises can be found in Augustine. Augustine is in interesting ways also aligned with Aristotle's three revisions — except for the fact that a Christian understanding of Plato's cosmological and theological concerns are pulled back to the front. Moreover, Christianity enables Augustine to hold together the natural and divine in ways that were not accessible to Plato and Aristotle. Crucially, God, the One, descends to friendship with humans via incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection so that humans can ascend to God in, by, and through Jesus Christ. This makes it possible for Augustine to Christologically recast some of the central concepts of the friendship argument. Contemplation, for instance, melts together with spiritual practices like prayer, conversion, repentance, confession, and worship. Thus, Augustine offers a revised variant of the friendship argument: politics should aim for happiness and self-sufficiency; happiness and self-sufficiency consists in genuine friendship, which is only possible as a friendship among humans with God; friendship with God is a gift of grace; thus politics can only achieve its aim by grace. For Augustine, God gives this gift of grace via Christian ways of life that retain a coenobitic and ascetic form.

Augustine thus provides a cosmological-theological resolution to the friendship problems in Plato and Aristotle: it is *earthly* politics that is unable to secure its own condition and achieve its own end, that is, friendship. For earthly politics is a distorted variant of heavenly politics. Yet even in the *saeculum*, heavenly cities are possible. This possibility is presented to us by way of a Christian synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian forms of politics. On the one hand, Augustine conceives of politics in the *saeculum* as a Platonic journey led by a guardian class reborn: a pil-

grimage of mortification (*i.e.* moral development) and prayer, conversion, repentance, *etcetera* (*i.e.* contemplation). Like the guardians, Augustine's monastics rule by leading the way and communicating the grace of God to the people, and especially by providing sacraments. On the other hand, this deification is not taken to conflict with human nature, but to complete and perfect it. This means, for instance, that the households are not simply to be ruled by the monasteries and eliminated if possible. Rather, the households are to rule themselves in order to be perfected monastically *as* households. For Augustine, these heavenly cities — households living around and together with monasteries, following their lead by appropriately participating in their way if life — were achievable alongside earthly cities and within the Church as an alternative *kosmos*.

In Chapter 6, I bring this Augustinian solution to bear on MacIntyre's political philosophy, and in Chapter 7, anticipate and respond to objections. Specifically, on the basis of the examination of MacIntyre's friendship account in Chapter 1, and within the framework of the eight Thomistic principles derived in Chapter 2, I draw on Aristotle's and Augustine's critical engagement with the eight Platonic premises to put forward a revised and systematised MacIntyrean account of civic friendship. I do so in terms of eight MacIntyrean theses: (1) the genus 'friendship' is a relation whose form is a shared recognition and pursuit of goods and ultimately the good; (2) the essential and primary relation of political community is a species of friendship, *viz*. civic friendship; (3) civic friendship is the shared recognition and pursuit of self-sufficiency and goods integral to self-sufficiency; (4) civic friendship is normatively prior to justice in the specific sense that imperfect (civic) friendship is a precondition for, and perfect friendship the end of justice; (5) civic friendship is a network of groups of domestic friends that share, and is formed by, the project of creating and sustaining the life of political community; (6) an integral virtue of the network of groups of friends is just generosity, which requires charity; (7) the network of group of friends is comprised of, and must acknowledge, various degrees of dependence; (8) friendship is a gift of grace.

I consider three achievements of this account. Firstly, it can be used to bolster the conclusion of MacIntyre's argument that the liberal nation-state is incapable of creating and sustaining civic friendship. I suggest this *vis-á-vis* John Rawls' political liberalism. Secondly, it provides a very special kind of grounding of the liberal nation-state: one that is critical of both liberalism and the nation-state. Thirdly, this account is able to resolve a central problem in MacIntyre's political philosophy, pointed out in various ways by *e.g.* Thomas Hibbes, Thomas Ousbourne, and Mark Murphy: the absence of an adequate political imagination, by which MacIntyre's proposed 'revolution' is reduced to passive theory. However, in modernity and under liberalism, this revolution is uniquely made possible as an *Augustinian* revolution: a shared moral and political life on the basis of a sociology infused by a theological cosmology.

PROLOGUE

Introducing the Issues to be Addressed

I venture to examine and develop Alasdair MacIntyre's account of the political relation, that is to say, the essential and primary relation of political community *qua* political. MacIntyre conceives of this relation in terms of friendship, and specifically civic friendship. There are two different sets of needs that I want to meet by devoting my efforts to this project. The first concerns the observation that animosity and corresponding fragmentation seem to increase and intensify in liberal nation-states, sometimes flaring up on the surface, but most of the time as it were smouldering beneath it. If this is the case, then we find ourselves in a predicament that is not only serious, but perhaps even politically speaking existential. How are we to think about this? And what, if anything, can be done?

Since the publication of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre has consistently — which is to say for around half a century — warned us about this predicament. When our societies seemed to be just fine, that is, MacIntyre said that something is nonetheless very wrong. Then he explained why he thought things would only get worse. According to one commentator, MacIntyre's political philosophy therefore has a 'prophetic' character.[1] For that reason, we do well in considering MacIntyre's argument that

[1] Charles R. Pinches, 'Theological Overtones in After Virtue', in *MacIntyre's* After Virtue *at 40*, ed. Tom P. S. Angier (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 201.

the liberal nation-state is inherently incapable of creating and sustaining the essential and primary relation of political community: civic friendship. In this project, I seek to understand whether MacIntyre is right, and if so, what the implications are. However, thus turning to MacIntyre, we come to find two overlapping scholarly lacunas. That brings me to the second set of needs.

Firstly, friendship in MacIntyre has eluded the attention and commentary of MacIntyre scholars. As we piece together and examine MacIntyre's account of civic friendship, we discover that it must be developed further. The reason for this pertains to theology. MacIntyre seems adamant that political philosophy must resist any kind of involvement with theology. Yet it also seems that MacIntyre's political philosophy is inherently and irredeemably dependent on theology. To bring MacIntyre's political philosophy into harmony with theology, I turn to political theology so as to probe the prospect of theologising MacIntyre's political philosophy. Upon doing so, we find that there are no systematic accounts of civic friendship on offer in political theology.

This thesis attempts to fill these two lacunas in the literatures of MacIntyrean scholarship and political theology, and in doing so, address contemporary issues concerning the political relation. I do so by proposing, on the basis of the MacIntyrean account of civic friendship which I develop, an alternative MacIntyrean political imagination — that is, an alternative imagination of viable paths through the moral and political ruins that MacIntyre has exposed. The absence of this kind of imagination has produced a complex of important charges against MacIntyre's political philosophy. As we shall see, some critics say that MacIntyre's political communities are in fact not political, but rather *pre*-political, and others that they are subtly but profoundly dependent on the liberal nation-state.

Having theologised MacIntyre's political philosophy, and developed his account of civic friendship, we shall find ourselves in a position to answer these critics. That position is found in sociologies of embodied Christian and specifically Catholic

theology. For there we find access to the necessary resources to create and sustain local, small-scale, and participatory political communities — resources that are not readily available elsewhere in modernity and under liberalism. The answer we shall give the critics will encourage us to resist the liberal nation-state, even to be 'revolutionary', while also discouraging us from trying to capture or overthrow it.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

MacIntyre and the Problem of Friendship in Politics

In *After Virtue*'s finale, Alasdair MacIntyre offers a famously critical perspective on politics in modernity: blinded by the Enlightenment, we are heading into dark ages. In fact, MacIntyre reckons that barbarians have 'already been governing us for quite some time'.[2] Interestingly, the critique is ambiguous as to who, precisely, the barbarians are. At first glance, MacIntyre seems to target some ruling elite, probably bureaucratic and managerial in kind.[3] Then again, in advanced modernity, nation-states are typically liberal democracies, and liberal democracies are (at least supposedly)[4] ruled by its citizens. If we look again, therefore, we come to recognise that MacIntyre's critique does perhaps not only target some political villain, but also, in MacIntyrean parlance, 'plain people'. That provokes us to inquire: what is a MacIntyrean 'barbarian'?

[2] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 263.
[3] Ibid, 76-77.
[4] See *e.g.* Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 126; 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', in *The MacIntyre Reader*, ed. Kelvin Knight (University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 236-237.

MacIntyre answers this question by way of Aristotelian exegesis in Chapter 12 of *After Virtue*. Barbarians, MacIntyre reckons, are people 'incapable of political relationships'.[5] Presumably, these 'political relationships' refer not only to relationships that are narrowly connected to government and lawmaking, but to the full breadth of relationships that pertain to political community.[6] Such relationships might be found in businesses, labour unions, and marketplaces; clinics and hospices; schools and universities; religious congregations; neighbourhood and family; or pubs, sport clubs, reading groups, soup kitchens, and so and so forth. Relationships in these very different kinds of associations or institutions are *political* insofar as the people involved are members of the same political community such that their relationships both implicate and are implicated by their shared political community. However, this definition appears somewhat circular: what is 'political community'?

In everyday language and academic jargon alike, 'political community' and equivalent terms are usually applied non-evaluatively to state-like structures, spanning from city-states to nation-states, republics to kingdoms to empires. MacIntyre, however, shows us that human life is permeated by evaluative or functional concepts.[7] When applied to political community, functional concepts make it possible to differentiate between two kinds of distinctions. One the one hand, we can distinguish between political communities that function 'potentially or actually' — that is, to greater or lesser extent — *as* political communities.[8] On the other, we can distinguish these political communities from those 'political communities' that *appear* to function as political communities, but on closer scrutiny are found only to mimic

[5] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 158-159.
[6] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Open Court, 2002), 102-103, 108-109; 'Replies', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 67, no. 264(2) (2013): 220; 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 26 (1991): 110; Giovanna Borradori, 'Nietzsche or Aristotle? Alasdair MacIntyre', in *The American Philosopher: Conversations with Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell, MacIntyre, Kuhn* (The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 151.
[7] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chap. 5.
[8] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 241.

this function. This is a distinction between genuine or true or real political communities, versus counterfeit or phantom or *ersatz* political communities.[9] To expound this genuine-counterfeit distinction, I must briefly bring to the fore the 'Aristotle' that we find behind 'MacIntyre's Aristotle' in Chapter 12 of *After Virtue*.[10]

According to Aristotle, human nature is rational and political. The perfection or completion (*teleios*) of human life consists in recognising and pursuing our end (*telos*) as humans, for in so doing, we can actualise our potential, which is to achieve — in the absence of better translations — flourishing or happiness (*eudaimonia*).[11] This is a life of virtuous activity, which is to say activity of the soul in accordance with reason, involving the exercise of complex cognitive, emotional, and social skills. But happiness deprived of self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) is imperfect, and self-sufficiency can only be achieved by a flourishing political community.[12] Conversely, just as happiness is intrinsically entangled with self-sufficiency, self-sufficiency cannot be disentangled from happiness: political community is self-sufficient only insofar as its citizens are able to achieve happiness within its order.[13]

In MacIntyrean parlance, humans are *dependent* rational animals, and by virtue of our dependency, we can only flourish in community. I take a community that makes it possible for dependent rational animals to flourish to be *ipso facto* self-sufficient. MacIntyre does not emphasise the term 'self-sufficiency', but construed in this way, it serves to capture important features of MacIntyrean political community: that which make political community *political* as opposed to other social associations. This politicalness is an architectonic feature. Specifically, it consists in the practice

[9] MacIntyre, 'Replies', 220. See also Caleb Bernacchio and Kelvin Knight, 'MacIntyre and Political Philosophy', in *Learning from MacIntyre*, ed. Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore (Pickwick Publications, 2020), 119; 137.
[10] See Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Four - Or More? - Political Aristotles' in *Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Aristotelianism: Modernity, Conflict and Politics*, ed. Andrius Bielskis, Eleni Leontsini, and Kelvin Knight (Bloomsbury, 2020), esp. 21-23.
[11] *NE* $1097^{a}28$-29; $1097^{b}20$-22.
[12] *NE* $1094^{a}28$-29.
[13] See *e.g.* Robert Mayhew, 'Aristotle on the Self-Sufficiency of the City', *History of Political Thought* 16, no. 4 (1994): 502.

of deliberating about what individual and common goods the political community must achieve in order to be flourish, that is, to achieve its end, and how to coordinate different practices that are required to achieve these goods. This deliberative and coordinating practice is the practice of politics.

We begin here to use terms that need further detailing: MacIntyre's conceptualisation of 'practice' and his taxonomy of goods, both of which I return to in § 1.2. Towards the end of that section I return briefly to self-sufficiency to consider the detailing's implications for our understanding of this term. But we sense already now that the MacIntyrean notion of self-sufficiency is not identical to conventional definitions of the term, a difference that I consider in more detail in Part III (and specifically §§ 6.1, 6.3, 7.1). Correspondingly, we also sense that MacIntyre's understanding of 'politics' deviates significantly from that which is typically exercised in the modern academe and public discourse — why and how will become clearer over the course of this first chapter. We shall see that, for MacIntyre, for instance, it is neither the case that voting nor partisan 'politics' represent genuine political acts.

For now, I return to the idea of counterfeit political community. I will define a counterfeit political community as an apparent political community that does not only *happen* to be incapable of self-sufficiency, for instance because of coincidental institutional shortcomings or human limitation — granted that these shortcomings and limitation are correctible on the political community's own terms — or extraordinary external circumstances. Rather, a counterfeit political community is *intrinsically* incapable of achieving its own end; its functioning serves to frustrate individual and communal flourishing. A counterfeit political community is therefore in its very constitution — that is to say essentially, rather than merely accidentally — bad or unjust.

Elsewhere, MacIntyre seems to point out a necessary condition for determining whether an apparent political community is genuine rather than counterfeit. The

political community must feature some 'tolerably specific overall conception of the ultimate human good',[14] presumably involving happiness and self-sufficiency, according to which the political community can order its subordinate communities and their functions. This ordering occurs on both a foundational and overarching level. Individuals must inquire into the place the goods of each of the practices in which he or she is engaged should have in *their* life.[15] Similarly, the political community must respond to a twofold question: 'what place should the goods of each of the practices in which we are engaged have in *our* common life? What is the best way of life for *our* community?'[16] It is only possible to adequately answer these questions by engaging in some kind of shared deliberation. The political community must therefore be scaled such that its members can, in some meaningful sense, participate in this shared deliberation about their common life — which is only possible in 'local' and 'relatively small-scale' community.[17]

Thus we can return to Chapter 12 of *After Virtue*, where MacIntyre tells us that political relationships is found between 'those members of a community who both rule and are ruled'.[18] This shared ruling occurs only among 'free' people.[19] Satisfactory responses to the aforementioned twofold political question must therefore involve the protection and promotion of freedom. And freedom is both the absence of domination and coercion as well as the presence of a kind of sovereignty, and specifically 'the exercise of the virtues and the achievement of the good'.[20] Thus, barbarians are barbarians because they — and we should not foreclose the possibility that 'they' include 'us' — are incapable of political relationships; they are incapable of political relationships because they are incapable of shared ruling; they are incapable of shared ruling because they, if we were to apply the Berlinian distinction, are incapable of a certain kind of negative and especially positive freedom;

[14] MacIntyre, 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', 99.
[15] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 240.
[16] Ibid.
[17] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 142; 130.
[18] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 159.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

and they are incapable of such freedom because they are incapable of exercising virtues and achieving the good, perhaps mainly the *common* good. This incapability ultimately makes barbarians incapable of happiness and self-sufficiency and therefore genuine politics.

MacIntyre's critique is not only that this or that modern policy or ideology is barbaric, but rather that barbarism is the political predicament of modernity as such.[21] This predicament is characterised by enmity. 'Modern politics is civil war with other means', MacIntyre tells us.[22] The qualifier 'modern' refers here to the age of advanced or even post-modernity in which we find ourselves. According to MacIntyre, this age is characterised by a worldview that is deprived of the kind of scheme of ends, a teleological '*kosmos*',[23] by which ancient and mediaeval people intuitively and analytically evaluated human life. Correspondingly, politics in modernity converges towards the theory called 'liberalism' in the modern academy, summarised thus by MacIntyre: legitimate government should 'promote law-abidingness' but not 'inculcate any one moral outlook' upon the citizens.[24]

MacIntyre reckons that barbarism, which is to say the negation of citizenship — and here, I should add, 'citizenship' is not taken to simply denote a formal status; 'citizenship' is substantial membership in a political community, to function as a member of political community — manifests itself in the counterfeit politics of enmity. Thus, genuine citizenship and politics, for MacIntyre, must be the opposite of enmity. It must be some sort of friendship, that is, friendship appropriate to political community, friendship among citizens *qua* citizens, namely, 'civic friendship'.[25] Indeed, MacIntyre says that friendship is the 'paradigm' of political relationships.[26] We therefore find, in *After Virtue*'s barbarism critique, that which I shall label an alleged 'friendship problem' of modern politics. Later on, MacIntyre would come

[21] Ibid, 254-255.
[22] Ibid, 253.
[23] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 101-102.
[24] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 172.
[25] I take 'civic friendship' to be synonymous with 'political friendship'.
[26] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 158.

to formulate the problem in terms of a succinct and interesting, but as far as I know hitherto unexamined argument:

> If one understands citizenship as Aristotle and Aquinas understood it, as a participation in civic friendship directed towards the achievement of common goods, then contemporary liberal political societies have no citizens.[27]

The first premise states that citizenship is participation in civic friendship directed towards the achievement of common goods (for needless to say MacIntyre *does* understand citizenship as Aristotle and Aquinas understood it). This seems to put civic friendship at the center of MacIntyre's political philosophy. However, although MacIntyre does speak about friendship here and there, he does not seem to provide any systematic account of it. And to my knowledge, MacIntyre scholars have not yet attempted to piece together and examine friendship in MacIntyre's writings.[28]

The argument's second and hidden premise makes two distinct claims. Citizens in contemporary 'liberal political societies'[29] — *i.e.* liberal nation-states — are unable to, first, participate in civic friendship, and second, achieve common goods. John Macias has helpfully expounded the second claim. The liberal nation-state's justification of its own authority as a *liberal* nation-state precludes it from grounding a nationwide 'common purpose', which the achievement of common goods requires,

[27] MacIntyre, 'Replies', 220.
[28] A telling example is found in *Virtue and Politics*, an edited volume dedicated to MacIntyre's moral and political philosophy. Friendship is mentioned once in the volume, by Anton Leist: we are informed that Aristotle 'did not present the ideal city as a form of collective friendship'. Leist seems unaware of MacIntyre's alternative, rather novel, interpretation of Aristotle's friendship account in Chapter 12 of *After Virtue*, which we shall consider in § 1.2. See Anton Leist, 'Troubling Oneself with Ends', in *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, ed. Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 203.
[29] In MacIntyre, the terms 'political society', 'polity' and 'political community' seem to refer to the same thing. I consistently use 'political community'.

and as a *nation*-state, its sheer scale makes it impossible to 'embody shared deliberation toward common goods'.[30] Put differently, the liberal nation-state fails to satisfy the aforementioned necessary condition of genuine political community. The premise's first claim, concerning the failure of civic friendship, is however in need of interpretation. We are therefore not yet in a position to say much in detail about the relation between civic friendship and common goods, because we do not yet have a firm grasp of MacIntyre's friendship concept. But interestingly, MacIntyre can be taken to suggest that the failure in achieving common goods is caused by a prior failure in civic friendship. I shall propose that, according to McIntyre, citizens create and sustain civic friendship, that this activity is integral to genuine politics, and that political community emerges from such civic friendship. Politics functions to advance the creation and sustenance of civic friendship among the citizens, so that the political community can flourish. MacIntyre's argument, as I shall elaborate over the course of the next sections, is that the liberal nation-state does the very opposite: it undermines civic friendship, and inherently so, which is also to undermine itself.

Finally, the argument's conclusion points to the aforementioned genuine-counterfeit distinction: the liberal nation-state is a political community without genuine citizens, and thus, *ipso facto*, a counterfeit political community. It is my conviction, and a provisional assumption of this inquiry, that this friendship problem of modern politics merits our attention. Specifically, by piecing together and examining MacIntyre's account of civic friendship, we will get a better grasp of what political community is, for MacIntyre, and thus not only why the liberal nation-state fails to be one, but also how political communities might be successfully realised in modernity and under liberalism. That will possibly put us in a position to further develop MacIntyre's political philosophy by responding to a serious objection, pointed out in various ways by a number of critics, liberal opponents and Thomistic

[30] John Macias, 'Political Reasoning and the Nation-State: A MacIntyrean Consideration of a Thomistic Debate', *Perspectives on Political Science* 52, no. 4 (2023): 199.

allies alike: there is a simultaneous lack of and need for an adequate political imagination in MacIntyre. For it is only possible to resist the liberal nation-state if alternative, genuine political communities are protected and promoted,[31] and to do so, we must be able to imagine such political communities.

Different roads could be taken to study civic friendship in MacIntyre. Over the course of this and the next chapters, I make plain that which will be taken in the present thesis; here at the outset, I shall simply point out two roads that shall not be taken. The first takes civic friendship to be reducible to the aforementioned shared deliberation about achievement of common goods, accounted for by MacIntyre in terms of concepts like tradition, practices, and practical reason. Several erudite MacIntyre scholars have analysed these aspects of MacIntyre's philosophy, notably Christopher Lutz, Jeffery Nicholas, and Kelvin Knight.[32] Although such concepts must feature somehow in any MacIntyrean inquiry, they shall remain predominantly in the background of the present project. I shall focus on civic friendship as MacIntyre's *political relation* — that is, as the constitutive bond of political community in McIntyre's political philosophy.[33] This approach will be warranted in due course, but for now, we can think of Aristotle's claims that 'friendship holds cities together' and 'legislators take it more seriously than justice', indeed, 'if people are friends', Aristotle asserts, 'there is no need for justice, while people who are just need friendship in addition to justice'.[34] Aquinas comments: 'perfect justice seems to preserve and restore friendship' such that it pertains to moral and political philosophy 'to treat friendship much more than justice.[35]

[31] See *e.g.* MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 262-263; 254-255; 'A Partial Response to my Critics', 302-303. See also Giovanna, 'Nietzsche or Aristotle? MacIntyre', 151.
[32] *E.g.* Christopher Stephen Lutz, *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre: Relativism, Thomism, and Philosophy* (Lexington Books, 2004), esp. chap. 2; Jeffery Nicholas, *Reason, Tradition, and the Good: MacIntyre's Tradition-Constituted Reason and Frankfurt School Critical Theory* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), chap. 3-5; Kelvin Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre* (Polity Press, 2007), chap. 4.
[33] Tristian J. Roger demonstrates concisely the importance of friendship for political philosophy in *The Authority of Virtue: Institutions and Character in the Good Society* (Routledge, 2021), chap. 5.
[34] *NE* 1155^{a}22-28.
[35] *Eth.* 8.1.1534.

The second road I avoid is to interpret MacIntyre's civic friendship in terms of Marxism. This is certainly a viable road; civic friendship could for instance be accounted for in terms of comradery on the basis of class struggle against capitalism. And the genuine-counterfeit distinction, which we have seen that MacIntyre connects to civic friendship, could be taken to be a piece of Marxist heritage: counterfeit political communities are based on a false consciousness, that is, the false political beliefs and values of liberal democracy, preventing citizens from realising their true political nature. Indeed, MacIntyre's deploys this very distinction in the landmark essay 'Notes from the Moral Wilderness'. However, the fact of the matter is that MacIntyre connects civic friendship not to Marx, but Aristotle in *After Virtue*, and subsequently Aristotle and Aquinas — and as we shall see in Part II, the genuine-counterfeit distinction can be found in both Aristotle's philosophy and Augustine's theology. Moreover, although there is a group of commentators that still lament the fact that MacIntyre abandoned Marxism,[36] it nonetheless remains the case that he did. We should therefore be sceptical about attempts to force MacIntyre's thought back into Marxist paradigms by insisting that MacIntyre's political writing 'still be read along with' Marx.[37] In fact, to me it seems that MacIntyre makes a point of resisting such attempts.

Consider, for instance, *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, edited by Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight, which provided MacIntyre with a fine opportunity for making plain any residuary Marxist influence: what does an appropriate 'revolutionary' politics consist in? How does MacIntyre

[36] Jeffery Nicholas, 'Alasdair MacIntyre and Utopia: An Introduction', *International Critical Thought* 9, no. 3 (2019): 411-419; Paul Blackledge, 'Future, Present and Concrete in Alasdair MacIntyre and C. L. R. James', *International Critical Thought* 9, no. 3: 420-435.
[37] Kelvin Knight, 'Revolutionary Aristotelianism', in *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, ed. Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 34. See also Jeffery Nicholas, 'MacIntyre and Frankfurt School Critical Theory', in *Learning from MacIntyre*, ed. Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore (Pickwick Publications, 2020), 163. *Cf.* Tony Burns, 'Revolutionary Aristotelianism?', in *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, ed. Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 50-52.

himself understand his political philosophy as a revolutionary endeavour? It is notable that MacIntyre, in his response essay to the contributions of the volume, not only deems Marxism's failures irredeemable, but also limits his remaining agreement with Marxism to a bare minimum: the failures of capitalism (MacIntyre even seems to say that Marxism is not required for identifying these failures).[38] MacIntyre then calls for 'an alternative view of what revolutionary politics is' before praising Pope Paul VI's 'radical political conclusions' about the primacy of the common good in political philosophy.[39] MacIntyre elaborates: 'to acknowledge the truth spoken by such a prophetic voice — and not to attempt to reduce it to a secular truth — is incompatible with the deepest convictions of the Enlightenment and its later heirs, whether liberals or Marxists'.[40] MacIntyre concludes the essay by returning to this theological deficiency. 'Human life is sustained by hope', MacIntyre tells us, and since hope is a 'theological virtue', and liberalism and Marxism are both 'anti-theological', they have 'no room for the exercise of the virtue of hope'.[41] Thus, Marxism is an inherently inadequate alternative to liberalism. I shall therefore not read MacIntyre's political philosophy alongside Marx, but rather in the context of the Catholicism within which MacIntyre came to position himself.

In the present chapter, I proceed by situating Chapter 12 and the friendship problem in *After Virtue* (§ 1.1). I then outline the beginnings of MacIntyre's Aristotelian friendship account, as this is presented in Chapter 12 of *After Virtue* — which is an account that both serves to substantiate the friendship problem of modern politics and hints towards a MacIntyrean solution (§ 1.2). I go on to piece together and examine the development of this friendship account, first in *Dependent Rational Animals* (§ 1.3), and then in 'Is Friendship Possible?' (§ 1.4). In doing so, however,

[38] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Where We Were, Where We Are, Where We Need to Be', in *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, ed. Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 315-316; 321; 330-331.
[39] Ibid, 319; 324.
[40] Ibid, 325.
[41] Ibid, 333-334.

we come to discover that friendship also poses an interesting problem to MacIntyre's political philosophy, a problem that is theological in kind, and which calls for further development of his political philosophy (§ 1.5).

1.1 Situating the modern friendship problem in *After Virtue*

Since the publication of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre has been engaged in a 'single project'.[42] That project — which specifically political dimensions I attempt to pick out and put together, examine, and then develop in this thesis — has been to elaborate, revise, and advance the twofold argument that MacIntyre presents in *After Virtue*.[43] I shall summarily present that argument in this section. The first, critical argument commences with the disquieting suggestion in Chapter 1 and concludes climactically in the alternative between Aristotle and Nietzsche in Chapter 9. For MacIntyre, Aristotle represents the best variant of a classical mode of ethics. This mode comprises a threefold, teleological schema: first, a conception of our point of departure, that is humans-as-we-are; second, a conception of our finality, or humans-as-we-ought-to-be; and third, deliberation about ways of moving from the former to the latter, which requires the virtues, and involves rules as normative guides.

[42] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'An Interview for Cogito', in *The MacIntyre Reader*, ed. Kelvin Knight (University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 269. See also MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 278.

[43] For a more comprehensive introduction to this twofold argument, see Christopher Stephen Lutz, *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's* After Virtue (Continuum, 2012). Lutz' also provides an abridged account of the ways in which MacIntyre's major works make up this kind of project in 'Alasdair MacIntyre: An Intellectual Biography', *Learning from MacIntyre*, ed. Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore (Pickwick Publications, 2020), 1-33. For a broader, although still deep introduction to MacIntyre's project, emphasising (perhaps overly so) MacIntyre's Marxist heritage, see Kelvin Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre* (Polity Press, 2007), chap. 4. For a critical, judicious evaluation of MacIntyre's project in the context of Rawls' liberalism, see Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, 2nd ed. (Blackwell, 1992), chap. 2. For an insightful introduction to the political dimensions of this project, see Caleb Bernacchio and Kelvin Knigh, 'MacIntyre and Political Philosophy', 117-139.

Due to a series of intellectual and spiritual cataclysms, however, culminating in the Enlightenment, MacIntyre contends that human finality has been rendered unintelligible in the modern conception of the *kosmos*.[44] But without a firm grasp of finality, ethics as a rational discipline is lost on us. We find relics of the classical mode of ethics — *e.g.* the rules of deontology or the teleology of consequentialism — but without the threefold schema, modern ethical theories cannot be justified rationally.[45] Although guised in rationality, MacIntyre reckons that modern ethics is essentially Nietzschean, which is to say non-rational: 'a clash of desires, preferences, and wills'.[46]

In modern politics, this clash manifests in the aforementioned civil war with other means, which is to say means other than 'force and fraud'.[47] Different parties enter into alliances and deploy tactics to achieve political victories and defeat opponents. The parties typically attempt to negotiate 'more or less conflicting economic and social interests'.[48] The outcomes of those negotiations are settled on the basis of 'the political and economic bargaining power of each', determined by elections and lobbying and the like.[49] If negotiations break down, or in the build-up to new negotiations, the parties, each with their own *bellum justum*, fight for power with the means available to them in liberal democracy — such as promise-breaking and bullying, gatekeeping and institution capturing, cronyism and lawfare, post-factuality and identity politics. If MacIntyre is correct, then these are features, not bugs, of modern politics.[50]

[44] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chap. 5. See also Lutz, *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's* After Virtue, 44-46.
[45] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 111.
[46] MacIntyre, 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', 97. For an alternative interpretation of Nietzsche in contemporary political theory, see *e.g.* Corey McCall, 'Reconsidering Nietzsche and Politics', *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (2020).
[47] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 135.
[48] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 131.
[49] Ibid.
[50] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 245.

Without a shared overall conception of the ultimate human good, MacIntyre reckons, we cannot *commonly* perceive and conceptualise, let alone rationally resolve, the political problems that arise in liberal nation-states.[51] Some appeal to utilitarian considerations, others engage in the rhetoric of rights, and others again to a combination thereof. Take, for instance, taxation: is taxation for the sake of redistribution integral to justice, as John Rawls maintains? Or can taxation only ever be just insofar as it finances the safeguarding of property rights, which is Robert Nozick's understanding?[52] MacIntyre's point is that without any shared, overall conception of the ultimate human good, it is impossible for Rawls and Nozick (and MacIntyre) to *rationally* deliberate together about which kind of reasons — utility or rights (or virtue and the common good) — should be valid when and why, and how different valid reasons should be ranked against one another.[53]

This deficiency is presumably, and certainly conceivably, existential for the liberal nation-state. Granted, firstly, that modern politics is a clash of desires, preferences, and wills, and secondly, that moral unity gradually unravels in modernity,[54] we should expect the clashes of modern politics to increase and intensify rhetorically and institutionally, thus fragmenting the liberal nation-state, undermining the feasibility of shared political projects on the level of the liberal nation-state. And in the absence of shared political projects, different groups within the nation are likely to construct separate and rivalling political projects — projects that involve using state power to impose *their* particular project upon the nation. Amidst such fragmentation-*cum*-destabilisation, citizens of the liberal nation-state are revealed to one another as potential or actual enemies. We can observe this in contemporary liberal nation-states, and specifically in demonstrations that descend into looting,

[51] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 254-255.
[52] See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 214-220; 279-281; 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', esp. 96-101.
[53] For other examples, see *e.g.* Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Claims of *After Virtue*', in *The MacIntyre Reader*, edited by Kelvin Knight (Polity Press, 1998), 69-70; 'Toleration and the goods of conflict', in *Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Vol. 2* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 211-212.
[54] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 156.

assaults on the processes of liberal democracy, and assassinations of partisan figures.[55] I return to this issue in § 6.2. Now we shall return to situate Chapter 12 in *After Virtue*.

Chapter 12 is situated in the second, constructive argument of *After Virtue*. Here MacIntyre attempts to work out a classical mode of ethics for modernity by rebuilding an Aristotelian conceptual structure for deliberation about goods and, ultimately, the good life. The core concept is practice;[56] other central components include virtues, institutions, traditions, and narratives. Practices are coherent and complex forms of cooperative human activity by which goods internal to that form of activity are achieved in the course of trying to achieve the activity's standards of excellences.[57] The virtues are constitutive of such achievement. A favourite example of MacIntyre is chess.[58] The internal goods (or goods of excellence) of chess

[55] Consider five empirical studies from the United States of America, which remains a prototype of liberalism (and therefore, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed in *Democracy in America* 2.4.8, ahead of other particular liberalisms, such that it can be taken to reveal to us the destiny of liberalism more generally). Firstly, Eli J. Finkel *et al* demonstrate that for decades, and on both sides of the political spectrum, Americans 'have grown more contemptuous of opposing partisans', even though no corresponding divergence in policy preference can be found. Secondly, there is a mounting tendency to estrange, dislike and distrust opposing partisans, as well as deem them wicked and immoral: according to Shanto Iyengar and Sean J. Westwood, enmity is now 'ingrained in citizens' consciousness'. Westwood. Thirdly, Nathan P. Kalmoe and Lilliana Mason shows that the acceptance for and even exercise of political violence is on the rise on both sides of the political spectrum. 'Aggression rates were similar for Democrats and Republicans'. Fourthly, a study conducted by Sonia Robinson *et al* indicates that around half of Americans expect 'somewhat', 'strongly', or 'very strongly' to experience civil war in the near future. Fifthly, David Betz, a theorist of civil war causation, believes that this expectation is warranted, and not only in the US: 'it is not simply that the conditions [for civil war] are present in the West; it is, rather, that the conditions are nearing the ideal' (whether or not Betz' conclusions are warranted is controversial, but it is nevertheless noteworthy that this kind of argument is formulated in scholarly discourses). Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Eduardo Nolla, trans. James T. Schleifer (Liberty Fund, 2012), 1280, 1285; David Betz, 'Civil War Comes to the West', in *Military Strategy Magazine* 9, no. 1 (2023): 26; Eli J. Finkel, *et al*. 'Political Sectarianism in America', *Science* 370, no. 6516 (2020): 533; Nathan P. Kalmoe and Lilliana Mason, *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy* (University of Chicago Press, 2022), 96; see also esp. chap. 7; Shanto Iyengar and Sean J. Westwood, 'Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization', *American Journal of Political Science* 59, no. 3 (2015): 692; Sonia Robinson, *et al*, 'Views of democracy and society and support for political violence in the USA: findings from a nationally representative survey', *Injury Epidemiology* 10, no. 1 (2023): 7.

[56] For a more elaborate account of practices in MacIntyre, see Kelvin Knight, 'Practices: The Aristotelian Concept', *Analyse & Kritik* 30, no. 2 (2008): 317-329.

[57] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.

[58] Ibid, 188; 274.

can only be achieved by playing chess *well* — demonstrated, for instance, in the beauty of Magnus Carlsen's strategic queen sacrifice against Sergey Karjakin in 2016, by which Carlsen won the game. Such internal goods can only be achieved in and by virtues, and specifically fortitude, shrewdness, and creativity.[59] Carlsen has attained the relevant virtues by adhering to chess' standards of excellence, over time paying due respect to authorities, and under their guidance devoting himself to mastering the game's complexities.

Chess' internal goods can only be preserved and developed if the practice of chess is guarded, so to say, by institutions.[60] The institutions are practices in incorporated form; they are more or less structured organisations that serve to support practices. The institutions of chess, like Fédération internationale des échecs, for instance organise tournaments and provide ranking systems. In so doing, the institutions make external goods (or goods of effectiveness) available, like status and prizes, or in the Carlsen example: the World Chess Championship, which Carlsen earned by winning the game against Karjakin. Although genuine, and sometimes even necessary for the pursuit of internal goods,[61] external goods can corrupt the practice and thus the achievement of internal goods.[62] Even if Carlsen came to love the game for its own sake, he might go on playing it for the sake of fame or money, that is, for the sake of external goods. Similarly, amateurs might begin to play chess to achieve, in leisure, its internal goods, only to develop an obsession — to take a less fanciful example than one perhaps would have liked — about climbing marginally somewhere very close to the bottom of an internet ranking.

However, although derivative of and potentially conflicting with practices, institutions remain indispensable for chess as a practice. That is because institutions make it possible to practice chess by determining the parameters within which chess can

[59] Ibid, 189; 191.
[60] Ibid, 194.
[61] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'A Partial Response to My Critics', in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Polity Press, 1994), 284-286.
[62] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 290.

be accessed as a coherent and complex cooperative activity. It is the institutions, by organising tournaments and providing ranking systems, that set and uphold the rules of chess, some of which are fixed (*e.g.* the pieces' movement), and others which are flexible (*e.g.* the pieces' starting position, ref. Fischer Random). The institutions of chess are therefore bearers of the tradition of the practice of chess, that is, of a historically extended and socially embodied argument about chess — involving disagreements and conflicts — in which standards of excellence emerge and grandmasters present themselves.[63] This tradition makes it possible for chess, as a practice, to be received and given on. The institutions are therefore necessary for preserving and developing *chess* as opposed to some other practice, and thus to make the internal goods of chess accessible.

For MacIntyre, then, 'chess player' is a functional concept. A chess player, by virtue of being a chess player, rather than say a flautist or footballer, goes for playing *chess* well, to function well as a chess player, and by so doing, achieve the internal goods of specifically chess. Such achievement is only possible if we understand what chess is, as a practice, and how it can be preserved and even developed, which is typically only possible in and by the quest for perfecting the game. And MacIntyre's Aristotelian conviction is that not only 'scientist', 'artist' and 'farmer' are similarly functional concepts, but that the same also holds, as indicated, for 'citizen' and indeed 'human'.[64] To be human just is to attempt to function well as a human and achieve the internal goods of being human. To function well, then, as a human, is to achieve the ultimate human good.

It is important to note that although this ultimate good is in the singular, the human function is not some kind of universal blueprint.[65] Goods internal to human life can be mutually exclusive and incommensurable; we cannot engage in every worthwhile human practice. Both person A and person B can therefore function well

[63] Ibid, 222.
[64] MacIntyre, 'Replies', 220. See also MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chap. 5.
[65] See Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Rival Aristotles: Aristotle against some modern Aristotelians', in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Vol. 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22-40.

while engaging in vastly different sets of practices and corresponding ways of life. But both A and B must deliberate well about which set of practices to engage in: 'what place should the goods of each of the practices in which I am engaged have in my life? The goods of our productive activities in the workplace, the goods of ongoing family life, the goods of musical or athletic or scientific activity, what place should each have in my life, if my life as a whole is to be excellent?'[66] Such questions arise within the narrative structure of a human life, and ethics is the practice by which we deliberate about their answers. We must do so with a view to achieving our ultimate good, the supreme good of happiness; this is the good internal to the practice (or 'second-order practice')[67] of ethics.

At this point we must not only distinguish between internal and external goods, but also between individual and common goods. For happiness is the supreme *individual* good, it is achieved in the life of the individual, and by his or her relatively independent exercise of practical reason. However, the individual is always and everywhere an individual in and of communities — a MacIntyrean point I will establish more firmly in § 1.3. For now it suffices to note that although individual goods, according to MacIntyre, are not subordinate to the goods of communities or *vice versa*, individuals can only conceptualise and define their individual goods in concrete terms if they recognise the goods of the community to which they belong.[68] In an important sense, then, the common good is normatively prior to individual goods.[69]

Common goods are the kind of goods which we can only achieve by virtue of participating in a community as members of that community. Even though we often find ourselves in a number of different particular communities, only two are uni-

[66] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 240.
[67] Mark Murphy, 'MacIntyre's Political Philosophy', *Alasdair MacIntyre* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 163.
[68] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 79.
[69] MacIntyre, 'A Partial Response to My Critics', 288.

versal to human life: the domestic community — whose core is the family or household (I use these terms interchangeably although the former is the constitutive center of the latter) — and the political community.[70] These communities are interdependent in the sense that immediate and extended family can only truly flourish in a flourishing political community, and political communities can only flourish if it is comprised of flourishing families. As indicated, the supreme common good is self-sufficiency; this is the internal good of politics as a practice.[71]

It is crucial here to distinguish common goods from collective or public goods.[72] Public goods can be taken to be the *external* goods of politics as a practice, for according to MacIntyre, they are goods 'enjoyed by individuals which characteristically serve the purposes of individuals, but that those individuals could not achieve except through some form of political organization'.[73] Common goods, however, to reiterate, can only be enjoyed by individuals as members of communities and characteristically serve the purposes of individuals *in* those communities. Moreover, as opposed to public goods, common goods can only be achieved by way of participation in the shared practices of that community; common goods are therefore sharable goods. Specifically, common goods are the intrinsic ends of practices that are essentially communal, and ideally, these shared ends are recognised and pursued — and ultimately enjoyed — as such. Take, for instance, the common goods of family. The goods of fatherhood and motherhood are inseparable from, although not identical to, the goods of childhood. These goods are achieved in and by the interlocking practices of parenthood and childhood; they can only be achieved by way of complementary, reciprocal functioning. Other examples of common goods are those achieved by fishing crews or string quartets or research groups. The members of these communities participate in shared practices which involve certain technical skills and ways of cooperation that would be impossible

[70] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 158.
[71] According to MacIntyre, modern politics do not only fail to achieve the common good; it fails even to be a practice. See MacIntyre, 'The Claims of *After Virtue*', 71.
[72] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 239-241; 'A Partial Response to my Critics', 303; *Dependent Rational Animals*, 108-109.
[73] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 125.

to engage in except *qua* members of the relevant community. In summary: MacIntyrean common goods are, firstly, essentially shared, secondly, only accessible by way of participation in the relevant community's practices, and thirdly, the intrinsic end of such communal practices. In the next section, we shall see that MacIntyre conceives of such participation paradigmatically in terms of receiving and giving.

According to MacIntyre, liberal nation-states can and often do provide valuable public goods, 'and paramount among them are the goods of law and order, of a stable currency, and of national security'.[74] But according to MacIntyre, the liberal nation-state is unable to provide common goods; I attempt to substantiate this claim in § 6.3. As noted, this is a central reason why the liberal nation-state is unable to function as a genuine political community and thus has no genuine citizens. It could be challenged that MacIntyre's concept of common goods is definitionally undetermined: what characterises the kinds of communities that are able to offer common goods? How do the members participate in a satisfactory way, so that they might achieve common goods?

As indicated, MacIntyre offers some detailing in terms of networks of receiving and giving, which I return to in § 1.3. For now, we can note that MacIntyre does provide important detailing with respect to the common goods of specifically political community: the aforementioned need for an overall conception of the ultimate human good, which implicates for instance appropriate scaling. We can now see better why self-sufficiency requires this kind of agreement about the ultimate human good. I defined self-sufficiency in terms of the human good: a political community is self-sufficient if (and only if) dependent rational animals can flourish by virtue of being members of it. But to be able to recognise and pursue such flourishing as a common good, that is, as a shard end, there must be agreement about what it means to flourish as individuals and communities. And such agreement is only possible if there is

[74] Ibid.

substantial agreement about the ultimate human good. As pointed out, the *liberal* nation-state does not have a sufficiently intelligible, substantial overall conception of the ultimate human good within which goods can be ordered. In fact, liberalism deliberately puts away such overall conceptions (yet, underhandedly, MacIntyre tells us, and even unbeknownst to itself, the liberal nation-state imposes this very thing upon its citizens).[75] This is reflected in the liberal nation-state's approach to legislation. On MacIntyre's account, the liberal nation-state asserts that it 'should have the last word on what law is', making positive rather than natural law foundational, which precluded 'rational deliberation aimed at the common good'.[76]

Furthermore, the geographical, populational, and institutional scale of any nation-state is simply too immense to allow for politics to be exercised as a shared practice, and self-sufficiency cannot, therefore, be enjoyed as a common good, that is, as a shared good. From MacIntyre's perspective, the nation-state is 'unmanageable'.[77] Politics in the nation-state must therefore be exercised by an elite; plain people can only partake superficially, procedurally.[78] This scaling issue also means that nation-states that do attempt to implement an overall conception of the ultimate human good are prone, indeed doomed, to corrupt this good in 'sinister' and often tyrannical ways.[79] Although the liberal nation-state masquerades as a political community, it therefore remains inherently unable to reach the end of political community. This does not mean that the liberal nation-state cannot provide genuine goods; I return to this prospect in § 6.3. But it is not possible to realise our political nature on the

[75] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 238; 245; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, chap. 17 and 20. This raises an interesting question: does liberalism fail because it is incoherent, or because it is coherent but flawed? I will not be able to address this question here. At different stages, MacIntyre says different things: in *After Virtue*, MacIntyre suggests the former, and in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, the latter. But this does not necessarily imply inconsistency, for 'liberalism' can refer to slightly different things (see § 7.2).
[76] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary: Ethics, Resistance, and Utopia', in *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, ed. Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight (University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 14.
[77] MacIntyre, 'A Partial Response to My Critics', 303; *After Virtue*, 122-124; 134; 237; 245; 246-250.
[78] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 236-237.
[79] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 132; Borradori, 'Nietzsche or Aristotle? Alasdair MacIntyre', 151.

level of the nation-state, that is, to achieve and enjoy the ultimate political good of self-sufficiency. And for that reason, it is a counterfeit political community. Here we must recall that according to MacIntyre, this failure in achieving common goods is also a failure in civic friendship. We shall therefore turn to MacIntyre's account of civic friendship, the beginnings of which we find *After Virtue*'s Chapter 12.

1.2 Outlining the friendship account in *After Virtue*

In MacIntyre's political philosophy, the Aristotelian *polis*, the 'city-state' or simply 'city', represents the paradigmatic political community.[80] This city does not only have an overall conception of the ultimate human good, but it is also local and small-scale, and indeed participatory. As MacIntyre explains in Chapter 12 of *After Virtue*, it is therefore able to create and sustain the kind of bond that makes genuine political community possible: 'the bond of friendship'.[81]

> The type of friendship which Aristotle has in mind is that which embodies a shared recognition of and pursuit of a good. It is this sharing which is essential and primary to the constitution of any form of community, whether that of a household or that of a city.[82]

MacIntyre categorises such friendship as 'a virtue', labelling it 'genuine friendship'.[83] And in *NE* 8-9, which MacIntyre appeals to, Aristotle defines friendship as 'reciprocated goodwill' that is recognised as such among the friends.[84] Thus, although friendship is delightful and can come in handy, it is based neither on pleasure

[80] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 241. See also MacIntyre, 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', 101. *Cf.* Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Moral philosophy and contemporary social practice: What holds them apart?', in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Vol. 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 111.
[81] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 155.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid; 158.
[84] *NE* 1155^{a}22-29; 1155^{b}35.

nor utility, but on virtue.[85] I take MacIntyre to make two further significant claims about this kind of Aristotelian friendship.

Firstly, MacIntyre appears to define such genuine friendship as a shared recognition and pursuit of 'a good', and we might add not only 'goods' in the plural, but also the definite, singular: the aforementioned 'ultimate human good' that MacIntyre requires a political community to share.[86] As such, Aristotelian friendship is not only a singular virtue, but as John von Heyking has pointed out, the 'entirety' of virtue.[87] Presumably, the nature of the good that is recognised and pursued varies according to the nature of the friendship communities; yet across that variation, it remains a common good, since it is achieved in and by participation in the relevant friendship community. Specifically *civic* friendship must therefore be a shared recognition and pursuit of the ultimate good of political community: self-sufficiency. This pursuit in turn manifests in a shared recognition and pursuit of various subordinate goods by which such self-sufficiency is achieved for this or that specific city.[88]

Secondly, for MacIntyre's Aristotle, friendship is 'primary' to the constitution of any form of community, and specifically household and city.[89] We must inquire: primary in what sense? And specifically how does friendship, if primary, relate to justice? One could emphasise that according to MacIntyre, the classical Greek city emerged from Homeric societies of friends.[90] And justice, MacIntyre reckons, 'is

[85] *NE* 1172^{a}13. See also *NE* 1170^{b}12; see also 1159^{b}31; 1157^{b}20; 1171^{a}1.
[86] MacIntyre, 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', 241. See also MacIntyre, 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', 101. *Cf.* Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Moral Philosophy and Contemporary Social Practice: What Holds them Apart?', in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Vol. 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 111.
[87] John von Heyking, *The Form of Politics: Aristotle and Plato on Friendship* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 55. Notably, MacIntyre lists friendship together with the cardinal virtues, *After Virtue*, 135.
[88] Melissa Moschella's provides a list of goods which serves to exemplify subordinate but crucial goods: 'life and health, knowledge and appreciation of beauty, skilful performance in work and play, friendship, marriage and family, integrity and authenticity, and religion'. See Melissa Moschella, *Ethics, Politics, and Natural Law: Principles for Human Flourishing* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2025), 22.
[89] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 158.
[90] Ibid, 122-124.

the virtue of rewarding desert and of repairing failures in rewarding desert within an already constituted community; friendship is required for that initial constitution'.[91] Thus, on this interpretation, friendship is *historically* prior to justice.

But this interpretation cannot be the whole story. For it is possible to conceive of communities that were not necessarily constituted on friendship, and specifically not virtue friendship — be it a conquered city, slaves in an Aristotelian household, or bantering clubs. Yet, once there is a community, friendship presumably *should* nonetheless be primary for that given community. Historical priority fails to explain the way in which friendship must be primary in this sense. Moreover, MacIntyre couples 'primary' with 'essential', which suggests that the passage should be taken to be first and foremost about *normative* priority. Put differently, friendship is the political relation or the bond of political community. This interpretation is supported by the fact that MacIntyre, later on in his project, and as we have already seen, identifies citizenship as civic friendship.[92]

It is important here to stress that whether or not MacIntyre's Aristotle is the 'correct' Aristotle is beside the present point. I shall consider Aristotle on his own terms in Chapter 4. For the moment, our concern is *MacIntyre*, and MacIntyre subscribes to an Aristotelian understanding of politics and friendship. Furthermore, MacIntyre seems to mean that civic friendship is a kind of virtue friendship.[93] This means that civic friendship is a shared recognition and pursuit of political goods, and ultimately self-sufficiency — making friendship the normative basis of political community. Precisely what it means for friendship to be the normative basis of political community must be expounded in due course, but we are justified in assuming that for MacIntyre's Aristotle, and *ipso facto* for MacIntyre also, the essence of political

[91] Ibid, 156. See also 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', 107.
[92] This understanding is concurrent with *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, in which MacIntyre says 'it is important to recognize that on Aristotle's view the norms of justice govern the relationships of those who in one way or another are also and more fundamentally bound to each other by ties of friendship. For justice by itself is insufficient as a bond' (122).
[93] This inference is supported by Jason A. Scorza, 'Civic Friendship', *International Encyclopedia of Ethic*s, ed. Hugh Lafollette (Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 775-776.

community — the political relation or bond from which we derive affiliated concepts like 'politics' and the 'political' — somehow resides in friendship.

Here, an urgent issue surfaces. MacIntyre estimates that Aristotle's city runs into some tens of thousands. But if friendship is a shared recognition and pursuit of goods, then it seems unlikely that friendship can serve as the bond of an entire city; many and even most of its citizens will barely interact with one another. How, then, can friendship truly be the essential and primary bond of the city?

> The answer surely is by being composed of a network of small groups of friends, in Aristotle's sense of that word. We are to think then of friendship as being the sharing of all in the common project of creating and sustaining the life of the city, a sharing incorporated in the immediacy of an individual's particular friendships.[94]

Civic friendship, therefore, is a network of small groups of friends. The idea seems to be something like this: in a given city, *polis* P, we find friendship groups x, y, and z. Friendship group x and y are directly connected and share the common political project CPP. So are y and z also, such that x and z are indirectly connected and thus can be said to share in the same CPP with one another via y. An important feature of this common political project is that it does not only encompass parts of these groups' life but 'the whole of life'.[95] Put differently, the citizens recognise that their happiness can only be successfully pursued in a self-sufficient community, which only can be achieved by the city. And the rulers of the political community must recognise that this supreme common good can only be achieved if the ruled — as it were plain citizens — pursue it as such, namely as *their* good. Their common political project then, is to realise their overall conception of the ultimate human good in and by a shared way of life.

[94] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 156.
[95] Ibid.

I take this network of groups of friends to amount to civic friendship if, and presumably only if, two conditions are met. Firstly, x, y, and z share the *same* CPP, namely the common political project of creating and sustaining the life of their particular P in accordance with a shared conception of the good. This activity is politics.[96] There must be extensive and substantial agreement about their good. However, as to the best means for achieving that end, and how these means should be deployed, civic friends might disagree. Importantly, the network is not only some obscure emergent phenomenon that arises from collections of private friendship groups that, as it so happens, find themselves in space-time proximity. Rather, the total network needs to take the distinctive *form* of political community *qua* actually or potentially self-sufficient. Secondly, each friendship group is made up of people that incorporate the shared political project (of creating and sustaining P) in their individual friendships and participate in this common political project. This shared participation delimits the political bond in accordance with MacIntyre's scaling condition for political communities: the bond cannot be stretched indefinitely, for it only holds to the extent that x and z, in some meaningful sense, *share* a common political project.

The shared pursuit of goods and ultimately the good is only possible if there is also shared recognition of this good, which is made possible, according to MacIntyre's Aristotle, by 'metaphysical contemplation' (which is itself the culmination of the common political project).[97] Why? Contemplation consists in approaching an 'impersonal unchanging divinity' that takes no interest in human affairs; MacIntyre therefore identifies 'certain tension' between Aristotle's understanding that humans are at once essentially political and essentially metaphysical.[98] But in approaching this divinity, that is in practicing philosophy, we come to know our end as humans. Thus contemplation furnishes politics with its overall conception of the ultimate

[96] *I.e.*, 'a higher-order, integrative form of activity' whose aim is the achievement of 'a structured communal life within which the goods of the other forms of activity' can be order, not to 'this or that good, but *the good and the best* as such'. See MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 44.
[97] Ibid, 158.
[98] Ibid.

human good. However, it remains vague, in *After Virtue*, exactly how this is achieved. Does it, for instance, involve a common project of study and discussion, which is suggested by Aristotle?[99] If so, what would that project look like?[100]

Notwithstanding this vagueness, it is clear that a shared recognition of the good, provided by some kind of shared contemplative activity, is necessary for uniting the citizens in a common pursuit of the good. Conversely, in the liberal nation-state citizens have allegedly 'banded together' for mutual protection, so that each individual can go for ends set by him- or herself.[101] MacIntyre's proposal is certainly not that the liberal nation-state should set ends for the people — based on for instance a concept of *volk* or class or religion — but that people, to realise their political nature, must find out what their common ends are and then how to go for them together as a shared enterprise. And this is only possible in local, small-scale, and participatory communities.

It is important to add here that affection is not irrelevant in MacIntyre's Aristotelian friendship account, although it is secondary. Friendship's principal concern is a 'common allegiance' to the good.[102] It is within this kind of relation that *good* affection might arise.[103] But in modernity, MacIntyre says, rather sweepingly, affection is made principal: 'our friends are said to be those whom we *like*, perhaps whom we like very much'.[104] Friendship has therefore become 'the name of a type of emotional state rather than of a type of social and political relationship'.[105] Interestingly, this places friendship at the crux of MacIntyre's twofold argument in *After Virtue*. I shall briefly explain why.

[99] *Pol*. 1337ª20-30.
[100] The best contender, it seems, in MacIntyre, is the university. I return briefly to this prospect in § 6.4.
[101] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 156.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid, 156. See also ibid, 149.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

The alleged failure of friendship captures the intersecting, but distinct, failures of ethics and politics. For MacIntyre seems to claim that individual friendships are predominantly variants of pleasure friendships. In modernity, that is, 'friendship' tends to prevail insofar as our 'friend' is enjoyable, interesting, or fun — you do you, and as long as it reinforces me doing me, we remain 'friends'. But there is typically no intentional, or quasi-intentional, commitment to discuss the good so as to perceive or conceptualise it commonly and then go for it together in shared allegiance to that good. That, in turn, makes it very difficult to create and sustain genuine friendships, as MacIntyre conceives of them, without which there can be no networks of groups of such friendships, and thus no civic friendship. Consequently, civic friendship also degenerates into varieties of counterfeit friendships. These pseudo-friendships might sometimes be based on affections, characteristically nationalism,[106] other times — especially in the *liberal* nation-states — on sheer advantage,[107] and presumably most of the time a mix thereof.

At this point MacIntyre's exposition of friendship and politics in Chapter 12 of *After Virtue* fades out. We have seen that MacIntyre has shed important light on civic friendship: it is a is a shared recognition and pursuit of goods and ultimately the good; it is the essential and primary relation of political community; it is virtuous and normatively prior to justice; and it is a network of groups of friends sharing in the common political project of creating and sustaining the life of political community. Although MacIntyre indicates in *After Virtue* (and then later seems to confirm) that he adopts this Aristotelian account of politics and friendship,[108] he also stresses that it is necessary to correct and develop this account to make it adequate and applicable to modernity. Specifically, Aristotle's anthropology is in certain re-

[106] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Is Patriotism a Virtue?* (University of Kansas, 1984).
[107] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 156; 'Replies', 220.
[108] Ibid, 159; MacIntyre, 'Replies', 220.

spects seriously deficient. For, according to Aristotle, human perfection or completion is only accessible for Greek male aristocrats.[109] This anthropology can be revised, MacIntyre tells us, without invalidating Aristotle's account.[110] But, in *After Virtue*, we are left in the dark as to how it can be done, and to what extent MacIntyre's Aristotelian friendship account must be changed in response to the revised anthropology.

1.3 Development 1: *Dependent Rational Animals*

In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre advances a Thomistic anthropology to correct and develop Aristotle.[111] This anthropology addresses several of the mentioned deficiencies: the category of 'human' is reimagined in Jesus Christ, wherein there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, aristocrat nor slave.[112] Thus, within this Christian anthropology, human perfection is not only achievable for some humans, but all. Yet we must inquire about the details. In what ways can plain people participate in the proposed shared ruling among civic friends? How is MacIntyre's Aristotelian account of friendship, and specifically civic friendship, implicated by the Thomistic anthropology?

According to MacIntyre, ethics and thus politics 'characteristically presupposes a sociology', a social basis — an understanding of how its 'concepts are embodied or can be in the real social world'.[113] And the claim that civic friendship is a network of small groups of friends seems to lie of the core of the kind of sociology that is

[109] Ibid. See also MacIntyre, 'A Partial Response to My Critics', 301; *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 85ff.
[110] Ibid, 160.
[111] See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 162-164; xi. See also 'The relationship of moral philosophy to theology' in the postscript to the second edition of *After Virtue*.
[112] Galatians 3:28.
[113] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 23. See also See also MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 19. See also Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy*, 124.

presupposed by the classical and specifically Aristotelian mode of ethics that MacIntyre advances. In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre can be taken to shed further light on these networks: MacIntyre conceives of appropriate relational dynamics among friends in terms of receiving and giving.[114] Put differently, the shared recognition and pursuit of the good manifests itself in the sharing of goods. And MacIntyre does so by reflecting on human vulnerability, which shows two important things to us. Firstly, that we are dependent, indeed interdependent, and inherently so, and secondly, that this predicament calls for receiving and giving. We were all quite helpless to begin with and, if all goes well, age will render us helpless again before the end. We fool ourselves, MacIntyre says, if we think, as we often do, that human life is essentially the time in-between childhood and old age, and that this in-between time is untouched by dependency. According to MacIntyre, there is in fact a sense by which we can only be independent insofar as we acknowledge our dependency. I will make three MacIntyrean points to ground this claim.

Firstly, practical reason is 'given' to us in and by certain relationships — especially in immediate and extended family, but also by schoolteachers, sport coaches, neighbourhood parents, and so on and so forth. For we must be taught not to slavishly act on our desire or the demands of others, but 'to stand back' and deliberate about them.[115] Secondly, to be a practical reasoner, we must deliberate about what we are to do in various circumstances and dilemmas, as the peculiar persons *we* are, and why we are to do what we are to do. Practical reason therefore depends on self-knowledge which, in turn, 'depends in key part upon what we learn about ourselves from others, and more than this, upon a confirmation of our own judgements about ourselves by others who know us well, a confirmation that only such others can provide'.[116] This kind of self-knowledge demands knowledge of our own narrative as well as that of our communities, since we are always and everywhere individuals

[114] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 160-161. See also *NE* 1159^{b}25-32, 1168^{b}7.
[115] Ibid, 83; 94. See also 161-162.
[116] Ibid, 94.

in and of communities.[117] Thirdly, the very exercise of practical reason is itself communal, for we cannot reason prior to or apart from traditions or quasi-traditions, be they known to us or not.[118] Here we are provided with the necessary starting points from which we can begin our deliberations, as well as border posts, legitimate goals, standards of justification, and exemplars of good reasoning.

If we fail to acknowledge and appreciate our dependency, we also render ourselves insensitive to the fact that we remain, invariably, situated in networks that call on us to receive and give. In the beginning and towards the end of our life, we predominantly receive. In the aforementioned time in-between, we still rely in one way or another on communities to reason practically and thus achieve goods. Moreover, importantly, this time in-between is also a time when others are dependent on us. And their dependency ought to shape our understanding of who we are and what ends we should deliberate about — be they our children as they come of age, parents and grandparents that have already aged, or other people in our communities that are impaired or disabled or otherwise in need of our assistance. To function well as practical reasoners is to recognise our situatedness in such social structures and function *accordingly*. This, MacIntyre says, is only possible if we resist the relational mode of modernity and liberalism: justice as fairness.

> I have to understand that what I am called upon to give may be quite disproportionate to what I have received and that those to whom I am called upon to give may well be those from whom I shall receive nothing. And I also have to understand that the care that I give to others has to be in an important way unconditional, since the measure of what is required of me is determined in key part, even if not only, by their needs.[119]

[117] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 216.
[118] Ibid, 31; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, esp. chap. 14 and 20.
[119] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 108.

The receiving should be 'graceful', the giving 'uncalculated'.[120] MacIntyre labels this kind of graceful receiving and uncalculated giving 'just generosity'.[121] Although the receiving and giving must be free, it is simultaneously required by flourishing. How can we engage in it? Or, put differently, what virtues are necessary for just generosity? MacIntyre points to Aquinas' understanding of taking pity (*misericordia*) and doing good (*beneficentia*).[122] Say we ungrudgingly give to a person in significant need, 'from a regard for the other as a human being in need, because it is the minimum owed to that other', and because in relieving their distress we will relieve our distress at their distress. For Aquinas, MacIntyre explains, we would then act at once justly and generously, as well as out of pity and from beneficence — and that is the kind of morally complex act that is MacIntyre's just generosity.

MacIntyre says there is no strict proportionality in just generosity, and there can thus be no calculating mindset. However, it is still the case that '*prudent* calculation is not only permitted, but required'.[123] Without prudence, receiving and giving risk degenerating into exploitation and oppression, which would then rip the network of friends asunder. Moreover, in a world of scarce resources, we have to exercise the virtue of temperance and set aside resources for saving; we can only deliberate about what to give to whom and why if we have a surplus to give from. Thus, if justice concerns rewarding desert and repairing failures in rewarding desert, then such rewarding and repairing must be carried out with a view to the networks of receiving and giving — which are governed by just generosity — insofar as it is these networks that make up the fabric of political community.

MacIntyre reckons that humans can only flourish as independent practical reasoners.[124] But to be independent practical reasoners, we do not only need to exercise

[120] Ibid, 121.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid, 126.
[123] Ibid (my emphasis).
[124] Ibid, 77.

virtues of independence (*e.g.* justice as desert, temperateness, truthfulness, courage), without which practices 'could not resist the corrupting power of institutions'.[125] We also need to exercise the virtues of dependence (*e.g.* just generosity, charity, pity). We cultivate these virtues by practicing physical care for those in our communities that are especially vulnerable. Care is therefore required by virtue.[126] As a practice, caring reminds us about our own situatedness in networks of receiving and giving. Caring therefore helps us to avoid the corruptive delusion of individual self-sufficiency — a delusion that undermines political community. By caring for the more or less radically dependent, we can harmonize our affections, and relatedly our sympathies and inclinations, with virtue.[127] We can become attentive to the concerns of 'those whose urgent need confronts the members' of our political community, and who predominantly or solely participate as recipients.[128] These affections should not only include lasting members of our own political community; it should also be extend to relationships of hospitality to passing strangers.

As indicated, justice as generosity is normatively prior to justice as desert for MacIntyre; they can be combined in a twofold justice maxim.[129] Among independent practical reasoners, each will receive in proportion to their contribution to the political community as measured by just generosity. Between relatively independent practical reasoners and the radically dependent, it will be from each according to their ability, to each, so far as is possible, according to their needs. This maxim should permeate not only political decisions, but also the decision-making process itself: 'there will have to be institutionalized forms of deliberation to which all those members of the community who have proposals, objections and arguments to contribute have access'.[130] For the decisions must be 'recognizable as the work of the whole'.[131] The radically dependent must therefore participate by proxy, which is

[125] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.
[126] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 151.
[127] Ibid, 121; 126.
[128] Ibid. See also ibid, 117.
[129] Ibid, 129.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

only possible if independent practical reasoners are 'able and prepared to stand proxy for them and if the role of proxy is given a formal place in the political structures'.[132] In this way, the radically dependent can participate in ruling: firstly, via proxies, that is friends, and secondly by setting certain important bounds of political deliberation.

Although in important respects still Aristotelian, MacIntyre's friendship account is now furnished with a rudimentary but still distinctively Christian and specifically Thomistic anthropology.[133] The networks of groups of friends that comprise civic friendship participate in receiving and giving, the characteristic virtue of such receiving and giving is just generosity; and the virtue of just generosity requires the virtues of pity and beneficence. The distinctively Thomistic contribution consists, of course, in the synthesis of Aristotle and Augustine, and specifically the former's emphasis on acquired virtues with the latter's emphasis on infused and theological virtues, and especially charity (*caritas*).

Here transpires, it seems, that which Thomas Hibbs has called 'tensions' between philosophy and theology in MacIntyre.[134] For MacIntyre says that 'the theological virtues are due to divine grace'.[135] For Aquinas and MacIntyre, it is also the case that pity and beneficence are effects of the infused virtue charity.[136] But MacIntyre swiftly assures us that this tension is only troubling to the 'incautious reader', for it is not, in fact, real.[137] This assurance should be read against the background of long-running debates among Thomists about the possibility of 'Christian philosophy' and the autonomy of reason from divine revelation.[138] Specifically, it must be read

[132] Ibid.
[133] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, xi.
[134] Hibbs, 'MacIntyre, Tradition, and the Christian Philosopher', 223.
[135] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 124.
[136] Ibid. See also *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 2; Meghan J. Clark, 'Love of God and Neighbor: Living Charity in Aquinas' Ethics, *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1040 (2011): 423-424.
[137] Ibid.
[138] For a helpful introduction to this debate, see John F. Wippel 'The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy: A Thomistic Perspective', *Faith and Philosophy* 1, no. 3 (1984): 272-290. For a discussion of this debate's expression in MacIntyre, see Lutz, *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre*,

against a special strand of these debates, concerning the possibility for specifically *moral* and *political* Christian philosophy: does it makes sense, for a Christian, to inquire into and seek the acquired virtues in and of themselves? Is a virtue like justice, for instance, or in this case pity and beneficence, truly intelligible without charity? Pity is, after all, the *effect* of charity. Then again, in his treatment of pity, Aquinas does not only cite Augustine, but also Aristotle's remarks about appropriate pity in the case of evil or suffering befalling people by 'accident' or 'undeservedly'.[139] MacIntyre explains that pity — and the same holds, presumably, *mutatis mutandis*, for beneficence also — is 'recognizably at work in the secular world […] independently of its theological grounding'.[140] By way of elaboration, and in line with Aquinas' reading of Aristotle, MacIntyre says that pity is owed to 'those, whoever they are, who are afflicted by some considerable evil, especially when it is not the immediate outcome of the afflicted individual's choices'.[141] MacIntyre then appeals to Aquinas: the basis of pity is a natural *affiliation*, that is, of seeing in the face of the other a possible friend.[142]

But this does not reduce the philosophical-theological tensions. Can a concept like 'considerable evil' — involving accidental or undeserved suffering and moral faults alike — be cut off from its theological grounding without changing its operative meaning in our practical deliberations? Take as an example the first and foundational community according to Aristotle and Aquinas: the family. A basic business of families is to deliberate appropriately about its own size in order to protect and promote the flourishing of its members. Consider now three different ways by which the family can regulate its size. In Greco-Roman antiquity, infants could be left to die, which sometimes amounted to handing them over to slaveholders; in medieval Christianity, children could be donated to the monastery, and irrevocably so; in secular modernity, it is possible to use contraceptive methods and carry out

183-193; Thomas Hibbs, 'MacIntyre, Tradition, and the Christian Philosopher', *The Modern Schoolman* LXVIII (1991): 211-223.
[139] *ST* II-II, q. 30, a. 1.
[140] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 124.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

abortions.[143] Is pity owed to the infant set out to die, the child donated to the monastery, or the foetus removed from its mother's womb? Although MacIntyre seemingly maintains that our deliberation about this issue is, from the perspective of Christian moral and political philosophy, autonomous from divine revelation, it can certainly not be autonomous from tradition. And different traditions will furnish us with different notions of 'evil', not only about the kinds of acts that constitute moral faults, but also the kinds of sufferings that are morally relevant, which in turn are typically derivative of the status we grant to the sufferer.

Traditions illuminated by divine revelation and 'infused' by Christian charity will be very different from traditions that remain, from the Christian perspective, in the dark, operating solely according to their own acquired virtue. Thus, in cutting pity off from charity as a specifically theological virtue embedded in a specifically theologically infused anthropology which itself manifests in a certain kind of theologically infused sociology, MacIntyre tries to make us accept an unrealistic assumption: that the virtue of pity, which has historically been brought forth from Christianity, and rather uniquely so, is readily accessible outside of Christianity as *the same kind* of virtue that Christians have access to within theologically infused traditions. We should not accept this assumption.[144]

Charity, Aquinas maintained, is a kind of friendship (*amicitia*) with God,[145] or in MacIntyre's formulation: 'friendship towards God and humans.[146] It is because we already are friends with God that we can recognise an image of God in the other and thus see in their face a possible friend. Indeed, according to Aquinas, friendship

[143] See John Eastburn Boswell, '*Expositio* and *Oblatio*: The Abandonment of Children and the Ancient and Medieval Family', *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 1 (1984): 10-33.
[144] I am here drawing on John Milbank's criticism of MacIntyre. However, it is important to also push back against Milbank. For MacIntyre's project does not, of course, as Milbank claims, consist in some 'advocacy of the antique'. MacIntyre's tradition develops partly by way of critical engagement with its own presuppositions, arguments, and conclusions. See John Milbank*, Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Blackwell Publishing 2006), 328.
[145] *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1, a. 8; q. 25, a. 2; q. 26, a. 2; q. 44, a. 3. See also: q. 26, a. 1; q. 44, a. 1; a. 7. See also Liz Carmichael, *Friendship a Way of Interpreting Christian Love* (T&T Clark, 2004), 113.
[146] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 126.

with God is not only a condition for friendship among humans; it also unites and directs *all* the virtues, such that prudence only can order the moral life correctly as it were *within* charity. MacIntyre in fact elaborates that 'without charity the virtues would lack the specific kind of directedness which they require'; justice for instance 'cannot indeed, so it turns out, even exist as a natural virtue, unless and insofar as it is informed by the supernatural virtue of caritas'.[147]And furthermore, such 'charity is not to be acquired by moral education; *it is a gift of grace*, flowing from the work of Christ through the office of the Holy Spirit'.[148]

These philosophical-theological tensions emerge again in the very concluding paragraphs of *Dependent Rational Animals*, where MacIntyre suggests that differences between rivalling accounts of virtue manifest in their respective understandings of friendship. Specifically, MacIntyre distinguishes between the accounts by which we must attain self-sufficiency in and by ourselves, rendering friendship ultimately superfluous or even self-defeating from the perspective of the virtues, and those by which rational deliberation, achievement of common goods, and thus flourishing is only possible within friendship. The former is epitomised in Nietzsche and characterised by the ignorance of or unwillingness to acknowledging our dependence. Aristotle gives us the beginnings of the latter accounts, but MacIntyre says we need *more* than Aristotle provides. Can that something 'more' be provided by nature, that is, by reason alone? This is the crucial question, and MacIntyre suggests an affirmative answer. Angela McKay Knobel, however, identifies a conflict between the 'Aristotelian ethic of acquired virtue […] centered around the notions of self-perfection and self-sufficiency' and 'an ethic of humility and dependence', namely an ethic that seeks to cultivate the infused virtues.[149]

[147] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 205. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Aquinas's Critique of Education: Against His Own Age, Against Ours', in *Philosophers on Education: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Routledge, 1998), 101.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Angela McKay Knobel, *Aquinas and the Infused Moral Virtues* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 178.

Thus, for now at least, it seems fair to say that MacIntyre's dismissal of the aforementioned philosophical-theological tensions are too quick. That implicates our present concerns: if a specifically theological account of charity or friendship with God is integral to virtues like pity, and virtues like pity integral to just generosity, and just generosity integral to genuine political communities and specifically civic friendship, then transitively, Christian charity or friendship with God is integral to civic friendship.[150] Yet MacIntyre seems to insists that theological should be kept away from moral and political philosophy. I return to this theological friendship problem in § 1.5. Now we shall probe further into the alleged dependency of MacIntyre's civic friendship on Christian charity by turning to a lecture from 2019.

1.4 Development 2: 'Is Friendship Possible?'

In the lecture entitled 'Is Friendship Possible?', MacIntyre develops ideas from a 2004 essay entitled 'What Both the Bad and the Good Bring to Friendships in Their Strange Variety'. I must therefore begin by briefly considering this essay, in which MacIntyre proposes a reclassification of friendships that is 'significantly different' from Aristotle and thus Aquinas, 'even if still in important respects Aristotelian'.[151] MacIntyre wants to demonstrate that genuine friendship is possible not only as perfection, among people who already are truly virtuous, but also among base people

[150] MacIntyre offers *wancantognaka* among the Lakota people as an example of just generosity. One might be tempted to infer that charity thus cannot be *integral* to just generosity. But this inference is invalid. For it is not clear how this example is meant to function in MacIntyre's argument, or whether just generosity is sufficiently similar to *wancantognaka*. The issue is made evident by the fact that MacIntyre immediately turns to Aquinas to examine and detail just generosity. Moreover, Jeffery Nicholas points out that among the Lakota, there was no socially established practice of 'claiming property'. Conversely, for MacIntyre's Aristotle, generosity consist in receiving and giving *property* (see *NE* 4.1 and *Pol*. 2.1-5). The point is that even if just generosity and *wancantognaka* are sufficiently similar, we are not in a position to copy-paste *wancantognaka* into a different tradition, for it relies on a very different set of social facts compared to both Aristotle's and ours. See MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 120-121; Nicholas, *Reason, Tradition, and the Good*, 35, 128ff.

[151] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'What Both the Bad and the Good Bring to Friendships in Their Strange Variety', in *Amor Amicitiae: On the Love That is Friendship*, ed. Thomas A.F. Kelly and Philipp Rosemann (Peeters Publishers, 2004), 241.

that are in the process of becoming virtuous. That is, MacIntyre attempts to demonstrate that friendship is also the way of virtue, not simply its destination.

This task is especially crucial in modernity, since we have, according to MacIntyre, lost our way and need to find back to virtue. In fact, strikingly, in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, MacIntyre says that modernity's remedy is friendship: what a person deprived of education and habituation in moral and civic virtues 'has to discover is that what he or she needs is a *friend* who will also be a teacher in the approach to the virtues'.[152] The friend is necessary not only for those that are virtuous, but also for people that desire to be so. Thus, 'the first inquiry of such a person must be how he or she is to constitute relationships of friendship with other persons, such that through those relationships he or she may learn what the good is'.[153]

Initially, the aspiring friends will not be able to grasp the fullness of friendship. But MacIntyre thinks it is beyond doubt that what is needed for them to get going — something which is intuitive for them *qua* aspiring friends — is a resolution to will 'the good of the other person as friend, so that he or she is secure, so far as one is concerned, from bodily danger, loss of possessions, the telling of lies about them, and the like'.[154] To obey these primary precepts of friendship, MacIntyre observes, 'is to obey the primary precepts of the natural law and those other precepts which follow immediately from them, and so to embark upon that education in the virtues which is the necessary prologue to adequate practical enquiry' — which is to say ethics and politics.[155] In this 'prologue', the aspiring friends come to learn about the 'nature of their good'.[156] Friendship, then, is not only a shared recognition and pursuit of the good; friendship also serves as an initiation into the very recognition and pursuit of the good. This suggest that friendship is essential and primary not only for politics, but also ethics.

[152] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 180 (my emphasis).
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.

But how, exactly, can friendship both be the way and destination of virtue? In the 2004 essay, this is the topic at hand. MacIntyre distinguishes accidental, timely, and enduring friendships. Accidental friendships are based on advantage or pleasure or a combination thereof; the friend is a mean to other ends. These are friendships insofar as the people involved develop in virtue, albeit accidentally. MacIntyre offers the example of a town that is attacked. The next-door criminal runs to its defence and fights side by side with the mild shoemaker who never hurt a fly. As they fight together for the sake of their town, they develop an 'accidental' friendship: the criminal grows in justice, the shoemaker in courage. According to MacIntyre, this demonstrates, against Aristotle, that friendship between the base and the (at least somewhat) virtuous is possible. However, this inference seems tautological. Is not MacIntyre simply assuming the conclusion that we are here dealing with a *genuine* friendship, rather than a momentarily friendly advantage relationship? And is not the point of Aristotle's classification precisely to keep these kinds of relations distinct from one another?

MacIntyre's 'timely' friendships concern a more refined notion of advantage and pleasure and involve people that enable us, at critical junctures, to become the kind of persons we would like to be. These relationships consist in receiving and giving guidance about the good life. But we must ask again: why is this a genuine *friendship*, and not, say, a friendly mentorship? Finally, MacIntyre's 'enduring' friendships occur when 'the life of each friend becomes an integral and constitutive part of the life of the other, something that can only happen over a period of time and that, once it has happened, will only be terminated by death or by physical separation'.[157] MacIntyre accepts that the goods of enduring friendships can be 'illusory', but stresses that these friends aim at achieving Aristotle's complete friendship, 'even if their friendship always remains a work in progress'.[158]

[157] MacIntyre, 'What Both the Bad and the Good Bring to Friendships in Their Strange Variety', 254.
[158] Ibid, 255.

It is not entirely clear where the contribution of MacIntyre's reclassification lies. As indicated, if MacIntyre's political philosophy is to be relevant for modernity, it needs an account of the ways by which we can move from incomplete to complete friendship, from barbarism to civility. MacIntyre does so by showing us variants of friendship-like relations that lead towards more complete friendship. Put differently, MacIntyre provides insights into the moral psychology and behavioural patterns of relationships that are friendly and approach, in various ways, the completion of friendship. But MacIntyre is not proposing a theory of moral psychology or behavioural patterns; MacIntyre is proposing a rivalling classification. I shall counter-propose a strategy for achieving that which MacIntyre sets out to do, that is, identify relations that feature *parts* of complete friendships by making use of the conceptual flexibility that can already be found in the Aristotelian account. This serves to undermine the need for MacIntyre's rivalling classification. I will also indicate that MacIntyre's rivalling classification is in an important respect inconsistent with *After Virtue* and thus ought to be discarded.

Take, as a starting point, the MacIntyrean understanding of Aristotelian friendship as a shared recognition and pursuit of the good. On this understanding, friendship is a relation that involves *movement* and thus offers the prospect of conceptual flexibility: in its very nature, the friendship relation progresses towards its end, which is to say, with MacIntyre, that it is 'a work in progress'.[159] Just as Aristotle's concept allows for very virtuous people to become *more* virtuous, such that friendship is only completed in the fullness of virtue, it seems also to allow for somewhat virtuous people to, as they progress towards the good in and by their friendship, become *more* virtuous. Aquinas stretches this conceptual flexibility by appreciating that, as MacIntyre formulates it, 'different virtues may be more or less fully developed in one and the same person and that this unevenness of development may take

[159] See also Bradley Bryan, 'Approaching Others: Aristotle on Friendship's Possibility', *Political Theory* 37, no. 6: 770.

different forms with different individuals'.[160] We would have expected MacIntyre to attempt to stretch this flexibility even further before proposing a new classification. This can be done by developing two important distinctions in Aristotle.

The first is to distinguish, in Aristotle, between different kinds of friendship species and their genus. I do so in Chapter 2 by making explicit that which is already implicitly present in MacIntyre. In summary: as a genus, friendship consist in a shared recognition and pursuit of goods, but *what* goods, as well as *how* the goods are pursued, will vary from friendship species to friendship species. According to Aristotle, some friends 'have everything in common, others have only specified things'.[161] This flexibility can account for the friendly features of MacIntyre's timely friendships while avoiding reclassification. Secondly, both Aristotle and Aquinas distinguishes 'friendship' from 'friendliness' or 'affability'.[162] The former is an active, virtuous relation, the latter is a restricted virtue that is seemingly derived from friendship but can be exercised in other relations. Friendliness therefore makes it possible to exercise and experience elements of friendship in relationships that are not in fact genuine friendships but are still *friendly*. It can correspondingly account for that which makes MacIntyre's accidental friendship resemble genuine friendship.

Thus, MacIntyre's 2004 essay could, and I believe should, be reframed as elaborative observations on these two distinctions. For it is important to retain, with Aquinas, Aristotle's classification: it captures the fact that friends come together for the sake of the good and to form their relation and shared activity accordingly. Such teleological intentionality is inadvertently undermined by MacIntyre's rivalling classification, and especially by the apparent inclusion of accidental friendships among genuine friendships. That serves in turn to undermine the friendship problem MacIntyre levels against the liberal nation-state. MacIntyre says that the liberal

[160] Ibid, 243.
[161] *NE* 1159^{b}32-35; 1160^{a}30-32.
[162] *NE* 4.6; *ST* II-II, q. 114.

nation-state 'has to be rejected' *qua* political community.[163] The reason, as we have seen, is that the liberal nation-state is not able to create and sustain civic friendship directed towards the achievement of common goods. But if the criminal and shoemaker share genuine friendship as a result of their banding together, then why cannot the liberal nation-state be said to offer genuine friendship — a shared recognition and pursuit of the common good of earthly peace — by *their* banding together? If so, could not this banding together amount to a genuine civic friendship, albeit not a perfect one, by which certain extremely rudimental common goods are achieved? This would perhaps not amount to a perfect political community, but which political community ever was? That brings us to the 2019 lecture 'Is Friendship Possible?'.

Introducing this lecture, MacIntyre gestures to weaknesses in the 2004 essay and indicates that he will now attempt to rectify some of them; MacIntyre will provide us with something more 'adequate'.[164] Although MacIntyre does not tell us, the kind of friendship he explores the possibility for seems to be genuine and specifically enduring friendship. Granted this assumption, MacIntyre argues for three conclusions about this kind of friendship. The first is that friendship rightly conceptualised is difficult to achieve, and especially so in modernity; secondly, friendship remains indispensable for humans and thus moderns; and thirdly, it is by giving due weight to both the first and second conclusions that we might properly account for friendship in modernity.

The argument for the first conclusion alludes to the ending of *Dependent Rational Animals*, and its contrast between Aristotelian and Nietzschean friendships. On the Nietzschean account, as MacIntyre understands it, there is both a desire to have a privileged relation with someone else and a desire to conceal oneself. Thus 'friendship' is rendered a hidden game of power, and perhaps even exploitation, rather

[163] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 254.
[164] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Is Friendship Possible?', Keynote lecture delivered at the Fall Conference 2019, de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, University of Notre Dame, 2019, 15:20-15:30.

than a shared recognition and pursuit of the good. This, MacIntyre suggests, is the predicament of modernity. In modernity, therefore, 'friendship' is typically counterfeit friendship. The second argument appeals to the Aristotle of *After Virtue*: friendship is integral to flourishing. Without friends, we are rendered incapable of flourishing, and even incapable of comprehending that we are incapable of flourishing. For friends provide a perspective from outside that we internalise almost as if it were our own, thus enabling us to recognise and pursue the good in *our* life by enabling us to better understand who we are and what we ought to do with the life we have been given. This can only be done if the friends reveal themselves to one another, that is, if their relationship is illuminated by truth. The third conclusion is arrived at by holding together the conclusions of the first two arguments.

MacIntyre goes on to make a remarkable claim that connects to the philosophical-theological tensions in *Dependent Rational Animals*: friendship is not only constituted by virtues given to us by grace, we are now told that friendship itself is 'grace'.[165] To elaborate this proposition, MacIntyre, in reference to Aquinas' *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, distinguishes infused from acquired moral virtues by identifying three different character types. The first type exhibits one or more of the acquired moral virtues, either because their natural inclinations tend to issue in virtuous activity, or because they have been educated in the virtues and have cultivated the relevant habits. There is however no proper unity to their moral life because there is no single end towards the achievement of which their actions are directed. The second character type exhibits the cardinal virtues — justice, temperance, and courage — and specifically the unifying virtue of prudence. This character type lives virtuously according to practical reason ordered to their natural good, which is to say happiness and self-sufficiency. The third character type orders their life to their final end in God, which is only possible if their prudence is infused by charity. MacIntyre then makes three remarks about such charity. Firstly, people of

[165] Ibid, 40:39.

the third character type will often, if not always, act as people of the second character. Secondly, charity is only possible as a supernatural gift of grace. Thirdly, friendship as a gift of grace is not restricted to Christians; 'grace' can be taken to mean 'grace in a secular way'.[166]

We can always destroy a friendship, but friendship lies forever beyond desert because it lies forever beyond prudent calculation: we never deserve good friends. Indeed, to receive friendship, MacIntyre reckons, we must be open to receiving them precisely as gifts of grace. This openness includes a certain kind of responsiveness to other people, a readiness to receive them when we do not expect friendship and a corresponding willingness to suffer disappointment if things do not work out as we hoped. It also involves that we ought to be 'grateful' for their friendship.[167] And here the philosophical-theological tensions make themselves evident. For surely, gratefulness in response to secularised grace, some kind of pure moral luck, is nonsensical. This kind of grace would operate much like a Polynesian 'taboo': a concept evoking a certain emotive response that made sense within a metaphysical context that is not accessible any longer. Put differently, gratefulness for our friends makes sense if God is omnipresent as a generous giver of gifts — but it does not make sense if that God is bracketed away. This raises a question as to exactly what kind of commitments are hidden away in MacIntyre's notion of 'grace' and how it operates in his account of friendship. For MacIntyre seems to want to have his cake and eat it: grace is a supernatural gift that is also entirely secular.

In the lecture, MacIntyre contrasts genuine friendship, which to say friendship as 'grace' or 'genuine gift', with 'networks of givers and receivers'.[168] This phrase, 'networks of givers and receivers', is a peculiar one, and we are justified in assum-

[166] Ibid, 40:39-40:40.
[167] Ibid, 42:39-42:40.
[168] Ibid, 42:29-42:49; 23:55-24:40; 47:43-48:10.

ing that it refers to the account of friendship that MacIntyre developed in *After Virtue* and *Dependent Rational Animals*. This is corroborated by the fact that MacIntyre, in the lecture, identify these networks with the same kinds of relations that comprise the networks in *Dependent Rational Animals*, and most notably familial relations.[169] But then again, in the lecture, MacIntyre restricts the networks to *calculated* giving and receiving, whereas in *Dependent Rational Animals*, we have seen, the opposite is the case: the networks are taken to consist essentially in uncalculated receiving and giving.

MacIntyre goes on to say that our flourishing in networks of giving and receiving *depends* on the grace of friendship, for without it, 'our social life would be very different in a variety of ways', indeed, it is uncertain whether the networks could even prevail.[170] Thus, in the lecture, MacIntyre seems to extract 'friendship' from the networks of receiving and giving as these are presented in *Dependent Rational Animals*, calling this extracted friendship for 'grace', before telling us that if the networks are not given this grace, they cannot function naturally — that is, we are rendered incapable of realising our natural ends by our own natural capacities. But if the networks need this grace to function properly, then in what sense is it really *grace*, as Thomists understand it, that is, a freely given supernatural gift? Put differently, if natural human relationships require grace to function properly, is not MacIntyre then collapsing the distinction between nature and supernature? This theological conundrum concerns the very core of MacIntyre's account of civic friendship: how are we to understand friendship as both the essential and primary relation of political community, and as a supernatural perfection that is seemingly *required* for natural flourishing?

[169] *E.g*. ibid, 42:29-42:49; *Dependent Rational Animals*, 150.
[170] Ibid, 47:19-24. Here it is also important to recall that MacIntyre regards genuine friendship as the paradigm of civic friendship. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 158; *Dependent Rational Animals*, 160.

Our answer to these questions rely on our understanding of MacIntyre's political philosophy, and specifically, its relation to grace. On this issue there are two different tendencies in MacIntyre's thought, which I have hinted at, and which are both expressed in the lecture. On the one hand, there is the standard Thomistic understanding that Christian moral and political philosophy, insofar as it is *Christian*, and insofar as it is concerned with natural or imperfect happiness, must be open to supernatural or perfect happiness and self-sufficiency.[171] As we have seen, MacIntyre critiques Marxism and liberalism alike for not being able to account for the infused moral and theological virtues. Thus, if we apply the Thomistic distinction between perfect and imperfect flourishing, it might be that MacIntyre means to say that the networks of giving and receiving represent imperfect flourishing which only can be perfected when it is bestowed the supernatural gift of genuine friendship. But this interpretation is not entirely satisfactory, for, to reiterate, MacIntyre suggests that the networks are truly *dependent* on this supernatural gift in order to even prevail.

On the other hand, there is the proposal that the kind of grace that MacIntyre is concerned with can be accounted for on entirely secular terms — MacIntyre's is a moral and political *philosophy*, not theology. Similarly, MacIntyre insists that his philosophy is 'as secular in its content *as any other*'.[172] This insistence is repeated again and again: 'I am committed to holding that, if the requirements of practical reason are rightly understood, then practical rationality provides *everything* that is required for the moral life, *independently* of any theological ethics'.[173] Similarly, on MacIntyre's reading, Aquinas's standpoint about political authority and the common good 'was *incompatible* with […] theological invocation of revealed

[171] See Thomas Joseph White, 'Imperfect Happiness and the Final End of Man: Thomas Aquinas and the Paradigm of Nature-Grace Orthodoxy', *The Thomistic: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 78, no. 2 (2014): 276.
[172] Borradori, 'Nietzsche or Aristotle? MacIntyre', 152 (my emphasis). See also Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Theses on Feuerbach: A Road Not Taken', in *Artifacts, Representations and Social Practice*, ed. C. C. Gould and R. S. Cohen (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 283.
[173] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'From Answers to Questions', in *Intractable Disputes about the Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics*, ed. Lawrence Cunningham (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 315 (my emphasis).

truth'.[174] According to Stanley Hauerwas, this insistence is a persistent feature of MacIntyre's project.[175] That brings us back to the possibility of Christian moral and political philosophy.

1.5 Nature, grace, and MacIntyre's theological friendship problem

As a Christian *philosopher*, MacIntyre sees value in examining questions pertaining to human life by means of unaided human reason. Yet accounts of the acquired virtues, as discovered by these methods, remain incomplete: theology alone can discover the true cause of virtue and the true end of human life. For this philosophical exercise to remain meaningful, MacIntyre's political philosophy, *qua* Christian, must in a substantial sense remain open to grace and divine revelation, that is, it must make room for the infused virtues. And as noted, it is ambiguous at best whether MacIntyre's political philosophy, and specifically his account of civic friendship, remains sufficiently, which is to say effectively, open to the Christian grace which he requires from any adequate account of human life. This is reflected in the fact that MacIntyre, in describing his own political position, frequently drops the qualifier 'Thomism' — it is simply 'Aristotelian' or in MacIntyre's somewhat stylistically unfortunate variant: 'NeoAristotelian'.[176]

As noted in § 1.3, MacIntyre's account of just generosity — which is integral to his political philosophy and specifically his account of civic friendship — relies on a

[174] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Natural Law as Subversive: The Case of Aquinas', in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Vol. 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 54 (my emphasis). See also ibid, 62-63.
[175] Stanley Hauerwas, 'God and Alasdair MacIntyre: With a Nod to Barth', in *Fully Alive: The Apocalyptic Humanism of Karl Barth* (University of Virginia Press, 2022), 81-99. *Cf.* Stanley Hauerwas, 'MacIntyre and Theology', in *Learning from MacIntyre*, ed. Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore (Pickwick Publications, 2020), 51. See also Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy*, 217.
[176] *E.g.* MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 11; *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, chap. 4. Similarly, as to the Thomism: Janet Coleman accuses MacIntyre of underplaying the 'continuity' between reason and faith in Aquinas. See Janet Coleman, 'MacIntyre and Aquinas', in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Polity Press, 1994), 85.

distinctively Christian anthropology which would be, if not in principle then at least *de facto*, inaccessible without the ultimate gift of grace: Jesus Christ. This Christian God has been largely expelled from our shared social life and ethical deliberation, inevitably changing this life and deliberation in radical ways. MacIntyre's political philosophy can therefore not take for granted that which it previously perhaps could take for granted: commonplace intuitions and sentiments in our culture that at some point in our history was infused by Christianity.[177] In this new — in lack of a better term — post-Christian culture, a conscious openness for grace becomes paramount for political philosophy: grace can furnish our philosophy in ways that not so long ago might have seemed redundant, but now are crucial, if it is to remain Christian in any meaningful sense.

To thus consider the prospect of opening MacIntyre's political philosophy to grace — that is, insofar as it is really closed, to open it up from within — I turn to MacIntyre's reflections on Pope John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor*. In it, MacIntyre considers this kind of openness with respect to the *moral* life. And moral and political philosophy are parts of a whole; indeed, friendship is the unifying element between the two, for in friendship, the moral life is made communal. The political life can therefore perhaps be opened to grace according to the openness modelled in MacIntyre's engagement with the encyclical. And that brings us to MacIntyre's exposition of the natural law's significance for moral deliberation.

> The natural law teaches us what kinds of actions we need to perform, what kind of actions we need to refrain from performing, and what kinds of person we need to become, if we are to achieve our own final end and good and to share with others in achieving our final end and good. In achieving that good we shall be perfected, something possible for us sinful human beings only by

[177] Interestingly, Jacques Maritian makes precisely this kind of strong and close connection between '*civic or secular* faith' in liberal democracy and '*religious* faith', and specifically Christian faith, suggesting the latter is a product of the former. See Jacques Maritian, *Man and the State* (The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 110-114.

> grace. And what we shall lose, if we fail to achieve it, will, Jesus taught us, be God Himself.[178]

MacIntyre goes on to say that 'the law declared to us by God in revelation is *the same law* as that which we recognize in the moral requirements imposed by our own human practical understanding and reasoning, when they are in good order'.[179] Thus, from the perspective of practical reason, divine revelation is necessary insofar as we find ourselves distorted by sin. 'Grace often corrects, as well as completes', MacIntyre explains in Thomistic fashion, 'what we have so far taken to be conclusions of reason, but, when grace does so correct us, it is always because we have in some way failed as reasoners'.[180] Then MacIntyre turns to the parable of the rich young man in Matthew 19.

The rich young man asks Jesus Christ questions about perfection, that is, 'questions about morality which are in fact questions about the meaning of one's own life'.[181] Christ's answer is to 'give up everything to God, so that by holding back nothing he will acknowledge that God, the supreme good, his supreme good, cannot be weighed against any other good'.[182] This is to 'go beyond mere conformity to the law to a kind of obedience which understands the point of the law as an expression of God's love'.[183] But it is not possible for the rich young man to achieve this by his own powers; this possibility is opened up to him 'exclusively by grace'.[184] The rich young man's moral failure — namely not making Christ's answers about the meaning of life his own — is therefore the *spiritual* failure.

[178] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'How can we Learn what *Veritatis Splendor* has to Teach?', *The Thomistic: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 58, no. 2 (1994): 178.
[179] MacIntyre, 'How can we Learn what *Veritatis Splendor* has to Teach?', 175.
[180] Ibid. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Truth as a good: A reflection on *Fides Et Ratio*', in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Vol. 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 213-214.
[181] Ibid, 189.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid (my emphasis).
[184] Ibid.

> Unless, unlike the rich young man, we respond to God's offer of grace by accepting it, we too shall be unable fully to understand and to obey the law in such a way as to achieve that ultimate good which gives to such understanding and obedience its point and purpose. But unless we can understand and obey the law adequately, we will be unable to recognize the truth concerning our own natures and to realize their potentiality for an exercise of rational freedom through which we can perfect our individual and communal lives. This inability would constitute a loss in ourselves of that which is of most value to ourselves and to others. What we have to learn from the story of the rich young man is that attachments to what it seems to us that we cannot bear to lose — in his case his possessions — may, if they come between us and the possibilities that obedience to the law and grace together open up for us, that is, if they come between us and God, result in a far more radical loss to and of the self.[185]

MacIntyre then proceeds by criticising, in accordance with *Veritatis Splendor*, three analogous attachments in modern moral and political life: an understanding of freedom as opposed to law and obligation; the tendency to approach practical situations in terms of calculation of costs and benefits; and the moral relativism that undermines a shared recognition and pursuit of the good. Let us now, however, set aside these attachments and imagine a different but very similar rich young man. This alternative rich young man justified his decision to not sell all his possession and give them to the poor by citing a passage from *Dependent Rational Animals* dealing with just generosity.

> If I do not work, so as to acquire property, I will have nothing to give. If I do not save […], then, when the time comes when my help is urgently needed by my neighbor, I may not have the resources to provide that help. If I give to those not really in urgent need, then I may not have enough to give to those who are. So industriousness in getting, thrift in saving, and discrimination in giving are required.[186]

[185] Ibid, 190 (MacIntyre here references Sections 38-40 of *Veritatis Splendor*).
[186] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 126.

According to MacIntyre, divine revelation only corrects us when we, in one way or another, *fail* as practical reasoners. What could be the alternative rich young man's failure in this instance? How could his failure be correctly identified and accounted for in non-theological terms?

Say the rich young man in Matthew 19 desires perfection and to please God and prior to citing *Dependent Rational Animals* deliberates about his answer to Christ's calling. He presumably accepts the major premise that, as a general truth — and let us assume, for the purposes of argument, that this truth can be legitimately derived from Aquinas' preambles of faith — if God indeed does call on us to give up everything, then it is good to do as he says, not only in itself, but also to be perfected. However, the conclusion to act accordingly, to abandon everything and follow Jesus from Nazareth is only reasonable granted the minor premise that Jesus from Nazareth, rather than, say, *this* or *that* rabbi, is in fact God calling on us. That minor premise is tantamount to saying that Jesus from Nazareth inhabits a position to make divine claims on us — claims that go far beyond the reach of any preamble of faith or conclusion arrived at by reason alone, while not only remaining congruent with but even perfecting such reason. As we have seen, MacIntyre tells us that we can only make that minor premise ours if 'we respond to God's offer of grace by accepting it'.[187]

We must here formulate a crucial principle around which have been circling for some time: the achievement of imperfect happiness cannot contradict perfect happiness, which is to say that imperfect happiness can only be imperfect *qua* happiness insofar as it does not foreclose the possibility for perfect happiness. It must

[187] MacIntyre, 'How can we Learn what *Veritatis Splendor* has to Teach?', 189. See also *After Virtue*, 161-162.

remain *open* for perfect happiness.[188] And the rich young man in Matthew 19 suggests to us that just generosity is only constitutive of imperfect happiness insofar as it is — if not actually, then at least potentially — ordered to perfection in supernatural charity. Thus, the rich young man, finding himself face to face with Jesus Christ, should have come to accept that just generosity points to a further end, that is, an end beyond nature: *divine* generosity. If the rich young man sought Christ in a state of imperfect happiness, perhaps precisely because imperfect happiness had stirred in him an indefinite yearning for something more, something further, then the rejection of Christ's invitation to enter perfect happiness would close even his chances for imperfect happiness. That is because this rejection closes the 'openness' for perfect happiness which had been present up until that point. In fact, the rich young man leaves Christ grieving, suggesting this very thing: even the happiness which he had seems to be taken away from him. Here we must note the sheer extent to which MacIntyre opens his moral philosophy to grace.

> It is by faith alone that we can understand the nature of our recurrent waywardness and willfulness in taking as our good, either in particular situations or in general, what is not our good and so falling into vicious habits. To know what needs to be known about that relationship to God which is perfect happiness we first need the gift of faith. It is by faith alone that we can understand how only redemptive grace can rescue us from this sinfulness. It is by faith alone that we can understand that in addition to the moral virtues we need the theological virtues. And it is by faith alone that we can understand that charity is the form of all the virtues. God summons us to acknowledge these and other truths of his self-revelation in the teaching of the Church. The teaching authority of the Church is owed recognition by secular political authority as well as by individuals.[189]

[188] Similarly, the autonomy of philosophy only holds for 'true' philosophy, that is, philosophy that is aligned with theology. If exercises of reason take us away from divine revelation, then we necessarily move away from truth. See Wippel, 'The Possibility of a Christian Philosophy', 276-277.
[189] MacIntyre, 'Aquinas' Critique of Education: Against His Own Age, Against Ours', 101. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (Continuum International Publishing, 2009), 24-25; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, chap. 5.

As we recall form § 1.1, MacIntyre's classical mode of ethics moves from humans-as-we-are to humans-as-we-ought-to-be. This kind of deliberation is only possible if we make assumptions about anthropology, that is, about human being and becoming, about nature and flourishing.[190] And MacIntyre suggests that theology corrects classical ethics in two respects: by correcting the distorting effects of sin upon the exercise of practical reason, but also, and more fundamentally, by revealing to us our true nature, that is, by modifying our anthropological assumptions.

We are always and everywhere individuals in communities, and if the pursuit of individual flourishing is thus dependent on theology, so must also be the case for communal flourishing. We see this even in the case of the rich young man: the rich young man's spiritual failure implicates his moral life which in turn implicates the political community. I shall therefore attempt to open MacIntyre's *political* philosophy to grace from within, and specifically his account of civic friendship that is, in a way that seeks to mirror the openness featuring in his moral philosophy. To do so, I turn to the political discipline that presumably is the most open to grace: political theology.

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The core of MacIntyre's friendship account, as this is presented in *After Virtue*, and as I have pieced it together by tracing its developed in *Dependent Rational Animals* and 'Is Friendship Possible?', consists of a number of claims about civic friendship: it is a shared recognition and pursuit of goods and ultimately the good; it is the essential and primary relation of political community; it is virtuous and normatively prior to justice; it is a network of groups of friends that share in the common political project of creating and sustaining the life of political community; that network

[190] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Indispensability of Political Theory', in *The Nature of Political Theory*, ed. David Miller and Larry Siedentop (Clarendon Press, 1983), 31. See also MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 152.

shares in creating and sustaining the life of political community and participate in receiving and giving; the characteristic virtue of such receiving and giving is just generosity; just generosity requires the virtues of pity and beneficence; pity and beneficence are effects of the infused virtue charity; friendship is grace.

In this thesis, I seek to develop this account of civic friendship, and an important task is to make sure it is effectively and sufficiently open to grace — an openness which MacIntyre models for us in his treatment of the rich young man. My further aim in carrying out this work is answering questions like: what kind of political communities arise from MacIntyre's political relation construed as civic friendship? How can such communities be realised in modernity and under liberalism?

CHAPTER 2

Friendship in the New Political Theologies — and Thomism

With the publication of Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*, a space for political theology as a distinct discipline in the modern academy emerged.[191] The significant concepts of the nation-state, Schmitt proposes, are secularised theological concepts.[192] Political sovereignty mirrors divine sovereignty, and similarly: legal codes the divine law; the nation-state's aspirations for establishing order in a world of chaos the salvific mission of redeeming the world from sin. Moreover, Schmitt reckons that political sovereignty resides in the ability to decide the 'exception', to suspend positive law (rather than decreeing it) — just as divine sovereignty is revealed to us in the ability to suspend the laws of nature, that is, in performing miracles.[193] It is this exception, therefore, that should occupy us as students of politics;

[191] The term 'political theology' means different things to different people. Here I use the term descriptively and genealogically to capture an approach that emerged from political theory and focused on the theological grounding of political concepts. Although this approach attracted significant criticism, it also made it possible to exercise a very distinct form of Christian political philosophy, one that is attentive to the spiritual character of social reality. Today political theology is typically considered to be the part of moral theology which deals with political issues, although there are also other ways of understanding political theology as a discipline. (I offer normative reflections in § 2.5.) For an overview of different understandings of 'political theology', see Luke Bretherton, 'What is Political Theology? What is Politics?', in *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 22-54.

[192] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 36. See also *The Concept of the Political*, expanded ed., trans. George Schwab (The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 42. We can add that the same holds for the significant concepts of the city-state: happiness (or completion), self-sufficiency, and the common good.

[193] Ibid, 4, 36.

it is sovereignty and not rules or norms that comprises the existential principle of the political.[194]

Leo Strauss notes that for Schmitt, 'the political is a basic characteristic of human life' such that we 'cannot escape politics'.[195] In modernity, as Schmitt sees it, the political manifests itself in a threefold conceptual structure: the political entity — which in modernity is a state centred around a nation, *viz*. the nation-state — is the domain of the political and thus the location of the exercise of politics. The authority of politics resides in the political entity's sovereignty. In *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt grounds this sovereignty in the friend-enemy distinction, which is intrinsically entangled with the aforementioned exception: the ability to decide the exception involves the ability 'to distinguish correctly the real friend and the real enemy'.[196] Politics therefore captures 'the most intense and extreme antagonism'.[197] That is not to say that politics, for Schmitt, consists in waging war against enemies abroad, or dominating 'the domestic enemy'.[198] We should rather think of Schmittian politics as '*the mode of behavior* which is determined by this possibility' for warfare and domination.[199]

According to Schmitt, the enemy is not necessarily evil.[200] Rather, the enemy is the stranger who, *ipso facto*, poses a potential or actual threat to the political entity and its 'way of life'.[201] To protect this way of life, Schmitt advocates a nation-state that increases and expands its powers by way of technologisation, so as to awaken the

[194] Ibid, 15.
[195] Leo Strauss, 'Notes on The Concept of the Political', in *Political Theology* (The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 110. See also Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 35; 51-52; 78.
[196] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 37. See also 26; 33-35.
[197] Ibid, 29.
[198] Ibid, 46.
[199] Ibid, 37 (my emphasis). See also 33-35.
[200] Two well-known, but important points should be added here. Firstly, the Schmittian enemy is allegedly public rather than personal enemy (*hostis*, not *inimicus*). Secondly, the friend-enemy distinction in politics corresponds to the good-evil distinction in ethics, the beautiful-ugly distinction in aesthetics, and the profitable-unprofitable distinction in economics, ibid, 28-29; 38; 46; 67-68.
[201] Ibid, 27.

'total state' — a political entity that is self-conscious of itself as sovereign.[202] Needless to say, this Leviathan proved to be a very sinister thing: Schmitt's theory of the nation-state served to sanction horrific suffering and grave injustices, culminating in the Holocaust. In the shadow of its terrible smog, Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann reckoned it necessary either to destroy political theology altogether — this womb of Leviathans — or entirely renew the discipline.[203] According to Metz and Moltmann, the new political theology had to answer questions like: what made the Holocaust possible? How can we ensure that nothing like it will ever happen again? The so-called new political theologians sought to do this by inverting Schmitt's political theology, as they understood it, by lamenting rather than sanctioning suffering and injustices, critiquing rather than exercising power, and judging earthly authorities rather than exalting them. For Metz and Moltmann, this meant a politics of equality and freedom, democracy and pluralism.[204]

A deep-seated but understudied feature of this renewal lies in the reconceptualisation of Schmitt's political relation; Moltmann as it were opens up Schmitt's closed friendship.[205] He does so by offering an alternative theological account of friendship, based not on classical and specifically Aristotelian friendship (*philia*, *amicitia*) but on Christian and typically Augustinian charity (*agape*, *caritas*). It seems that this reconceptualisation is more or less accepted as dogma in the new political theology — not only in the historical reckoning, but also in the various new forms of political theology that ensued from it. The gist of the dogma is this: *philia* is the

[202] See Richard Wolin, 'Carl Schmitt, Political Existentialism, and the Total State', *Theory and Society* 19, no. 4 (1990): esp. 407-409.
[203] Jürgen Moltmann, 'Covenant or Leviathan? Political Theology for Modern Times', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 (2009): 38-38; 'European Political Theology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Political Theology*, ed. Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 8.
[204] See Scott Paeth, 'Jürgen Moltmann and the New Political Theology', in *T&T Clark Handbook of Political Theology*, ed. Rubén Rosario Rodríguez (T&T Clark Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 213.
[205] See ibid, 211.

relational form of the old political theologies and should be conquered and disarmed by *agape*.[206]

Moltmann's criticism of Schmitt seems, *prima facie*, to implicate the space available for developing by theologising MacIntyre's account of civic friendship. That is because a theologised MacIntyre would necessarily share important features with Schmitt: a preoccupation with the political relation or bond and the conceptualisation of this relation in terms of friendship and a shared way of life. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to suspect that their critical perspectives on liberalism and modern politics, and the conviction that it must be resisted, in one way or another connects — again, *prima facie* — to their Catholic convictions.

It is tempting to immediately dismiss these similarities as superficial.[207] Firstly, Schmitt is a fierce advocate of the nation-state, and MacIntyre the very opposite. Secondly, according to Schmitt, the essential principle of politics is sovereignty, whereas for MacIntyre, it is participation in civic friendship directed towards the achievement of common goods. Thirdly, and relatedly, the political relation is only derivatively about friendship in Schmitt's political theology; it is principally about

[206] This kind of resistance against *philia* is not evident in political philosophy and theory. For instance, in *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition* (Columbia University Press, 2005), John Rawls identifies civic friendship as the 'nature of the political relation' in liberal democracies (447). And interestingly, the resistance is not found specifically in moral theology either. In 'The Gift of the Church and the Gifts God Gives It' (in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2011) Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells claim that friendship is 'at the center of the moral life' (16). Yet, notably, among the moral theologians, friendship's possible bearing on politics is by and large neglected — see *e.g.* Paul J. Wadell's *Friendship and the Moral Life* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) and Edward Collins Vacek's *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Georgetown University Press, 1994) — or if considered, then, as we shall see in Gilbert Meilaender's *Friendship* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) and Guido de Graaff's *Politics in Friendship: A Theological Account* (Bloomsbury, 2014), denied a central place in the *political* life. A case in point is the concluding section of chapter 6 in Eric Gregory's *Politics and the Order of Love* (The University of Chicago Press, 2010), which seems to serve as an exception to the rule. 'Civic friendship', according to Gregory's Augustine, 'is a species of friendship that highlights the ethical relation as fundamental for political community' (358). And for Augustine, that ethical relation must be grounded in God. Gregory seems to simply assume that this understanding of friendship can be coherently combined with a liberal political theory (see 147-148).

[207] Even critics recognise that these similarities are superficial, see Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 88. See also Keith Breen, 'Alasdair MacIntyre and the Hope for a Politics of Virtuous Acknowledged Dependence,' *Contemporary Political Theory* 1, no. 2 (2002): 181-201.

enmity. In MacIntyre's political philosophy, however, friendship *is* the political relation: friendship is the fundamental political reality. But these deep differences do not eliminate the similarities. It is thus important to inquire whether a theologised MacIntyre will be liable to the same kind of criticism that especially Moltmann levels against Schmitt.

I therefore probe into Moltmann's understanding of friendship in order to evaluate whether it makes sense to attempt to theologise MacIntyre's political philosophy, that is, whether there is sufficient space for a MacIntyrean approach to civic friendship in political theology. Having outlined a Moltmannian taxonomy of political theology (§ 2.1), I go on to examine Moltmann's 'open friendship' (§ 2.2). It is an inadequate account. I then turn to Guido de Graaff's *Politics in Friendship* (§ 2.3), which is the only systematic account of friendship on offer in contemporary political theology. De Graaff finds political value in friendship — but not as a *political* concept. In critical engagement with Gilbert Meilaender, de Graaff contends that friendship is a *para*-political concept: a phenomenon that exists alongside, not within, politics (§ 2.4). That implies among other things that friendship cannot constitute the political relation. De Graaff's account is Moltmannian in the sense that a classical and allegedly Aristotelian concept of friendship is pitted against a Christian and Augustinian concept. I demonstrate that this Aristotelian-Augustinian dichotomy is untenable. Consequently, we find an unjustified lacuna: there is no systematic account of civic friendship in contemporary political theology. Situated in that lacuna, I offer a critical perspective on political theology as a discipline and identify the space for a possible MacIntyrean contribution (§ 2.5). I also present a framework for making that contribution: eight Thomistic principles within which I seek to develop MacIntyre's account of civic friendship.

2.1 From old to new political theologies: a Moltmannian taxonomy

I shall use Moltmann's article 'European Political Theology' to expound the aforementioned distinction between old and new political theology in twentieth-century Europe (or the West) by identifying further subcategories. I will label one such subcategory 'old forms of political theology'; it comprises all the different kinds of pre-modern and early modern conceptions and theories of political or public religion.[208] For the pre-moderns, the world was saturated by spirit, such that morality, order, and stability necessarily involved religion, which in turn implicated politics.[209] In pre-modern and then early modern Europe, this old form of political theology tended to be monarchical. And crucially, it was brought to bear on conflicts between authority and anarchy that arose in the Enlightenment. Notably, as Schmitt tells us, for Joseph de Maistre, authority of a specific kind, namely sovereignty, is necessary for forging a people into a united, political entity — and the monarch, embodying a divinely ordained political institution, was uniquely positioned to exercise such sovereignty.[210]

However, as revolutions in Europe dethroned (actually or effectively) one royal house after the other, sovereignty in the monarchical form was no longer accessible. Monarchy, it seemed, had to be substituted with dictatorship.[211] Schmitt, of course, recognises the political need for sovereignty.[212] Yet, surprisingly, he does not immediately accept the legitimacy of dictatorship.[213] As pointed out, Schmitt proposes to ground modern sovereignty not in dictatorship, but in the friend-enemy distinc-

[208] Moltmann, 'European Political Theology', 3; 4-7.
[209] Cicero is the famous example, see esp. *Amic*. 23; *Off*. 1.54-1.55. See also *Dom*. 109; *Leg*. 2.30; 2.8-2.10; 18-22; 2.42-2.43; *Nat. D.* 2.8; 2.75-80; 3.5-6.
[210] Schmitt, *Political Theology*, chap. 4.
[211] Ibid, 51-52; 65-66.
[212] In fact, Schmitt finds no logical alternatives: even anarchism presupposes sovereignty, for anarchism is the sovereign act to abolish sovereignty. See ibid, 66.
[213] Ibid. *Cf.* Wolin, 'Carl Schmitt, Political Existentialism, and the Total State', 409.

tion. He therefore introduces a second subcategory of political theology, the paradigmatic form of old political theology in modernity, which I label 'Old Political Theology'.[214]

For Old Political Theology, the nation-state is demarcated by and thus arises as an intelligible phenomenon on the border between friend and enemy. It is important to note that the friend-enemy distinction complicates the connection between Old Political Theology and the older forms of political theology. In some of the classical forms of political theology, the city-state or republic was based on a positive, and typically Aristotelian, account of friendship.[215] But for Schmitt, as Strauss points out, and as we have observed, *enmity* is the fundamental political reality.[216] The unity of the 'friends' is based on their collective separation from a common enemy. For the classical forms of political theology, however, it is the other way around: friendship is the positive, fundamental political reality, and enmity is correspondingly defined negatively in relation to friendship.

In this Moltmannian taxonomy, the old subcategories are mirrored in new ones. I label, with Moltmann, a third subcategory 'New Political Theology'; this is the kind of political theology that Metz and Moltmann introduced, which sought to correct the fatal and dangerous flaws of Old Political Theology.[217] One such flaw, according to New Political Theology, was the compartmentalisation and privatisation of faith, rendering the nation-state unrestrained by any theological consciousness. As a historical reckoning, New Political Theology produced a variety of 'new forms of political theology', which is my label for the fourth subcategory. The new forms of political theology, Moltmann reckons, are concerned with such things as 'social

[214] See Moltmann, 'European Political Theology', 7-8.
[215] To proceed with the Cicero example: according to Lorraine Smith Pangle, Cicero's understanding of friendship — see especially *De Amicitia* — is 'thoroughly Aristotelian [in] spirit', *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 104.
[216] Strauss, 'Notes on *The Concept of the Political*', 103-104. See also Leo Strauss, 'Letter Two', in *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, ed. Heinrich Meier (The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 125.
[217] Moltmann, 'European Political Theology', 8-14.

justice, just peace, and the integrity of creation', and we might perhaps add to the list, especially upon entering into the twenty-first century: 'Marxist and anarchist currents, Black studies, feminist theory, queer theory, and decolonial theory'.[218] The new forms characteristically comprise a 'socialist' and 'radical democratic theology of human rights and the rights of nature'.[219]

It is important to note that even though the new forms of political theology can be said to be characteristically morally progressive and leftist, we also see more or less morally conservative and rightist forms of new political theology, with Anabaptist, Anglican, and Reformed variations. Perhaps in reaction to morally progressive and leftist forms of new political theology, there has also emerged neo-old forms of political theology, such as a revived Protestant and specifically Evangelical loyalty to conservative and authoritarian leaders, resurgent Catholic interest in integralism, and a reinforced Orthodox bent towards nationalism.

In sum, the Moltmannian taxonomy leaves us with two principal categories of political theology — old and new — with various subcategories. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to the subcategories of the old (*i.e.* old forms of political theology; Old Political Theology; neo-old forms of political theology) jointly as 'old political theologies', and similarly the subcategories of the new (*i.e.* New Political Theology; new forms of political theology) as 'new political theologies'. Presently I shall centre specifically on Moltmann's presentation of New Political Theology and analyse it further, for it seems to capture a crucial moment in the history of political theology. It did not only challenge and replace Old Political Theology, the paradigmatic form of old political theologies in modernity, but served itself as a paradigm for the new political theologies.

[218] Ibid, 4; Luke Bretherton, Vincent W. Lloyd, Valentina Napolitano, 'Introduction: Trajectories in Political Theology', in *Political Theology?* (Columbia University Press, 2026), 5. See also Moltmann, 'European Political Theology', 14-17.
[219] Moltmann, 'European Political Theology', 13. For instance, Bretherton, Lloyd, and Napolitano align themselves with a 'more-left-than-liberal-politics', in 'Introduction: Trajectories in Political Theology', 9.

On Moltmann's account, New Political Theology was originally established by Metz and then immediately supported by Moltmann as a 'criticism of public affairs in the tradition of prophets'.[220] It was not a theology devoted to any specific political entity or community. Rather it was a 'theology of the world' — transforming political theology from a discipline in ethics or politics to a 'public consciousness of church and theology in modern times'.[221] As such, New Political Theology sought to resist the aforementioned compartmentalisation and privatisation of Christian faith by formulating the Christian message in the context of modern society.[222] The church, in New Political Theology, was to be a 'social-critical institution', and theology 'a liberating account of faith and hope'.[223]

This critical theological consciousness was awakened by Old Political Theology and the Leviathan it suckled. Moltmann mounted a forceful theological attack on this Leviathan: it is an entity whose will is itself law, for it is *per se* unbound even by natural law, and is thus, *ipso facto*, the 'lawless one' — that is, an Antichristic figure.[224] Moltmann contended, as Schmitt already had conceded,[225] that this understanding of the nation-state 'presupposes a negative anthropology in order to legitimate a positive theology of power, authority and sovereignty'.[226] The condition of sin, this predicament of chaos and confusion, requires the intervention of a Leviathan so as to save us from others and ourself.

In response, New Political Theology proposed a negative theology of power, authority, and sovereignty combined with a 'positive anthropology' that grounds such power, authority, and sovereignty in the 'covenant of free [and equal] people'.[227]

[220] Ibid, 3.
[221] Ibid, 9.
[222] Ibid. Moltmann, in contrast to MacIntyre, prefers 'church' to be uncapitalised. These preferences are presumably affiliated with theological assumptions and convictions. I therefore strive to adhere to the preferences of the author with whom I interact.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Moltmann, 'Covenant or Leviathan?', 29-32.
[225] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 58; 61; 65.
[226] Moltmann, 'Covenant or Leviathan?', 33.
[227] Ibid, 34.

Here is an attempt to hold together the 'creative dispositions' of humans in this world with an anticipation of the kingdom of God in the world to come, that is, redeemed creation.[228] Moltmann thus recognises both that community belongs 'to the essence and not just to the alienation of humankind', and that the nation-state is perverted by 'demonism' and 'sin'.[229] For Moltmann, New Political Theology 're-places' hierarchy in both church and nation-state: in the first case, with the 'base-communities' of 'the covenant of believers', characterised by freedom and equality, and in the second, with democracy and pluralism.[230] In a sense, therefore, Moltmann exchanges Schmitt's sovereign nation-state with sovereign individuals.

New Political Theology also shifts our focus away from the nation-state, and specifically variations of political religion and the power of the sovereign, to the church and Christian communities within the nation-state.[231] In other words, New Political Theology accepts the *liberal* nation-state as a legitimate political entity or community that serves the purpose of restraining sin — so as to bolster the freedom and equality of its citizens — while also stressing that precisely because of sin, the nation-state will be constantly entangled in injustice. On this understanding, there is profound conflict between communities engaged in politics and Christian communities.[232] Finally, according to Moltmann, New Political Theology seeks to 'to make theology aware' of political injustices and antagonisms — and especially 'the political causes and political effects' of theology itself — and to critique and '*judge* them in the light of the gospel'.[233] For the gospel reveals to us the kingdom of God, which both subverts and perfects the liberal nation-state, and in so doing stirs 'the

[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid, 34-35.
[231] Moltmann, 'European Political Theology', 9.
[232] See ibid, 10.
[233] Ibid, 18 (my emphasis). This kind of judging is the mode of influential new forms of political theology, *e.g.* Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgement* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), esp. Part III; Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), esp. chap. 10.

political consciousness' of theology.[234] That brings us to Moltmann's reconceptualisation of friendship, which seems to attempt this very thing.

2.2 Moltmann and the opening up of closed friendship

Moltmann says that Jesus should not only be thought of in terms of the three divine offices — Prophet, Priest, and King — but also, and fundamentally, as Friend.[235] In and by Christ, we are made friends of God: Christ opens or liberates that which Moltmann takes to be closed in classical and specifically Aristotelian friendship.[236] To examine this renewed understanding of friendship, I shall focus on Moltmann's essay 'Open Friendship'.[237] In it, Moltmann wants to demonstrate a conflict between Aristotelian and Christian concepts of friendship, between *philia* and *agape*.[238] According to Moltmann, *agape* is an open friendship characterised by

[234] Jürgen Moltmann, *Politische Theologie, Politische Ethik* (Kaiser, 1984), 39 (cited in Paeth, 'Jürgen Moltmann and the New Political Theology', 211).
[235] Jürgen Moltmann, 'Open Friendship: Aristotelian and Christian Concepts', in *The Changing Face of Friendship*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner (University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 32-34. The essay has been republished on a number of occasions: Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margareth Kohl (SCM Press, 1978), 51-64 (alternative title: *The Passion for Life: A Messianic Lifestyle*).
[236] Moltmann, 'Open Friendship', 40-41. Open friendship can be taken to be the relational constitution of Moltmann's 'exodus church', the aforementioned covenant of free and equal believers in modernity, which critiques and judges modern politics from the eschatological perspective of God's kingdom. The exodus church is liberated from the world, yet missionally sent to it, and must therefore remain amidst it, although constantly on the move in changing socio-political environments. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (Fortress Press, 1993), chap. 5, see esp. 320. The critique is an eschatological 'political hermeneutic', involving the practice of liberation: Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (Fortress Press, 1984), see esp. 106-107. For Moltmann, open friendship is not only the relational constitution, but also the task and end of the church: Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit:*, 314-317.
[237] Moltmann, 'Open Friendship', 29-42.
[238] Anders Nygren's landmark study *Agape and Eros*, from 1930, is presumably an important theological backdrop here. Like *eros*, Nygren regards friendship or *philia* as antithetical to *agape*. But unlike *eros*, Nygren does not offer friendship much thought, for as Nygren says, there is sheer 'hopelessness' in trying to express the meaning of *agape* by 'the alien idea' of *philia*. That is because the normative force of friendship is reciprocity and self-love. But God is eternally sovereign to humans and if we were to approach our relation to God in terms of friendship, then we would shape God in our own image, rather than being shaped in God's image. Yet there are important traditions — from classical philosophy, both Greek (Aristotle) and Roman (Cicero), and theology (Augustine), to mediaeval scholasticism (Aquinas) and monasticism (Aelred) — that have approached the God-human relation precisely in terms of *philia*. Nygren connects such approaches to paganism and heresy, and,

respect, affection, and faithfulness. It is opposed to any notion of 'function', and specifically the reciprocity that closes, so to say, *philia*, making it exclusive among certain chosen people.[239] Moltmann even claims that *agape* is opposed to obligation: a genuine friend 'demands nothing' from us.[240] In fact, there is 'no ideal image' of friendship.[241] Furthermore, in light of the gospels, Moltmann tells us, we see that *agape* rather than *philia* represents genuine friendship.

There is certainly an important problem with the 'closedness' of Aristotelian friendship; as Moltmann observes, it appears to produce elitist cliques. But open friendship does not provide us with an adequate solution. Firstly, there must surely be *some* function that pertains to the friend *qua* friend? Otherwise friendship, in attempting to include everyone, ends up with no-one. Secondly, and similarly, the friend must be bound by *some* kind of obligation in order to remain, in an intelligible sense, 'friend' as distinct from non-friend? Thirdly, granted that Moltmann identifies God as Friend, and humans as an image of God, there must be *some* ideal image of the friend? Moltmann does admit that friendship involves a 'promise to walk with each other and to be there for each other', which indicates both function and obligation.[242] And since reciprocity, for Moltmann, is the '*opposite* picture of friendship', there also seems to be some kind of ideal image of friendship.[243] Presumably, that ideal image is found in Jesus Christ, the Friend. Moltmann therefore opens a relational space in which there are no obligations, no ideals, except for the obligation to model the relational ideal of Jesus Christ.

This, of course, renders Moltmann's open friendship an internally inconsistent concept. To understand better whether these inconsistencies are rhetorical issues on the

specifically, the notion of 'friendship with God' to the 'the fundamental perversion in the Catholic doctrine of love' — accusations which Schmitt seemed to validate perfectly. See Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (SPCK, 1953), 645; 362; 714-715; 31.

[239] Moltmann, 'Open Friendship', 30.

[240] Ibid, 29. See also 31.

[241] Ibid, 30.

[242] Ibid, 31.

[243] Ibid (my emphasis).

surface or whether they reach to the core of Moltmann's open friendship, I will examine the two scriptural passages by which Moltmann opens up classical or Aristotelian friendship. The first passage is found in Luke 5, where the Pharisees charge Jesus guilty by association. Jesus, we are told, is the friend of 'tax collectors and sinners'.[244] Jesus is indeed guilty as charged: 'I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance'.[245] Moltmann explains that Jesus demonstrates 'acceptance' of the tax collectors and sinners and thus 'sets their oppressed humanity free'.[246] In liberating them, it is the tax collectors and sinners — not the Pharisees — who will find themselves at the 'marriage feast' of the Lamb.[247]

Moltmann's appeal to the 'marriage feast' demands our attention. We find the parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22, paralleled by the Great Banquet in Luke 14. In both parables, we learn that many are invited, but most either decline or defer responding. It is 'the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame', the tax collectors and sinners, that accept the invitation.[248] When it comes to the dynamics by which people find themselves at the marriage feast, there is, therefore, quite evidently an element of reciprocity involved. Jesus accepts the guests by inviting them, and the guests accept Jesus by responding to the invitation and coming to the feast. Moltmann's nonchalant rejection of reciprocity therefore prevents inquiry into the nature and purpose of this kind of reciprocity, and its significance for friendship with Jesus Christ.[249]

That leads to the second passage, in John 15, where Jesus rather strikingly names his disciples 'my friends'.[250] This passage presents us with Moltmann's scriptural

[244] Luke 5:27.
[245] Luke 5:32.
[246] Moltmann, 'Open Friendship', 31.
[247] Ibid, 31. See Revelations 16:6-9.
[248] Luke14:21.
[249] See John Milbank's landmark study on theology and gift, in which it is demonstrated that if we do away with reciprocity, the gift itself loses the context in which it is intelligible *as* gift, in 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics', *Modern Theology* 11 (1995): 119-161.
[250] John 15:14.

basis for claiming that friendship should be fundamental to our understanding of Jesus and thus God. Moltmann distinguishes between two senses by which the disciples can be said to be friends with God.[251] One is a narrow, exclusive sense. Abraham and Moses were both called 'friend' of God by virtue of being unique figures in the history of salvation; they were allowed to face God.[252] Then there is the other sense, which is broad and inclusive: in and by Christ, each and every Christian is equally freed to enter into friendship with God.[253] After the Christ event, it is the latter rather than the former that captures the meaning of 'friendship' with God. Put differently, friendship with God was in some sense closed in the old covenant, but it has been opened up in the new covenant.

There are, however, problems with Moltmann's exegesis. In John 15, Jesus' proclamation of friendship is not unconditional. Jesus immediately adds the condition that friendship is only possible 'if you do what I command you'.[254] Moltmann briefly notes this and takes it to emphasise the importance of loving others: Jesus commands us to 'love one another as I have loved you'.[255] Certainly, but it is a love that demands something. In fact, it demands everything from us, even our very self. For if Jesus is the Friend, then the Trinity is Friendship. And that Friendship overflows with Friendship, into the dripping wounds of Christ: the enemies of God are invited to drink of this blood, so that they can enter into the Friendship. 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'.[256] Thus, unsurprisingly, in the description of the apocalyptical marriage feast in the Book of Revelations, towards which the aforementioned parables point, the presence of the martyrs is a defining feature.

Although there is something unconditional about the love in John 15, in that everyone is invited into it, the friendship wherein we can participate in such love remains

[251] Moltmann, 'Open Friendship', 37.
[252] Isaiah 41:8; Exodus 33:11.
[253] *E.g.* 1 Corinthians 13:12.
[254] John 15:14.
[255] John 15:12.
[256] John 15:13.

in an important sense conditional: to be friends with Christ, we must accept Christ's gift of self — and accepting that gift just is to give ourselves reciprocally to Christ. The divine friendship is therefore open-yet-closed. This closedness manifests itself in two different ways. On the one hand, it demarks the boundary of friendship, distinguishing friend from stranger, and indeed enemy. The stranger is invited into divine friendship, but in refusing that invitation, the stranger declares their enmity towards God. Similarly, if the 'friend' does not abide in Jesus Christ, like a branch on the vine, and carry its fruits, the 'friend' cannot be a genuine (or true or real) friend and will be cut off and thrown unto the fire.[257] There is, on the other hand, also a permeable notion of closedness *within* friendship communities. For instance, the twelve are invited into a special kind of friendship with Jesus, among whom Peter, James, and John, 'the disciple Jesus loved', constitutes a circle within the inner circle.[258] Human nature requires this kind of differentiation and limitation even among friends.

Moltmann's dichotomous distinction between the narrow, exclusive sense of friendship, and that which is broad, and inclusive — that is, between closed and open friendship — is therefore resisted by the very scriptural passages that Moltmann appeals to. All the faithful will banquet with Abraham and Moses at God's table. But that is not because the Son's closed friendship with the Father has been opened, but because humanity, in and by the Son's gift of self, has been invited into it.[259] Whether the friendship will be open or closed *for us* depends on our response to that invitation. On this understanding, *agape* constitutes a relational precondition for, an invitation into, divine *philia*. Notably, this understanding can be found in Aquinas. The end of *caritas* — which here should be taken to be the kind of *agape*

[257] John 15:1-6.
[258] John 13:23. Notably, the open-yet-closed friendship is also propagated in the Early Church's liturgical practices: all were invited to partake in the Eucharist, but actual access was strictly restricted to the baptised. Indeed, the baptised were urged not even to repeat fragments of the liturgy to the unbaptised; a tendency to reticence that scholars have called the 'discipline of the secret'. See 'disciplina arcani', *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Andrew Louth (Oxford University Press, 2022).
[259] Matthew 8:11.

that humans can exercise by grace — is participation in the divine persons' sharing of self, and such sharing is the very basis of divine friendship.[260] Thus, for Aquinas, *philia* is, conceptually speaking, 'necessary' for *caritas*.[261] Or to connect to Chapter 1: opening friendship to grace does not entail the eradication of friendship *qua* friendship.

Moltmann's attempt to demonstrate an irredeemable conflict between classical and Christian concepts of friendship, between *philia* and *agape*, is therefore unsuccessful. Moltmann is not able to demonstrate that *agape* should or even can replace *philia* in human affairs. How can an open friendship, without reciprocity and obligations and ideals, remain a genuine *friendship*? This 'friendship' seems inherently incapable of binding people together in community, and thus to offer the relational properties that Moltmann regards as characteristic of open friendship: respect, affection, and faithfulness. If so, then in what sense can such friendship really stir a *political* consciousness of theology, or be the basis of Christian communities?

If anything, Moltmann's open friendship appears to dissolve community, be it political or Christian, which in turn undermines his understanding of human nature as essentially communal.[262] Moltmann even seems to infer that because Christians are called to love their enemies, Christian friendship must *include* enemies. We sense here a Derridean deconstruction of friendship, by which the enemy turns out to be the only genuine friend.[263] For the enemy is the 'friend' with whom we can be entirely free and equal, on a liberal interpretation of these terms, it is the 'friend' with whom we need not share community. But as we have seen, Moltmann's inference fails to appreciate that Christians are called to love their enemies in order to convert

[260] *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 2. See also Jonathan Kanary, 'Transforming Friendship: Thomas Aquinas on Charity as Friendship with God', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (2020): esp. 370-388.
[261] *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1.
[262] Moltmann, 'Covenant or Leviathan?', 34.
[263] Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (Verso, 2005), esp. chaps. 2-3. See also Catherine Pickstock, 'The role of affinity and asymmetry in Plato's *Lysis*', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 81, no. 1 (2020): 10-11; Sandra Lynch, 'Aristotle and Derrida on Friendship', *Contretemps* 3 (2002): 103.

them, to bring them into the community of divine friendship. And such friendship, according to Jesus Christ, involves reciprocity, obligations, and ideals — the very things that Moltmann rejects. In rejecting these relational properties, Moltmann can also be said to reject genuine freedom and equality.

We are now in a position to summarise the ways in which friendship changed in the turn from Old to New Political Theology. For Old Political Theology, enmity is taken to be the fundamental political reality. Moltmann's New Political Theology seeks to cut friendship loose from the friend-enemy distinction and strip it of its classical and Aristotelian features — in particular reciprocity, obligations, and idealism — turning it into *agape*. According to Moltmann, these relational properties close off the possibility of true or real friendship, producing an us-versus-them dynamic based on particularity and exclusivity. The corresponding fatal flaw in Moltmann's account of open friendship is that it is unable to account for friendship as a relation of sharing, commitment, and purpose. Without this kind of relation, there can be neither political nor Christian community. Thus, whereas Schmitt reduces friendship to enmity, Moltmann dissolves friendship *qua* friendship. I shall therefore turn to de Graaff's *Politics in Friendship*.[264]

[264] Notably, like Moltmann, de Graaff is situated in a Reformed theological tradition. In a different study, it would be interesting to consider this situatedness in greater detail, for instance by examining Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, and especially Barth's distinction between the commandments to love God and neighbour. For Barth, loving our neighbour is a divine *commandment* which therefore represents something unnatural for postlapsarian humans. Loving our neighbour is a benefactory 'event' rather than relation, and the true gift of our neighbour is to reveal to us that we are sinners and can only be redeemed by God, not to *e.g.* offer the possibility for community. This contrasts interestingly with important tendencies and perspectives in Catholic theology, historic (see footnote 239, § 2.2) as well as contemporary (*e.g.* Pope Benedict XVI's *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate*; Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti*). Thomas Heilke has for instance made the case that Martin Luther instrumentalised friendship among humans, and that John Calvin subordinated it to law and duty, which seems to undermine the theological significance of friendship, and specifically civic friendship. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, *Vol. I., Part 2, The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. T. F. Torrance, (T&T Clark International, 2004), 409ff, 414-416, 420-421, 430; Thomas Heilke, 'Friendship in the Civic Order: A Reformation Absence', in *Friendship and Politics: Essays in Political Thought*, ed. Richard Avramenko and John von Heyking (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 163-193.

2.3 De Graaff and friendship as para-political

Guido de Graaff wants to understand the politics 'of and in' friendship, and specifically Christian friendship, as well as the political significances of such friendship.[265] Like Moltmann, de Graaff says that a theological appreciation of these matters must be grounded in the constitutive relationship of the church, namely Jesus' gift of friendship to the disciples in John 15. This friendship is sacrificial; Jesus offers up his body for us, and we become his friends by submitting to this body and serving as its limbs.[266] Unlike Moltmann, however, for de Graaff *agape* does not replace *philia*. There is rather reconciliation of *philia* with *agape*; reciprocity and obligation with freedom; intimacy and particularity with universality; and, presumably, hierarchy with equality.[267] The Augustinian idea is that such reconciliation makes possible not only genuine friendship between humans and God, but among humans as well.[268]

Christian friendship also makes it possible to conceive of a divine kind of judgement, de Graaff reckons, which is made manifest in the practice of for instance forgiveness and hospitality. This judgement is not enforced on members externally, but operates internal to the body of Christ, and thus among its members. The church can therefore 'enter a realm beyond the strictures and limitations of secular judgement' wherein it can begin 'to fulfil, through these practices, the very righteousness that secular judgement is ultimately (if perhaps unwittingly) aiming for'.[269] Such partial fulfilment is eschatological: the church is governed by the 'rule of Christ' which should only 'function alongside, in support of, or even as the beginning of

[265] De Graaff, *Politics in Friendship*, 2.
[266] Ibid, 153-164. The disciples, de Graaff notes, hopes that friendship with Jesus Christ will make them great and bestow upon them power; Jesus comments that it 'will not be so among you', for according to Christ's logic of submission, the great exercise power by serving (see Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45). See also ibid, 164-172.
[267] See also Meilaender, *Friendship*, 36-67, esp. 65.
[268] See Augus. *ep.* 258. I return to this idea in Chapter 5.
[269] De Graaff, *Politics in Friendship*, 151-152. De Graaff reckons that such judgement is found in mutual dependence and empowerment, both of which are aspects of friendship. See ibid, sections I and II.

political dynamics and processes'.[270] By acting as a trailblazer, the church is called 'to point towards and anticipate what society (including the life of friendship) will one day be', and model how it will function.[271] Thus, for de Graaff, friendship in the church is not political, but para-political.[272]

It is worth lingering on this distinction between the political and the para-political. De Graaff proposes an Arendtian tripartite differentiation, by which the private and private-public, or social, can be clearly and robustly distinguished from that which is public in a political sense. As a para-political concept, friendship is located in the overlapping spheres of the private and public; but it cannot enter the political sphere.[273] Para-political friendship nevertheless has potential for political significance insofar as the friends share a conception of the good of society as a whole, including the political sphere, and to the extent that they care for one another's good as citizens of that society.[274] This potential is only fully actualised in the 'superabundant' friendship of Christ, offered to us in the church.[275] If friendships are transformed in and by Christ, then Christian friendships can draw 'human political acts and practices into a sphere where they can participate in God's redemptive action in fallen creation'.[276]

As indicated, de Graaff's para-political friendship can be regarded as a refined variant of Moltmann's open friendship. We sense that, whereas Moltmann wants to awaken the political consciousness of theology, de Graaff also wants to awaken the theological consciousness of politics. Still, de Graaff is adamant that friendship is the centre of *theology*, not politics. In other words, friendship pertains to the reli-

[270] Ibid, 203, 201.
[271] Ibid. Here, de Graaff uses O'Donovan's idea that the church's calling is to reveal 'the final form of human society', *Ways of Judgement*, 240.
[272] This concept aligns with O'Donovan's notion of the 'counter-political', *Ways of Judgement*, 292.
[273] De Graaff, *Politics in Friendship*, 29.
[274] Ibid, 32.
[275] Ibid, 203.
[276] Ibid.

gious and ethical life of Christian communities *qua* eschatological, and not to political communities *qua* temporal. This strict separation reinforces the Moltmannian wedge between Aristotle and Augustine — which, in fact, mirrors MacIntyre's distinction between political philosophy and theology. I shall critically examine de Graaff's dichotomy. This will be an analytically focused exercise; I point out wider implications for political theology in § 2.5.

De Graaff defines friendship as 'a relationship based on mutual affection that involves two or more people'.[277] It appears that this is a reformulation of Aristotle's definition of friendship as found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, possibly alluding to Matthew 18:20.[278] However, without further explanation, de Graaff exchanges Aristotle's mutual 'goodwill' with mutual 'affection'. These terms are related, to be sure, but their meanings are not the same: goodwill is necessarily ordered to the good, whereas affection (if not further specified) is not. In the passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where friendship is defined as mutual goodwill, Aristotle promptly goes on to define goodwill as 'wishing each other's good'.

One might regard de Graaff's substitution of 'goodwill' with 'affection' simply as the result of hasty exegesis or a careless elision. The reformulation is, after all, presented in de Graaff's introduction as a provisional and loose definition. Indeed, he goes on to describe para-political friendship as something that involves common judgement materialising in common acts and practices, which, in turn, are entangled with common goods.[279] Those caveats notwithstanding, de Graaff's reformulation effectively obscures the connection between friendship and common goods. For Aristotle, the shared recognition and pursuit of goods, by which these goods are made common, is essential to and constitutive of friendship. As we shall come see, a great deal hinges on this connection between friendship and common goods. Indeed, de Graaff's exchange of 'goodwill' and 'affection' mimics a historical shift,

[277] Ibid, 13.
[278] *NE* 1156ª4-5.
[279] See de Graaff, *Politics in Friendship*, 32,

as we saw criticised by MacIntyre in § 1.1, from a classical and Aristotelian conceptualisation of friendship, by which friendship is also rational and political, to a modern conceptualisation, where these aspects have been eliminated. Friendship is now widely seen as a particular, affectionate, and private-*cum*-public relation.

A similar shift is evident in de Graaff's understanding of politics, which he defines as the 'process involved in the task of government, and, by derivation, those processes that contribute to that task'.[280] In other words, for de Graaff politics is a specific set of actions within temporal society, uniquely devoted to the provision of justice, prosecuted typically via the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Given that de Graaff identifies 'politics' with the centralised apparatus of law, authority, and administration, the agency which enact that apparatus is presumably the nation-state. This limitation of the political sphere suggests that while humans may well be social by nature, we are not *political* by nature. In effect, this limitation legitimatises setting aside the political realm as a reserve of an elite.[281]

Furthermore, de Graaff seems to assume that justice is reducible to that which Aristotle characterises as partial justice. Such partial justice concerns institutionalised distribution of burdens and benefits. If we add to this a catalogue of basic rights, then we have the standard understanding of justice in modernity and specifically liberalism — namely justice as fairness. However, as the label suggests, for Aristotle partial justice is only *part* of justice. Complete justice concerns the entire character of the citizens, the fullness of virtue, which seems to culminate in friendship.[282] Fairness can therefore only be just insofar as it contributes to virtue and friendship. If fairness, as a part of complete justice, is detached and treated as if it

[280] Ibid, 17.
[281] Yet citizens should, according to de Graaff, act politically without becoming politicians, for instance by conforming to the legal codes via day-to-day law-abiding behaviour.
[282] Similarly, Daniel Schwartz observes that for Aquinas, justice is 'the means through which we can restore a friendship that has been damaged by the perpetration of wrongful acts'. See Daniel Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship* (Clarendon Press, 2007), 164. See also ibid, 123-140.

were the whole of justice, it runs the risk of distortion and devolution in slow and strange ways, possibly, over time, undermining the whole from which it derives.[283]

Since Aristotle serves as de Graaff's entry into friendship in politics, or politics in friendship, and given that Aristotle makes a profound connection between justice, virtue, and friendship,[284] we would expect some kind of discussion of the reasons for restricting justice to partial justice.[285] De Graaff says that the classical 'idealism' — that is, presumably, virtue culminating in friendship — poses a danger to our understanding of the significance of the relationship between friendship and politics, which as we have seen is construed in terms of the para-political.[286] But that fear is only reasonable if one grants two presuppositions. Firstly, that justice is already only ever partial, that there *can* be genuine justice without virtue and friendship, and that virtue and friendship should be taken to be para-political rather than political. Secondly, that friendship 'has a more restricted locality compared to politics; friendship is where friends are, whereas politics pervades [temporal] society'.[287]

The first presupposition is tantamount to assuming the conclusion de Graaff argues for. The second however challenges de Graaff's assumption that the private-public spheres can be clearly and robustly distinguished from the political sphere. If politics pervades the private and public spheres, then it seems that friendship cannot be kept out of politics. De Graaff might concede this second criticism, and retort that that the important point is that the locality of politics is *different* from that of friendship. But this difference is simply asserted, which again would be tantamount to assuming the conclusion that friendship is not political.

[283] A biblical example might perhaps be found in Jesus' cleansing of the temple: the laws and regulations, which originate in God's commandments, did not serve their purpose of divine redemption, of communicating reconciliation and forgiveness to the people, *i.e.* friendship — they had collapsed to a transactional system of moneymaking by which people and foreigners alike were exploited (see John 2:13-17).
[284] *NE* 1157ª27-29.
[285] *Cf.* MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 155.
[286] De Graaff, *Politics in Friendship*, 17-19; 23.
[287] Ibid, 18.

This circularity rests on a further presupposition, closely connected to the second, and already pointed out, concerning the nature of friendship. On de Graaff's account, it is futile to construe civic relations in terms of a political type of friendship because such an application of 'friendship' would not correspond to friendship in the 'ordinary sense'.[288] It is 'from the perspective of friendship simpliciter', friendship in this 'ordinary sense', that we can analyse 'the specific dynamics, acts, and practices on account of which friendship might be said to involve politics'.[289] We should therefore inquire: whose is that 'ordinary sense' of friendship? And *which* ordinary sense, precisely?

Presumably, de Graaff has in mind the modern conception of friendship as a particular, affectionate, and private-*cum*-public relation. If friendship is per definition restricted to the particular, affectionate, and private-*cum*-public, *pace* Aristotle and the Aristotelians, then certainly friendship is not appropriate to represent the political relation, this bond that binds humans together in political community. But de Graaff fails to consider whether this ordinary sense of friendship represents a good conception of friendship. In short, he fails to engage in the Aristotelian exercise of considering phenomena as they appear to us compared to their actual nature.

All philosophical inquiries must start from somewhere. But de Graaff's point of departure is problematic in that it rushes through consequential junctures, setting the inquiry off into a direction where the political order of modernity, the liberal nation-state, remains essentially unchallenged. Friendship, for de Graaff, is simply assumed to be a corrective to modern politics. As such, it is incapable of offering the basis of an alternative political community with an alternative politics. This approach is justified in Moltmannian fashion, that is, by critiquing an Aristotelian caricature, and simply taking for granted that the Augustinian tradition is inimical to that of Aristotle, and specifically Aquinas: 'whereas the Thomistic tradition sees

[288] Ibid, 20.
[289] Ibid, 20. See also ibid, 21.

a continuum between the desires, goals and governing principles of the earthly and heavenly communities respectively, the Augustinian tradition sees a discontinuity and even conflict'.[290] This approach crystalises in de Graaff's engagement with Gilbert Meilaender, to whose work we now turn.

2.4 Meilaender and the idolatry of civic friendship

In his book *Friendship*, Meilaender presents three criticisms against the ideal of civic friendship.[291] First, it is impractical and unrealisable, and thus irrelevant, especially if the ideal is Aristotelian and located in a 'participatory-communal' political community.[292] Historically speaking, these political communities were unstable arrangements, and the conditions which would have achieved their ideal form, and thus perhaps stability, are exceptionally rare. Moreover, the Aristotelian ideal is fundamentally at odds with the political order in which we currently find ourselves, based as it is on individuality rather than community. Meilaender thus assumes that the political order of modernity, namely liberalism, is not only justified, but also self-evidently superior to participatory-communal political communities.

Second, for Meilaender, the ideal of civic friendship is something 'incoherent'.[293] The ideal conflates two spheres that ought to be kept apart: on the one hand, associations of love in which people share individual interests, and on the other, the political community that serves the common good. Whereas friendship occurs in and is appropriate to associations of love and affection, the political community exists to provide justice *qua* proper adjudication between the various and often conflicting interests of individual citizens, including friends, from a strictly impersonal and disinterested perspective. In other words, friendship is a bond that is imbued by

[290] Ibid, 24. *Cf.* Bretherton, 'What is Political Theology? What is Politics?', 25-26.
[291] Meilaender, *Friendship*, 75. *Nota bene*: Meilaender presents four criticisms. I collapse the first two, *i.e.*, the instability of the historic Greek city-states and the difficulty of achieving its ideal form.
[292] Ibid, 70.
[293] Ibid, 74.

special interest, by exclusivity and particularity, and is thus contrary to justice. The ideal of 'civic friendship' amounts to a category mistake in that it involves the projection of a private relationship onto the political. Friendship must therefore be kept out of the political sphere; if it is, then justice will advance friendship, for it provides a befitting relational ground upon which friendships can be built.

Third, the ideal is 'essentially pagan', manifesting 'inordinate and idolatrous love'.[294] By contrast, Christian friendship — though partial and interested at present — foreshadows a greater future society: the universal society of perfect love which God is realising, and in which friendship and justice will forever be reconciled.[295] But the penultimate political community cannot realise this ultimate form of human society. To strive for civic friendship is therefore to overreach, it is to grasp for an eschatological society of perfect and universal love prematurely. This third criticism carries the real force of Meilaender's challenge against the ideal of civic friendship.

De Graaff does not simply repeat this threefold challenge but hones it by way of criticism. According to de Graaff, Meilaender's challenge is based on a night-watchman conception of the political community that, in its reductive minimalism, generates an excessively rigid separation of friendship from politics. That is, temporal society, as depicted by Meilaender, is a dualist system in which there is the private (to which friendship belongs) and the political (where justice reigns). De Graaff, as we have seen, proposes that this system be intermediated by 'the public'. Whereas friendship belongs to the private, and justice to the political, they intermix in the public. Put differently, the common good does not only consist in justice as an instrumental good, which Meilaender suggests, but in the totality of substantial goods pursued and enjoyed in temporal society at large, which may or may not be

[294] Ibid, 75.
[295] Ibid, 77.

promoted politically.[296] In this system, friendship can come to interact with the political, and *vice versa*, in and by the public.[297]

De Graaff maintains that this tripartite system is very much compatible with the typical insistence found in political Augustinianisms, emphasised also by Meilaender, that the political community is a temporary, albeit still divine, provision necessitated by sin.[298] But de Graaff, *pace* Meilaender, is also careful to stress that this does not prevent the political community from having the aforementioned substantive rather than merely a procedural conception of the common good (by which the common good is reduced to something like Rawlsian fairness). Otherwise the political community would be unable to recognise the common good in a broader and thicker sense, which is a prerequisite for protecting and possibly promoting it.[299]

This takes away some of the force of Meilaender's first and second challenges, the charges of irrelevance and incoherence. However, it also introduces further problems for de Graaff's account. Importantly, the content and scope of de Graaff's substantive common goods remain vague. He simply assumes that the liberal nation-state has the competence and authority to protect and promote such common goods. In §§ 1.1 and 1.2, we observed that MacIntyre adamantly rejects this assumption: the liberal nation-state can only offer us individual and public goods, not common goods — a failure which connects to its failure in creating and sustaining civic friendship. For on MacIntyre's understanding, commons goods are goods that are achieved in and by a common recognition and pursuit of goods, which is friendship *per se*.

[296] De Graaff, *Politics in Friendship*, 28.
[297] Ibid, 30.
[298] Ibid, 29.
[299] However, this must be a matter of 'defending' rather than 'devising' the common good. See ibid. See also O'Donovan, *Ways of Judgement*, 57ff, esp. 61-62.

Indeed, we are now in a better position to see that this Aristotelian understanding of friendship appears to be a relational condition for achieving genuinely common goods. If friendship, for de Graaff, *is* concerned with common goods (on the view that his exchange of 'goodwill' with 'affection' in Aristotle's definition, noted above, was in fact only an exegetical slippage), and the political community *should* be concerned with common goods, then that seems to imply that civic friendship — understood along the lines of the Aristotelians, and especially MacIntyre — is not only desirable but even necessary. We also see that de Graaff's criticism of Meilaender's night-watchman state undermines his own wedge between friendship and politics. That brings us to the third criticism, the idolatry charge, which de Graaff develops in reference to Aristotle.

De Graaff and Meilaender reckon that for Aristotelians the city-state is the highest and finest form of human community; it is complete and self-sufficient. The city-state thus directly rivals Augustine's Heavenly City. Instead of viewing existing patterns of political life against the horizon of a better world to come, Aristotle makes ultimate the penultimate political community of this present world.[300] But, according to de Graaff, Aristotle's city-state resembles a large cooperation run by a racist, sexist elite. Consider only the structure of oppression and exploitation upon which Aristotle's city-state is built — a life of philosophical leisure is impossible, for instance, without the institution of slavery. In Aristotle, therefore, de Graaff can point to a manifest example of Meilaender's worst fears: the distortive effect of friendship on justice, to the point that justice serves to sanction, from a Christian point of view, 'grave examples of injustice'.[301] De Graaff reckons that 'within a general political dynamic that is already exclusivist and oppressive, surely this Aristotelian ideal of virtuous friendship enforces that dynamic?'[302]

[300] De Graaff, *Politics in Friendship*, 33.
[301] Ibid, 34.
[302] Ibid.

The question is rhetorical, but it is not at all obvious that the Aristotelian ideal of civic friendship is unable to provide the necessary corrective function: we have only been presented with a caricature of Aristotle, and thus we cannot know.[303] In fact, MacIntyre has given us good reasons to think otherwise. The problem with Aristotle's political theory seems not to be the idea that citizens should share a common recognition and pursuit of the good, but that 'citizens' is defined too narrowly and the good, in certain important respects, not correctly recognised and well-pursued. Put differently, the problem is not civic friendship, but rather the lack thereof. We should therefore be sceptical about de Graaff's proposal to pay heed to 'Meilaender's warning about civic friendship'.[304]

Moreover, it is not at all evident that Aristotle's ethical and political theory necessitates structures of oppression and exploitation, even though such structures certainly were taken for granted by Aristotle.[305] Furthermore, if it does, then it is not necessarily the case that it is impossible to redeem Aristotle's concept of civic friendship from such structures. Conversely, de Graaff fails to properly consider that for Augustine, politics in the *saeculum* can be taken to be genuine participation in and an inauguration of the Heavenly City, such that there is sense in which we really can partake in the Heavenly City here and now. And if so, might the aforementioned irreconcilable opposition between Aristotle's city-state and participation in Augustine's Heavenly City in the *saeculum* be overcome? Although there certainly are important differences between Aristotle and Augustine, the uncrossable chasm between them appears more than anything to be a postulate, at least from the Thomist perspective.

Both de Graaff and Meilaender seem to assume that personal and civic friendships are identical concepts: the latter is not compatible with justice because its features

[303] De Graaff does present a somewhat more nuanced exegesis of Aristotle later on in the book, but then it is already too late: the terms have been defined, the bounds set, and the approach taken. See ibid, chap. 3.I.
[304] Ibid, 36.
[305] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 159. See also MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 85ff.

are essentially like the former. But according to MacIntyre, these friendships are not identical. In § 1.2, we saw that for MacIntyre, genuine friendship consists in a common recognition and pursuit of goods, and that civic friendship is a recognition and pursuit concerning specifically *political* goods. Furthermore, de Graaff and especially Meilaender do not seem to appreciate that an ideal is an *ideal*, which by its very nature is something that is not easy or perhaps possible to realise fully between Eden and eschaton. Surely, we should not throw out the *imago Dei* if we found it to be impractical or even, in the *saeculum*, unrealisable? The charge of idolatry can also be turned against de Graaff and Meilaender. Is not the very aspiration to be just, which for the Christian is realised in divine justice, idolatrous in the same manner that civic friendship is said to be idolatrous? According to the logic of Meilaender and de Graaff, all ideals which find their fulfilment in Christ should be criticised as idolatrous when we attempt to realise them as best as we can. That would make the 'Christian ideal' a very peculiar class of ideals: a divinely revealed aim towards which we ought not strive. Surely that would challenge Augustine's counsel to 'imitate' Christ.[306]

To summarise, de Graaff's account represents an important improvement of Moltmann (and Meilaender), seemingly exhausting the possibilities for friendship in the new political theologies. Specifically, de Graaff proposes the reconciliation of *philia* with *agape*, such that friendship can come to serve as an eschatological corrective to modern politics. This makes us appreciate the sacrificial core of Christian *philia*, and that such Christian *philia* should be characteristic of Christian communities. But de Graaff's account is undermined by a number of problems. One set of problems concerns the presupposition that friendship is essentially non-political, effectively reducing justice to fairness, and another that politics is essentially concerned with restraining sin, such that the political community is rendered intrinsically temporal. These presuppositions amount to a *de facto* liberal political theory. Simultaneously, however, de Graaff attempts to couple this liberal political theory

[306] *Jo. ev. tr.* 25.16; *conf.* 7.

with substantial common goods. But we have reasons to believe that this coupling is not only difficult to achieve, but even impossible — for it requires a common recognition and pursuit of such goods, which just is the rejected Aristotelian understanding of civic friendship.[307]

2.5 From new political theologies to modern political Thomism

In examining the friendship accounts of Moltmann, de Graaff, and Meilaender, we have brought to the fore fundamental disagreements between Aristotelian and Augustinian modes of political theorisation. These disagreements can even be said to revolve around the relationship between the *saeculum* and the eschaton. According to Moltmann, de Graaff, and Meilaender, we must see political and Christian communities from the perspective of the eschaton. From that vantage, we recognise that it is only God that can fully inaugurate the genuine (or true or real) 'political community', namely the kingdom of God, the new Jerusalem, the Heavenly City. This perspective implies fixed and rigid constraints as to what the political community can be in the *saeculum*. In the old political theologies, there are no such constraints, or, at the very least, they are vastly laxer. Consequently, the old political theologies attempt to control or achieve that which is *per se* beyond the reach of political community: completion and self-sufficiency. For the new political theologies, this is tantamount to secularising or temporalising — or, in Voegelinian parlance, immanentising — the eschaton.

[307] It should also be noted, as Matthew Ryan Robinson does in 'Politics in Friendship: A Theological Account' (*Political Theology* 18, no. 2, 2017: 179), that de Graaff scarcely reflects on the possibility for para-political friendship in a situation where there is broad and deep, perhaps deepening, conflicts about the correct conception of the good life for humans (and thus substantial common goods). De Graaff simply assumes that there is sufficient agreement. There is a certain kind of blindness here, which is made evident in the case study de Graaff uses to explore the political significance of friendship: resistance against the Schmittian totalitarianism that produced the Holocaust. From our position in history, we look back at this period and see good and evil as manifest qualities and quantities, easily delineated from one another. Yet there is no such unanimous perspective on good and evil in our own society. Although we must continuously remember the Holocaust, it can also remove our analysis from the specific problems that needs resolving in our time — rendering us unable to adequately grapple with them.

Then again, ours is a penultimate time in-between the first and second coming of Christ the King. We have been bestowed revelations about ultimate political truths and realities. We must steward this revelatory deposit well; we cannot burry our treasures in the ground and hope that the King will be satisfied with us. And our crown jewel is the revelation that Christian communities can inaugurate, even in the *saeculum*, the kingdom of God. This inauguration both subverts political communities in the *saeculum*, and, with the fulfilment of the kingdom, completes them: the kingdom of God is alone self-sufficient.

However, according to the new political theologies, the kingdom of God is not *political*. Christian communities subvert and complete political communities by rendering politics redundant. It is against this eschatological horizon that we see the vanity of civic friendship for the new political theologies: it idealises a dimension of human sociability — the political — that only serves as a temporal remedy for sin.[308] Thus, according to the new political theologies, proponents of civic friendship eschatologises intrinsically temporal relations, which is to commit a category mistake. For them, the political community can only ever hope to restrain anti-friendship, so that para-political friendship can grow and blossom in Christian communities.

Although this criticism is insightful, the new political theologies also suffer, as we have seen, from serious conceptual problems. The basic problem is the postulation of a *de facto* liberal political theory where, on the one hand, justice is taken to be inimical to friendship, and on the other, politics is understood to be an intrinsically

[308] O'Donovan's *Ways of Judgement* is a case in point: the authority of political community 'resides essentially in the act of judgement'. According to O'Donovan, this is the only 'political function' the remains in the *saeculum*; all other political-like functions belong to the kingdom of God. But this kingdom is not really political, it is 'post-political', mirroring the 'pre-political' Eden. And political judgement is just a 'parentheses between the two, an interim service'. The church, in this schema, can assist the political community by promoting the goods that the political community protects, but it is intrinsically 'counter-political', it unsettles and critiques from beyond the political, that is, the eschaton. And since the political community is temporal, even this function will come to an end with the end of times. See O'Donovan, *Ways of Judgement*, 4; 238-240; 292; 319.

secular or temporal exercise. These presuppositions produce a fallacy of equivocation, and especially so from a MacIntyrean perspective. In the new political theologies, the 'political community' (in modernity) is equivocated with the 'the nation-state'. This, in turn, entraps the political imagination of the new political theologies within the strictures and limitations of the nation-state. According to the new political theologies, the nation-state, if liberal and restrained by the critical witness of Chrisian communities, securely chains the Leviathans of the old political theologies. But this very liberalism, and its coupling of nation-state and market, although hypotactically restrained by critical witness, is itself — to use a MacIntyrean description — 'a new, if often sickly, Leviathan'.[309] Put differently, conflating the political community with the nation-state renders the new political theologies insufficiently attentive to the fact that the nation-state is an amphisbaena, a two-headed serpent of modernity: an authoritarian head is roaring in front, and a liberal head hiding cunningly in the back.

How can this amphisbaena be resisted? MacIntyre suggests that resistance is only possible from the margins of the nation-state. The point, to reiterate, is not that the liberal nation-state is without any value.[310] The point, rather, is that the liberal nation-state is not legitimate *qua* political community, and thus that modern politics represents a distortion of politics. Voting every fourth year or so and having opinions about taxation policies and, say, transgender rights is not an adequate realisation of our political nature. Here it is important to stress that it does not follow from the fact that the nation-state is a counterfeit (or phantom or *ersatz*) political community, that it is impossible to create and sustain genuine political communities in the *saeculum*. Finally, if we assume that humans are political by nature — which the new political theologies might not accept, for reasons that are not entirely evident, if we disregard the assumption that politics is inherently secular or temporal — then the function of genuine political community cannot be essentially negative.

[309] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 124. See also MacIntyre, 'Toleration and the goods of conflict', 211.
[310] Ref. ibid, 125.

Sin necessitates the negative function. But granted that the postlapsarian predicament is secular or temporal, the essential function of genuine politics must be positive: achieving completeness and self-sufficiency in human relations.

On this understanding, the principal business of political theology concerns the positive function, and only derivatively the negative function: under different social and cultural structures, how can the positive function of politics be achieved granted a theological understanding of our nature (or identity) and history (or destiny) as humans? Answering that question would require political theologians to heed the ambiguities of the term 'politics' and to attempt to differentiate the counterfeit 'politics' that is displayed in the combative spectacle and managerialism of the liberal nation-state from genuine politics.[311] Critical and creative inquiries must go hand-in-hand: what is genuine politics? Where can it be found, and how do we exercise it? How can we actualise our political potential, and in what kind of communities? These questions can only be satisfactorily answered if we also engage in a philosophical anthropology, which in turn requires involvement with metaphysics and theology. Yet the new political theologies we have considered tend to distance us from such modes of thinking and living. They do so by emphasising the aforementioned 'discontinuity and even conflict' between the desires, goals, and principles

[311] Bretherton's distinctions between different approaches to 'politics' in political theology is a resource for reflecting on such ambiguities, but it also displays the inadequacies of contemporary political theology. For Bretherton, like de Graaff, claims that the nation-state is 'a providential necessity for restraining evil and sustaining forms of common life' amidst 'competing visions of the good'. But how is such common life possible? What does this common life consist in, if there is disagreement about the good? An interesting example is Bretherton's refusal to divide people in 'goodies' and 'baddies' (for otherwise, presumably, a common life despite competing visions of the good will not be possible). Yet Bretherton also labels specific opponents — people as it were more-*right*-than-liberal — as 'clearly on an antidemocratic path' (without providing any precise references to support this kind of claim), that is, on a path away from the common life as defined presumably in terms of Bretherton's conception of the good. As was the case with de Graaff, it seems that the 'common good' here serves as that which MacIntyre called a 'ghost' of older normative conceptions, *i.e.* fragments of older normative conceptions that reappear in one shape or another in modern ethical and political theories, even though they are in fact 'quite alien' to the totality of commitments that are espoused by these modern theories. See Bretherton, Lloyd and Napolitano, 'Introduction: Trajectories in Political Theology', 1-2; 234 n2; Luke Bretherton, 'Looking to the Future' in *What is Political Theology?* (Columbia University Press, 2026), 208; 'Political Theology as Testimony', in *What is Political Theology?* (Columbia University Press, 2026) 56-81; 85-86. See also MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 111.

of humanity in its temporal incompletion — to the exclusion of attending to the ways humans are drawn toward, and can move in the direction of, their eschatological completion as a perfection of human nature.

I will gesture at two reasons for regarding this alleged 'discontinuity and even conflict' as a misleading mirage. First, it is typically justified as a piece of *Augustinian* anthropology.[312] But that cannot be the case, as it would render Augustine's monasticism profoundly unintelligible. I develop this point in detail in Chapter 5. Put simply, we should take Augustine's *Rule* to represent a kind of constitution for an alternative genuine political community *vis-à-vis* the counterfeit political community of the Roman Empire: Augustine's paradigmatic Christian community is therefore inherently political.

Second, the alleged discontinuity and conflict would undermine the vocation of the Christian communities — namely, to be an intelligible witness to the kingdom of God. For if there is discontinuity and conflict, then how can the witness of para-political friendships be meaningfully communicated to the political community? Irrespective of communicability, would the witness at all be relevant for the political community *qua* political? Indeed, would not the para-political friendship, still within the *saeculum*, itself be prevented from its eschatological fulfilment by the discontinuity and conflict endemic to the political community, rendering all striving for the ideal, for perfection, meaningless?

On Moltmann's telling, Pontius Pilate is the only politician in the Christian confession. But clearly that is not the case: Jesus Christ reigns as Lord God, both Friend and King at once.[313] Indeed, by reciprocally interpreting the offices of kingship in terms of friendship and *vice versa*, we recognise that civic friendship must be the basic bond of God's kingdom. Chosen to be Christ's friends, the Christian community must therefore inquire into the manner by which this reign can be extended into

[312] Ibid.
[313] Moltmann, 'European Political Theology', 10.

alternative genuine political communities in the *saeculum*. That is, the Church must exist alongside the nation-state, not as a 'counter-politics' in the sense of being against politics. Rather, the Church must be a 'counter-politics' in the sense of offering the proper realm for alternative *genuine* political communities. This difference is paramount. For creating and sustaining such alternative genuine political communities is a demanding enterprise. And if political theology is, principally, a certain mode of critiquing, of judging, then we are distracted and removed from imagining and realising such alternatives, from participation in our ultimate destiny as humans, and thus understanding our basic identity.

The civic friendship lacuna indicates where there might be space for the proposed alternative approach to political theology, and how it can be developed.[314] This space is *Thomistic* in the specific sense that it is based on the synthesis of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism.[315] It is a *modern* political Thomism in the sense that it resists both the authoritarianism of old political theologies, and the liberalism of new political theologies — that is, it resists the conceptualisation of the political relation as either closed or open 'friendship'. Such resistance is but a precondition for realising our political nature in the *saeculum*, and specifically under the conditions of the liberal nation-state. Only by engaging in alternative political thinking and living *for its own sake* — which means to recognise and pursue the good in common with specific groups of people at particular places — can Christians serve as convincing and critical witnesses to the modern world and its nation-states.

[314] For examples of this kind of approach: D. C. Schindler, *Freedom from Reality: The Diabolical Character of Modern Liberty* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2017); *The Politics of the Real: The Church between Liberalism and* Integralism (New Polity Press, 2021); William T. Cavanaugh, 'Killing for the Telephone Company: Why the Nation-State is Not the Keeper of the Common Good', *Modern Theology* 20, no. 2 (2004): 243-274; *Theopolitical Imagination* (T&T Clark, 2002); *The Uses of Idolatry* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

[315] This involves, presumably, to enter into conversations with and about the classical texts of Thomism, and thus a Thomist tradition itself. In that sense, modern political Thomism can be taken to be 'Thomistic' in the sense suggested by Daniel De Haan's taxonomy in 'The Sapiential Task of the Thomist Tradition: To Enlarge and Perfect the Old by Way of the New', *New Blackfriars* (2025): 7.

Perhaps the pathway proposed by Andrew Willard Jones — a pioneer of modern political Thomism — seems promising. He contends precisely that 'friendship is the fundamental political reality'.[316] Unfortunately, although offering interesting and valuable perspectives on friendship and politics,[317] and especially on the positive function of politics, Willard Jones does not advance the kind of groundwork pertaining to friendship that modern political Thomism requires.[318] What does it mean that friendship is the fundamental political reality, and specifically in modernity and under the conditions of the liberal nation-state? And how can such friendship avoid collapsing into Schmitt's authoritarianism, or Moltmann's liberalism? These are central challenges with which modern political Thomists must grapple.

In this thesis, I endeavour to begin developing this groundwork. As suggested in Chapter 1, shall do so by opening MacIntyre's political philosophy, and especially his friendship account, to grace — while seeking to retain its form as a Christian philosophy. I propose to shift the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic synthesis of politics from Thomistic Aristotelianism to Thomistic *Augustinianism*. This requires elaboration. According to MacIntyre, the Aristotelian philosophical framework of politics is 'successively sophisticated by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle'.[319] Then Aquinas, ingeniously, brought this tradition into intelligible conversation with biblical and patristic sources.[320] Thus, on MacIntyre's understanding, Aquinas integrated Augustine's theological insights into Aristotle's philosophical framework, rendering the result a kind of Aristotelianism.[321] As we have seen, this is especially the case for political philosophy, where grace and supernatural perfection does not

[316] Andrew Willard Jones, *The Church Against the State: On Subsidiarity and Sovereignty* (New Polity Press, 2025), 9 (my emphasis), 251.
[317] Ibid, 3-28; 90ff; 250-262.
[318] Willard Jones connects for instance friendship in interesting ways to subsidiarity as the form of the common good. And he also says that, politically speaking, we must 'start playing a different game' (ibid, 27). We must 'identify where structures of friendship still exist' and then 'cultivate them and expand them' (ibid). But this is only possible if we have a firm grasp of the meaning of friendship and its connection to politics.
[319] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 156.
[320] Ibid, 172. See also MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 136.
[321] Ibid, 349.

play much of a role at all. My suggestion is therefore to invert MacIntyre framework: integrating Aristotle's philosophical insights into Augustine's theological framework — and I shall let MacIntyre do the heavy lifting.

In Chapter 9 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, MacIntyre discusses Augustinian 'political theory'.[322] According to MacIntyre, Augustinian political theory reached its greatest achievement in Gregory VII's theocratic adaptation. Gregory VII applied Augustine's distinction between the Heavenly City (*civitas Dei*) and the Earthly City (*terrena civitas*) to the 'difference in both function and origin of ecclesiastical institutions and secular sovereignties'.[323] Secular sovereignties were taken to be '*both* the result of sin *and* divinely ordained'.[324] MacIntyre observers that Gregory VII's understanding of the virtue of justice was 'at two salient points at one with Aristotle's', although he had knowledge neither of the *Nicomachean Ethics* nor the *Politics*.[325] Firstly, justice was conceived of in terms of 'what is owing to whom in respect of desert', and secondly, consisted in 'the discharge of the duties of one's assigned place within the institutions of a determinately structured community', moving the members of the community towards their end *as* members of that community.[326]

Then Aristotle's moral and political texts were reintroduced in Europe, making plain the differences between Gregory VII's Augustinianism and Aristotle. MacIntyre draws our attention to four such differences. The first is the sheer disparity between the Aristotelian *polis* and the Augustinian *civitas Dei*, and specifically the fact that the former is restricted to an elite (the aforementioned Greek male aristocrats), whereas the latter is not. Secondly, the catalogues of virtues are dissimilar, and especially notable is the absence of charity in Aristotle, without which, the Au-

[322] Ibid, 162.
[323] Ibid, 161.
[324] Ibid, 162.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid.

gustinians maintain, there could be no genuine justice either. Thirdly, for the Augustinians, right relationship to the good — as well as intermediate, proximate goods — is not only specified in terms of a psychology of reason, passion, and appetite, but also a will grounded in faith or distorted by the lack of such grounding. Fourthly, for the Augustinians, unlike Aristotle, the human end lies beyond the good achievable in this world; it lies, ultimately, in God. According to MacIntyre, all these four points — the *civitas Dei*; theological virtues; the redemption of the will; and the ultimate end of humans as a supernatural perfection — are instantiations of 'grace'.[327]

In Chapter 10 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, MacIntyre goes on to consider Aquinas' political synthesis.[328] On MacIntyre's account, Aquinas retains Aristotle's conception of politics as an architectonic discipline or science aiming at the completion of the *polis*, and that such self-sufficiency is inherently entwined with the citizens' happiness. But Aquinas also affirms that the *polis* is corrupted by sin and cannot, therefore, be completed in this world. Thus, Aquinas relocates the Aristotelian *polis* within an Augustinian order of loves, which is only possible if the Aristotelian understanding of human nature is revised and interpreted against the horizon of salvation history: 'for Aquinas the concerns of politics had to be understood in the framework of a rational theology, and the *civitas*' — which roughly speaking corresponds to the Aristotelian *polis* — 'had to be understood in relation to the *civitas Dei*'.[329] This serves to invert the aforementioned framework: it is now rational *theology* that constitutes the framework. I take this 'rational theology' to be Aquinas' interpretation of Aristotle's teleological *kosmos* in terms of the philosophical theology that could be retrieved from Augustine, combining Neoplatonism with divine revelation.[330]

[327] Ibid, 156.
[328] Ibid, esp. 164-167.
[329] Ibid, 165.
[330] Ibid, 166ff.

Let us now return to Chapter 9 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, and the four points of conflict between Aristotle and Augustine. With regards to points one, two, and four, Aquinas sides with Augustine: the *polis* has to be understood in relation to the *civitas Dei*; an exclusively natural virtue catalogue is seriously incomplete; and the ultimate end of humans is supernatural perfection. With respect to point three, Aquinas synthesises Aristotle's notion of intellect with Augustine's notion of will.[331] Indeed, for Aquinas, the corruption of ethics and politics is not solely or even principally due to an Aristotelian weakness of will (*akrasia*) — or Platonic ignorance (*agnosia*) — but an Augustinian evil will (*mala voluntas*).[332] And whereas ignorance can be corrected by education, weakness of will by laws and discipline, a will that is distorted by sin must be redeemed by grace. That implicates our understanding of politics as an architectonic discipline.

> The virtues understood only in Aristotelian terms are incapable of perfecting human beings in such a way that they can attain their *telos*, partly because of Aristotle's inadequate understanding of what that *telos* is and partly because the natural virtues themselves can only perfect when informed by that caritas which is a gift of grace.[333]

Shifting the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic synthesis of politics from Aristotle to Augustine achieves two related things at once. Firstly, as we recall from § 1.5, the aim of the resynthesis is to make sure MacIntyre's political philosophy remains truly open to grace and supernatural perfection. This can be achieved by understanding the *polis* in relation to the *civitas Dei*, that is, at best as an incompletely

[331] For Aristotle, the intellect secures rational choice-*cum*-action, whereas for Augustine, the will intervenes for better (via grace) or worse: for Aquinas, the intellect proposes and judges whereas the will consents and refuses. It is noteworthy that MacIntyre describes even this specific synthesis as 'theological' rather than philosophical: Aquinas uses an 'Aristotelian account of the genesis of action, into which are integrated both an Augustinian conception of the will and such later concepts as those of *intentio*, *synderesis*, and *conscientia*', where *intentio* denotes the will's orientation toward an end, *intentio* the innate and intuitive grasp of the first principles of natural law (*i.e.* good is to be done, evil avoided), and *conscientia* the application of such principles to particular cases, an application which is liable error. See MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 188; 184-187.
[332] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 181-182.
[333] Ibid, 182.

self-sufficient political community that is perfected in the divine political community which in fact is self-sufficient. Secondly, doing so serves, it seems, only to bring MacIntyre more deeply into the Thomist tradition.

The manner by which I will carry out this resynthesis requires further specification. I shall propose to construe my framework in terms of eight Thomistic principles. Although some are derived from the *Summa*, most are derived from Aquinas' commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*, which although unfinished, nonetheless offers an important deposit of ideas about the relation between the *polis* and the *civitas Dei*.[334] Firstly, the political community is *per se* 'self-sufficient' (*sufficiens*).[335] Secondly, by virtue of being self-sufficient, the political community makes it possible for its members to 'live well' (*bene vivant*), that is, achieve happiness.[336] Thirdly, happiness is achieved in the sharing of common goods pertaining to human nature *qua* 'domestic and political animal'.[337] Fourthly, sharing common goods requires virtues, and specifically virtues pertaining to friendship: the 'virtue of the citizens' (*virtutem civium*) consists in sharing appropriately in the manner of friends.[338] Fifthly, by their own natural capacities, humans can only acquire the natural virtues, which makes it only possible to achieve natural or imperfect happiness (and a corresponding self-sufficiency) — and such natural or imperfect happiness is only possible if it remains open to supernatural perfection, for political community makes us 'more god-like' (*divinius*).[339] Sixthly, charity is 'the form of *all* the virtues' and thus perfects happiness.[340] Seventhly, charity is a kind of friendship among God and humans. Eighthly, charity is a supernatural gift of grace. I take these principles

[334] *Pace* MacIntyre, 'Four - or More? - Political Aristotles?', 15.
[335] *Pol*. 1.1.17.
[336] *Pol*. 1.1.17. See also 1.1.1-2.
[337] *Pol*. 1.1.21.
[338] *Pol*. 2.4.5; *Eth*. 8.9.1660; See also Willard Jones, *The Church Against the State*, 9; 90-91.
[339] *Pol*. 1.1.2. See also *De reg.* 15.112: 'the rulers of the city should be subject to the priests'. See also *De reg.* 16.114, 16.116.
[340] MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 140-143 (my emphasis).

to comprise a rough and ready, but still adequate theological framework for a Christian and specifically MacIntyrean political philosophy. Within it, I shall attempt to develop MacIntyre's account of civic friendship.

Friendship connects plainly to this frame via the fourth and seventh principles. MacIntyre says that Aquinas seems to more or less 'endorse' Aristotle's account of friendship,[341] but we see now, of course, that this cannot be the whole story: as the seventh principle shows, Aquinas also follows Augustine in construing friendship in terms of grace — like MacIntyre himself, as we observed in Chapter 1. And I shall add a corollary to the fourth principle: for Aquinas, friendship seems to be essentially about sharing. Friendship consists in sharing in 'common' (*communicatio*), according to the ancient proverb, such that friends' goods simply are common goods.[342] This kind of sharing among friends involve virtues and, if done appropriately, creates and sustains appropriate unity.[343]

To conclude this first part of the thesis, I shall return to *After Virtue*'s finale, with which I began. Here, MacIntyre tells us that even though barbarians govern us, 'we are not entirely without hope'.[344] Importantly, we must cease to identify the continuation of morality and civility with the maintenance of the liberal nation-state and create 'new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness'.[345] We are waiting, in that famous phrase, for 'another — doubtless very different — St. Benedict'.[346] We are compelled to ask two questions. What is this hope? Who is this Benedict?

[341] MacIntyre, 'What Both the Bad and the Good Bring to Friendships in Their Strange Variety', 241. *Cf.* Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 163-164.
[342] *Eth*. 8.9.1660; *Pol*. 2.4.5. See also Willard Jones, *The Church Against the State*, 9; 90-91.
[343] *Eth*. 8.9.1660; 9.1.1768, 9.8.1859-1860. This is mirrored in *On Kingship*, which is an instance of applied political Thomism: friendship is depicted as the end of the political community — and it consists in sharing, by which unity is achieved. See *De reg.* 11.77-78.
[344] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 263.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Ibid.

The hope, MacIntyre informs us, is radical, even revolutionary.[347] And as we have seen, MacIntyre identifies the relevant kind of hope as a theological virtue, adding that any adequate of human life must account for it.[348] MacIntyre speaks to this theological dimension of hope in the prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue*: the Benedictine 'greatness lay in making possible a quite new kind of institution, that of the monastery of prayer, learning, and labour, in and around which communities could not only survive, but flourish in a period of social and cultural darkness'.[349] This greatness was, at the time, 'quite unpredictable'.[350] MacIntyre goes on to say 'that ours too is a time of waiting for new unpredictable possibilities of renewal', as well as 'for resisting as prudently and courageously and justly and temperately as possible the dominant social, economic, political order' — so it was at the time of writing *After Virtue*, and so, MacIntyre thought at the time of writing this prologue, 'it is still'.[351]

MacIntyre thus suggests to us that the monastic community can be regarded as a political community.[352] If so, then it can serve as a model for theorising about civic friendship. It is an intriguing proposal, because it makes us able to appreciate an argument about friendship that is proposed by Plato, specifically Plato's Socrates, criticised and revised by Aristotle, and then transformed by Augustine. This argument revolves around the aforementioned proverb that friends share everything communally. As noted, according to Aquinas, sharing is a civic activity that is paradigmatically found among friends — enshrined so to say in the proverb. Similarly, and strikingly, Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine all seem to agree that the proverb captures the very nature of the political relation, the normative force of the political

[347] See also MacIntyre, 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', 109-110.
[348] MacIntyre, 'Where We Were, Where We Are, Where We Need to Be', 334.
[349] Ibid, xvi.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.
[352] This is stated more plainly in Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Establishing a Tradition', in *The MacIntyre Reader*, edited by Kelvin Knight (Polity Press, 1998), 123, 132-133.

bond. The disagreement among them, which is fierce, concerns the *correct* interpretation and application of the proverb. For now, it suffices to observe that Augustine ends up making the proverb a cornerstone of the monastery.

> The chief motivation for your sharing life together is to live harmoniously in the house and to have one heart and one soul seeking God. Do not call anything your own; possess everything in common.[353]

The proverb shall therefore serve as the hermeneutical focal point by which I will examine friendship and politics in Plato in Chapter 3, Aristotle in Chapter 4, and Augustine in Chapter 5. I return to these old sources of Thomism to find the beginnings of answers and solutions to new questions and problems. It is important, therefore, to note that I will not return to the sources first and foremost as a student of classics and patristics but of political philosophy and theology. That is, the aim of my explorations is not to provide an exhaustive account of the proverb or prove historic connections among the positions that it gives rise to; my aim is to shift the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic synthesis of politics. At the same time, I am convinced that Martha Nussbaum is correct in asserting that we should not return to the sources 'to pull in a little nugget of insight from one place, another nugget from another'; rather, one should go about this work 'systematically', trying to reconstruct 'each position as a whole and make the best sense one can of it'.[354] In the next part, I attempt to do this very thing with respect to the connection between politics and friendship in Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine.[355] Then I return, in Part III, to MacIntyre and the prospect of developing his account of civic friendship.

[353] *reg.* 1.2-3.
[354] Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Aristotle, Politics, and Human Capabilities: A Response to Antony, Arneson, Charlesworth, and Mulgan', *Ethics* 111, no. 1 (2000): 104. See also 193.
[355] I provide a summary of these positions and their relation to one another in § 7.6. On that note: I will not attempt to survey MacIntyre's commentary on these thinkers and their writings — a helpful resource in that regard is Tom Angier, 'MacIntyre and Classical Philosophy', in *Learning from MacIntyre*, ed. Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore (Pickwick Publications, 2020), 98-116.

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I have, in Part I, pointed out and held together a problem in MacIntyre's political philosophy with a lacuna in the political theology literature. In Chapter 1, we observed that MacIntyre presents us with a succinct and interesting, but hitherto unexamined argument: the liberal nation-state is incapable of creating and sustaining civic friendship and is thus not a genuine political community. Having situated this argument in *After Virtue*, I went on to piece together and examine MacIntyre's friendship account as this is developed in *Dependent Rational Animals* and 'Is Friendship Possible?' so as to understand what civic friendship is for MacIntyre and how genuine political communities can be created and sustained in modernity and under liberalism. However, upon doing so, we discovered that friendship also poses a theological problem to MacIntyre's political philosophy.

In Chapter 2, I explored the possibilities for further developing MacIntyre's friendship account within political theology so as to overcome this problem. I probed into an important but understudied dimension of the conflict between old and new political theologies: Moltmann's opening up of Schmitt's closed friendship. We found that Moltmann's account of friendship was inadequate — and then considered a refined alternative in de Graaff's para-political friendship. For de Graaff, friendship exists alongside, but not within politics. Like Moltmann, de Graaff bases this account on a dichotomous understanding of Aristotelian versus Augustinian modes of political theorisation. I made the case that this dichotomy is untenable. There is, I conclude, space for a theologised MacIntyrean friendship account in political theology, and specifically modern political Thomism.[356] Developing that account can therefore both advance MacIntyre's political philosophy and fill a lacuna in political theology.

[356] I have represented this space somewhat schematically in Appendix 2: 'Figure 1: A Twentieth Century Schema of Political Theology'.

PART II

CHAPTER 3

The Friendship Maxim in Plato

In *Rep*. 4, Socrates famously orders Kallipolis to the proverbial ideal that 'friends share everything' (*koina ta philon*) — which, for the guardian class, also holds for wives and children.[357] The authority that Socrates attributes to the proverb is astonishing. Apparently, Socrates hopes that simply linking this kind of radical socio-economic arrangement to the proverb, however loosely, renders further justification superfluous. And Socrates seems to get away with it. Even Adeimantus, who is a rather cautious character, agrees that the proverbial ideal would perfect the city.[358]

Socrates' argument goes like this: the communality of everything and everyone, simply 'communism' hereafter, is best *because* the proverb is true. But that conclusion only holds if we assume that citizens are essentially like friends. And that seems to be Socrates' assumption precisely. According to Socrates, the guardian class must have a philosophical disposition, for philosophers, by virtue of their friendship with wisdom, are able to govern themselves and the city according to a maxim of friendship.[359] At the moment, we simply note this assumption; in due course, we shall have much more to say about it.

[357] *Rep*. 423^{e}-424^{a}.
[358] *Rep.* 424^{a}.
[359] *Rep.* 375^{e}-376^{c}; 500^{c}-501^{a}.

Adeimantus realises soon enough that Socrates intends to make the assemblage not only accept communism as an abstract ideal, but also as concrete reality, and thus he decides to hastily intervene.[360] We would have expected Adeimantus to do so by challenging the authority of the proverb. Yet this option is not even considered. Instead, Adeimantus contests Socrates' interpretation and application. The logic of the dialogue therefore suggests to us that not only Socrates, but also Plato took the proverb, and specifically its political ideal, to be beyond reasonable dispute.

This suggestion is supported by the fact that the proverb, although barely transpiring in Plato's political theory, does so at critical instances: strikingly, it is present in the foundations of both Kallipolis and Magnesia.[361] Yet the proverbial friendship ideal has not attracted serious attention from contemporary commentators on Plato's political theory.[362] I shall therefore examine it. To do so, I must bring out and to the fore a dimension of Plato's political theory, and specifically the *Republic*, that often remains hidden: Plato's friendship maxim. We shall in due course come to see that it is necessary to carry out this work if are to adequately understand Aristotle's and Augustine's respective conceptualisations of friendship and politics.

[360] *Rep.* 449^{a}ff.
[361] *Leg.* 739^{b}-739^{e}.
[362] There are, however, some recent interesting examinations of friendship in Plato's (and specifically Socrates') political theory: Boersma, *Aristotle's Quarrel with Socrates* (State University of New York Press, 2024) chaps. 2-3; F. C. C. Sheffield, 'Moral Motivation in Plato's Republic? Philia and the Return to the Cave', in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 59, ed. Victor Caston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 79-132; Melissa S. Lane, *Of Rule and Office: Plato's Ideas of the Political* (Princeton University Press, 2023), esp. chap. 10; Thomas Holman, 'Return to the Cave: Philia, Eros, and the Erotic-Hermetic Structure of the Philosophical Life'*, Perspectives on Political Science* 53, no. 1 (2024): 25-33. See also Kostas Kalimtzis' chapter on Plato in *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease: And Inquiry into* Stasis (State of New York Press, 2000), chap. 2. See also James M. Rhodes, 'Platonic Philia and Political Order', in *Friendship and Politics: Essays in Political Thought*, ed. Richard Avramenko and John von Heyking (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 21-52; Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, chaps. 4-8; Mary P. Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's* Symposium*,* Phaedrus*, and* Lysis (Cambridge University Press: 2010). For examinations of the proverb, but not its friendship ideal, see the edited volume *For Friends, All Is Shared: Friendship and Politics in Ancient Greek Political Thought*, ed. Jakub Jinek and Veronika Konrádová (OIKOYMENH, 2016).

The proverb is typically taken to be Pythagorean.[363] I shall therefore begin by considering the Nonplatonic claim that Plato was a Pythagorean, especially with respect to political theory, and Peter Garnsey's rejection of this claim (§ 3.1). In this chapter, I make the case that the Neoplatonists were right. After outlining my methodology for making this case (§ 3.2), I examine the manner by which friendship in the cosmos and the soul conditions politics with reference to the *Gorgias*, *Lysis*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Timaeus* (§ 3.3). That enables us to appreciate the significance of friendship in three key passages in the *Republic*: the noble lie, the story of the metals, and the myth of Er (§ 3.4). Finally, I consider anew an old tension in Plato's political theory (§ 3.5).

3.1 Plato and other Pythagoreans? Introducing a Neoplatonic proposal

In the Platonic tradition, the Pythagorean proverb came to represent the very spirit of the Pythagorean way of life.[364] It was also used to reinforce the connection between Plato and Pythagoras, forged in the Academy itself.[365] For instance, in the second century AD, the Platonist Apuleius proclaims that Plato was a faithful follower of Pythagoras and insinuates that Platonists *qua* Platonists should aspire to the same.[366] In the third century AD, as if picking up on that very cue, the Neoplatonist Iamblichus states that justice is based on 'the concept of the common and the equal, and the idea that all should approximate as nearly as possible in their attitudes to having one body and one soul in which all have the same experience, and should call that which is mine and that which belongs to another by the same name', then

[363] As far as we know, Timaeus of Tauromenium was the first to label this proverb 'Pythagorean'. And Timaeus did so, less than a century after Plato wrote the *Republic*, because the Pythagoreans were widely known for their dogmatic sharing. See Christopher A. Baron, *Timaeus of Tauromenium and Hellenistic Historiography* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 144ff, esp. 150.
[364] Iambl. *VP* 17.72. See also Diog. Laert. 8.10, 23; Porph. *VP* 20, 33.
[365] *M*. 987^{a}29-30.
[366] *Flor.* 15.

noting in passing, as if it were all too obvious: 'just as Plato, who learned from the Pythagoreans, also maintains'.[367]

But were Apuleius and Iamblichus making too much of the connection between Pythagoras and Plato, and especially in the context of political theory? The question is not whether or not there is a connection, for it is out in the open. The guardians, Socrates maintains in the *Republic*, are to be educated in mathematics, astronomy, and music — as 'the Pythagoreans claim, and we should agree'.[368] My interest lies not in the technical details of these sciences, of which I shall have very little to say,[369] but in their instrumental nature. These sciences are important because they investigate the goodness of order and perfection in the universe and teach the guardians to be friendly and 'godlike'.[370] But if the sciences are instrumental, that is, means to some other end, then that indicates that the Pythagorean influences run deeper and cover broader than the sciences themselves, raising questions about *what* the connection between Plato and Pythagoras consists in, and just *how* important it is. Specifically, I shall inquire into the extent to which it makes sense to call Plato, or at least Plato's Socrates, a political Pythagorean.

Our answers to these questions matter for our understanding of Plato's political theory. According to Iamblichus, Plato follows Pythagoras in basing justice on that which is common and equal because friends are communists and 'friendship is equality'.[371] If so, then friendship rather than justice seems to be the central concept of Plato's political theory. Then again, as Garnsey rightly points out, even if

[367] Iambl. *VP* 30.167-168. See also 30.131.
[368] *Rep*. 530^{d}.
[369] For a more detailed discussion that resonates well with the present inquiry, see James Bernard Murphy, *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), 159ff.
[370] *Rep*. 531^{c}-531^{d}; 386^{a}; 383^{c}. The sciences make the guardians attentive to the goodness of divine harmony. This harmony is found in a pattern (thus mathematics) in heaven (thus astronomy) that expresses itself in beautiful tunes (thus music) — captured in the famous and enigmatic theory of the harmony of the spheres. Heyking remarks that 'the guardians must learn to discern the good in itself before they are capable of discerning its instantiations in the realm of becoming', *The Form of Politics*, 152.
[371] Iambl. *VP* 29.162; Diog. Laert. 8.10. See also Porph. *VP* 49.

Iamblichus believed that Kallipolis was an idealised Pythagorean community, the question about the correctness of his belief remains open.[372] Garnsey's answer is that 'Plato was aware of and drew from' the intellectual and cultural heritage of which Pythagoras was a part, but by virtue of being a 'truly great philosopher', he kept that heritage at arm's length.[373] Garnsey, that is, reckons that the *Republic*'s paradigm of political community is Plato's 'own'.[374] Although there were Pythagorean influences, Garnsey tells us, Kallipolis was therefore not '*modelled*' on Pythagoreanism.[375] As I understand it, Garnsey's answer means that the Neoplatonists are guilty of revisionism, and that we should not read Plato's political theory in context of some Pythagorean tradition.

For Garnsey, then, it seems that philosophical genius consists in breaking with tradition, rather than finding novel ways to bear it. I believe that judgement is mistaken and therefore seek to provide an alternative to Garnsey. I take as my starting point Catherine Rowett's intuition that 'there is more of Pythagoras in Plato's imaginary city', namely Kallipolis, 'than is traditionally supposed', and Kathy Eden's proposal that the guardian class is modelled on a Pythagorean friendship community — which aligns well with John Palmer's claim that Pythagorean influences figure most clearly in the *Republic* (and the *Gorgias*, to which we shall return) on topics like goodness and happiness.[376] On this tentative alternative answer, crucial components of Plato's political theorisation, such as justice, are found to be dependent on, and indeed derivative of, a distinctly Pythagorean paradigm of political com-

[372] Peter Garnsey, 'Pythagoras, Plato and communality: a note', *Hermathena*, no. 179 (2005), 78.
[373] Ibid, 87.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Ibid (emphasis in the original). Paul Shorey is harsher, and tells us that 'the student of Plato will do well to turn the page' if the commentator so much as mentions the name of Pythagoras, *The Republic*, vol. II, 189, n. f.
[376] Catherine Rowett, 'The Pythagorean society and politics', in *A History of Pythagoreanism*, ed. Carl A. Huffman (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 115; John Palmer, 'The Pythagoreans and Plato', in *A History of Pythagoreanism*, ed. Carl A. Huffman (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 204; Kathy Eden, *Friends Hold All Things in Common: Tradition, Intellectual Property, and the Adages of Erasmus* (Yale University Press, 2001), 83.

munity *qua* friendship community. Put differently, the alleged Neoplatonists revisionism is, at its core, an entirely reasonably inference from the available facts — to which more or less fanciful elaborations probably were added.

3.2 Methodology: definitions, demarcations, clarifications

This inquiry immediately runs into a methodological difficulty: what does 'distinctively Pythagorean' mean? And how does it relate to the Pythagorean community in Croton around sixth century BC? John Dillon and Jackson Hershbell remark that the historicity of a Pythagorean community is not something that can be easily proven to modern scholars, at least not to everyone's satisfaction. Yet Dillon and Hershbell maintain convincingly that 'the vividness and detail' with which Iamblichus and other sources portray the Pythagorean way of life suggest that it is unlikely to be entirely a product of ancient imagination.[377] The point is not at all that we can be uncritical of Iamblichus and other sources. In the Platonist tradition, the distinction between provable facts and interpretative elaborations are inherently blurred.[378] The point is rather that Iamblichus and other sources build on older sources that in turn probably build on a historical foundation that we can make plausible estimations of. My inquiry, however, does not stand or fall on such a historic foundation. It depends on a slightly different assumption about the *imagination* of Plato and his contemporary interlocutors, namely the conception of a distinctively Pythagorean paradigm of political community.

Aristotle, of course, is such a contemporary interlocutor, and *M.* A is an early extant ancient text on Pythagoreanism.[379] In fact, there are no other reports from within

[377] John Dillon and Jackson Hershbell, 'Introduction', in *Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Way of Life: Text, Translations, and Notes* (Scholars Press, 1991), 16. Garnsey concurs on this point, 'Pythagoras, Plato and communality: a note', 87.
[378] Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Harvard University Press, 1972), 92. See also ibid, 201.
[379] My present engagement with Aristotle's *M.* A 5-8 is contingent and very restrictive, and therefore correspondingly selective. For more comprehensive treatments, consult Oliver Primavesi, 'Aristotle

the Academy. And on Aristotle's account the Pythagoreans are devoted to a harmony that encompasses everyone and everything.[380] That is congruent with Iamblichus, whose *Life of Pythagoras* is our longest and most detailed extant ancient text. According to Iamblichus, as well as other sources, this harmony is divine and essentially a descriptive-normative friendship in the sense that friendship describes the fundamental reality in which we ought to participate in.[381] Friendship is the true order of the universe, and humans ought to participate in it not only to perfect the universe, but to be perfected themselves. Indeed, friendship is consummated in union with God, such that God is presented to us as a kind of Friend. There should thus be 'friendship of all with all' — and of such friendship, Iamblichus maintains, 'by common consent, Pythagoras was the discoverer and legislator'.[382] Even critical scholars recognise friendship as central to some kind of historical Pythagorean way of life.[383]

Importantly, there are good reasons to believe that Plato was aware of a Pythagorean way of life oriented around friendship. The name 'Pythagoras' is mentioned explicitly once in Plato's dialogues, the *Republic*, and then precisely to praise him and his way of life: 'successors even now call their way of life Pythagorean and somehow seem to stand out from all other people'.[384] We shall shortly examine the implicit but pervasive presence of this way of life in the *Republic*. But for the moment I shall briefly consider two very different pieces of evidence to bolster the preliminary case that Plato was not only aware of but also significantly inspired by Pythagorean ethics and politics.

on the "so-called Pythagoreans": from lore to principles', in *A History of Pythagoreanism*, ed. Carl A. Huffman (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 227-249; Phillip Sidney Horky, *Plato and Pythagoreanism* (Oxford University Press, 2016), chaps. 1-3.

[380] *M*. 985^{b}33-986^{a}11.

[381] Iambl. *VP* 15.65-66, 33.240. See also Diog. Laert. 8.25-26, 29, 33. Porph. *VP* 38, 49.

[382] Iambl. *VP* 16.69-70; 33.229-230.

[383] See *e.g.* Leonid Zhmud, *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 106.

[384] *Rep*. 600^{b}.

First a piece of compositional evidence. The *Georgias* can be read as a prologue to the *Republic*, and *Timaeus* as its epilogue. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates deconstructs rhetoric, and upon doing so, exposes the need for a solid concept of justice — to defend the claim that it is better to suffer disadvantage and misfortune than committing injustice. Socrates carries out this work in the *Republic*. Moreover, in the *Gorgias*, as we shall come to see, Socrates identifies communal sharing as the basis of happiness and thus justice, and in the *Republic*, Socrates makes such communal sharing constitutive of the best city.[385] This understanding spills in turn over into cosmic considerations in the *Timaeus*.[386] As I show in the next section, both the *Gorgias* and *Timaeus* are unmistakably Pythagorean, which indicates that the *Republic* is Pythagorean also.

The second piece of evidence is biographical. Despite controversy concerning authenticity,[387] *L.*7 serves to elaborate the *Republic*'s Pythagoras reference and the aforementioned Pythagorean composition. For in the letter, we come to know about Plato's friendship with Archytas of Tarentum, a prominent Pythagorean politician and philosopher.[388] In a world governed by pride, power, and hostility, Plato and Archytas represent, in *L.*7, wisdom, loyalty, and friendship. This is epitomised in a story describing Plato's attempt to make the tyrant Dionysius II of Syracuse a loyal friend of wisdom and fellow citizens, and specifically to befriend an enemy, the

[385] Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 32.
[386] 'In the *Republic*', Murphy observes, 'Plato proposes that we study justice writ large in the city in order to understand justice writ small in the soul. In the *Timaeus*, Plato proposes that we study providential order writ large in the cosmos in order to understand providential order in a city. The dialogue *Timaeus* is literally a continuation of the dialogue *Republic*: the conversation of *Timaeus* takes place on the very next day and begins with a recap of the conversation in *Republic*. The *Republic* begins with an ideal city and ends with a cosmological myth, while the *Timaeus* features a cosmological myth framed by discussions of an ideal city'. See Murphy, *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible*, 171.
[387] We need not commit to the claim that Plato in fact penned the letter, but that its portrayal of Plato's acts, words, and thoughts are fair approximations. Indeed, in the event that the letter is spurious, it provides important insight into the imagination of a contemporary to Plato, and specifically a portrayal which Plato's contemporaries would presumably have regarded as credible. For a recent case for the letters' authenticity, see Ariel Helfer, 'Introduction', in *Plato's "Letters": The Political Challenges of the Philosophic Life* (Cornell University Press, 2023).
[388] *L.*7 339^{e}; 350^{a}. See Charles H. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History* (Hackett, 2001), 39-48; Helfer, 'Letter 7', 80, n. 86.

exiled Dion.[389] Suddenly, however, Dionysius' hospitality morphs into incarceration. Plato is accused of scheming against Dionysius with Dion. Plato reaches out to Archytas and his circle of friends in Tarentum, and an ambassador immediately sets sail to Syracuse. The ambassador successfully convinces Dionysius to release Plato. Later, when Plato meets Dion and explains what happened, Dion bids Plato to join a quest for vengeance. Since Dion was exiled and Plato's friendship cheated, Dion reckons that war is inevitable. Plato, however, refuses to join Dion. It is easy to miss the striking claim that Plato here makes: it is not necessarily just to harm an enemy.

This story is interesting because Iamblichus holds it together with a famous Pythagorean story occurring around the same time and at the same place — a story that would plausibly have been known to Plato's contemporaries.[390] To put Pythagorean virtue to the test, Dionysius' associates accuse the Pythagorean Phintias of conspiring against Dionysius, and Dionysius, playing along, judges Phintias to death. Phintias asks for the rest of the day to settle affairs with Damon, with whom Phintias lives communally. Damon himself serves as surety. Dionysius grants the request: Damon comes to stand in Phintias place — and Phintias returns by the end of the day to face execution. Dionysius is doubly amazed. In the first instance by Damon's willingness to serve as surety, and in the next by Phintias' return. Dionysius embraces them and begs to be included in their friendship. But Phintias and Damon refuses.

The parallels between the stories are notable. In both, there is a complication in Dionysius' courts connected to accusations of treachery, redemption in uncompromising Pythagorean friendship, and then rejection of requests by the unworthy to be included in this friendship. Furthermore, the story of Phintias and Damon does not only demonstrate the power of Pythagorean friendship, but also that Pythagorean *philoi* are *oikeioi*, the friends are sharers of household, which ideally speaking

[389] *L.*7 333[d]ff.
[390] Iambl. *VP* 27.127; 33.233-237. See also Porph. *VP* 59-61.

means to share everything communally. Interestingly, in *L*.7, Plato's friends are described as *oikeioi* precisely.[391]

We can therefore safely make the preliminary inference that Plato was not only aware of a Pythagorean way of life, but specifically a way of life consisting in a community of friends sharing, again ideally, everything according to the proverb. Moreover, in appealing to the proverb at critical instances, it is also *prima facie* reasonable to infer that Plato makes conscious use of Pythagorean ideas about friendship. Specifically, I shall seek to demonstrate that Plato, via Socrates, reworks a complex of Pythagorean ideas about friendship and politics by modelling the guardian class on a Pythagorean community.

Based on my research in the literature, I abstract three dimensions from the Pythagorean community.[392] I anchor these dimensions in Pythagorean sayings or slogans. That is because such memorable aphorisms are likely to predate the documents in which we find them, in our case the extant ancient lives of Pythagoras, making the aphorisms attractive to the authors of our sources: they are bones lending themselves to fleshing out. Similarly, aphorisms represent a kind of popularised philosophy, and would therefore, presumably, have informed popular conceptions of that which is distinctively Pythagorean.

[391] *L*.7 350[b].

[392] As to the primary sources, this synthesis is derived from our three extant lives of Pythagoras: Diogenes Laertius' *Opinions Lives of Eminent Philosophers* Book 8, Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras*, and Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, and especially chaps. 12-33 in Iamblichus. In conducting that derivation, I have made use of a number of secondary sources, both classics — esp. Kurt von Fritz' *Pythagorean Politics in Southern Italy* (Columbia University Press, 1940), 'Pythagorean Communism' (in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 75, 1942) and Edwin Minar's *Early Pythagorean Politics in Practice and Theory* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1942) — as well as contemporary contributions — esp. Catherine Rowett's 'The Pythagorean society and politics' and Laura Gemelli Marciano's 'The Pythagorean way of life and Pythagorean ethics' in Carl A. Huffman's *A History of Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and Kahn's *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, chaps. 1-3. I have also sought to consider sceptical perspectives, for instance in Burkert's *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* and Zhmud's *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans*.

(a) 'Friendship of all with all'.[393] The Pythagorean community practiced a way of life directed at friendship through education, virtue, and worship. Education (ref. mathematics, astronomy, and music) enabled members to understand the universe and their place in it. Exercising virtue and worshipping the traditional gods enabled them to play their designated role. Their way of life was epitomised in the sharing of property and household,[394] mirroring the oneness of the One. For initiated disciples, elite members, this implied ascetic and coenobitic living, and for others, a willingness to share with one another.

(b) 'Friendship is equality'.[395] Members were of different gender, age, and status. Esoteric candidates were tested rigorously before initiation and, if initiated, bound by vows and to rules and rituals that were kept secret. These elite members were also, more or less, arithmetically equal; but the basic equality among the Pythagoreans was geometrical. Each part, initiated into the inner circle or not, served mutually reciprocal functions in relation to the community as a whole. Thus, the community was hierarchical, but its hierarchy was taken to generate rather than oppose equality proper.

(c) 'Turn your enemies into friends'.[396] The community aimed at a traditional regeneration of morality and religion — espoused by initiated and uninitiated disciples alike — in society at large, that is to shape the city in the image of the Pythagorean community. Regeneration was mainly pursued by philosophical discussion and leading by example, that is in making friends of enemies, rather than by *coup d'état* or coercive ruling.

[393] Iambl. *VP* 16.69; 33.229.
[394] See Iambl. *VP* 17.72; Diog. Laert. 8.10, 23; Porph. *VP* 20, 33.
[395] Iambl. *VP* 29.162. See also Diog. Laert. 8.10; Porph. *VP* 49.
[396] Diog. Laert. 8.23. See also Iambl. *VP* 33.232.

With these three dimensions, I attempt to strike a balance: on the one hand, avoiding unnecessary, controversial commitment as to the historicity of detailed doctrines in the Pythagorean community, and on the other, pinning down important features that Plato's contemporary interlocutors would plausibly have recognised as distinctive to Pythagorean community.[397] To be specific, the case that I make, *pace* Garnsey and others, is that a Pythagorean community thus construed serves as Plato's paradigm of political community in the *Republic*.

That case is best made in brief, introductory reference to first principles. In the aforementioned passage from *M*. A, Aristotle reckons that Socrates and then Plato turn to ethics and politics so as to approach that which is 'universal' and, we might add, primary and divine.[398] This is precisely the Pythagorean way of theorising about politics: for the Pythagoreans, ethics and politics can be said to be a mode of metaphysics and theology, and theology and metaphysics a mode of ethics and politics. According to Iamblichus, for instance, the sovereignty of the gods is 'a first principle' of justice, because the gods are our ultimate guardians.[399]

This first principle reveals to us the divine harmony of the universe,[400] such that we come to know that the only thing that truly matters is to partake in it.[401] In the city, this divine harmony is characterised by, on the one hand, 'the common and equal',[402] and on the other, 'appropriateness' in relations.[403] This kind of divine harmony can only be fully realised in friendship. Again we sense that the first principle is a and indeed *the* Friend. However, it must be stressed that this Friend is not

[397] To clarify: we should regard the dimensions as Wittgensteinian family resemblances related to 'Pythagoras' and 'Pythagoreanism' in the context of ethics and politics — *as these are found in the imagination of Plato and his contemporaries*, not (necessarily) history. We need not speculate about the connection between the former and the latter.
[398] *M*. 987^{a}30-987^{b}10. A comment on this passage: Aristotle's uses the term '*ethika*', not '*politika*', but for Aristotle ethics and politics bleed into one another (ref. *NE* 1094^{a}17-1094^{b}11), and the kind of politics with which we deal presently is saturated by ethics and *vice versa*. See also Hugh Tredenick's introduction, *Metaphysics*, vol. 1, xx-xxi.
[399] Iambl. *VP* 30.174.
[400] Iambl. *VP* 15.65-66.
[401] Iambl. *VP* 18.86; 28.137; 33.240.
[402] Iambl. *VP* 30.167.
[403] Iambl. *VP* 30.181-182.

a person; correspondingly, this kind of metaphysical friendship is not personal. Friendship, for the Pythagoreans, consists in harmonious structure and functioning.

If Plato's paradigm of political community is Pythagorean, it is reasonable to suppose that Kallipolis share similar first principles. And Aristotle claims precisely that Plato's understanding of first principles adheres in 'most respects' to Pythagoreanism.[404] For the present purposes, two related similarities are important. Firstly, in the *Republic*, as suggested, the guardians can only transform the city if they are transformed themselves, that is, if their souls are ordered to perfection in philosophical communion with the gods.[405] Secondly, in the *Lysis*, the first metaphysical principle — which the Neoplatonist, studying Plato's *Parmenides*, labelled 'the One' (*to hen*); a label I shall use also, somewhat anachronistically — is as it were forever above and beyond the realm of metaphysics in which the many exist.[406] Yet paradoxically this principle also brought the many into existence, via the demiurge, and remains continuously underneath and thus upholding their realm. This principle is the 'first friend' (*proton philon*) and the many are mirror images of the first friend.[407] Heyking comments that the *Lysis* therefore anticipates 'a metaphysical first principle of friendship'.[408]

3.3 The dual conditioning of politics: *Gorg*., *Lys*, *Phdr*., *Sym*., *Tim*.

I shall now make the case that Plato's politics is conditioned on two levels by such metaphysical friendship: on the level of the universe and on the level of the soul.

[404] *M*. 987^{b}29. See also 987^{b}5-15. According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans maintain that numbers are derived from the One, and that for instance a soul is only a soul insofar as it imitates the number that is soul (*M*. 985^{b}23-986^{b}3). Thus, on Aristotle's account, Platonic forms are a development of Pythagorean numbers, and participation in such forms a development of imitation of numbers (*M*. 987^{a}30ff).
[405] See *e.g. Rep*. 540^{a}-^{c}.
[406] *Rep*. 509^{b}.
[407] *Lys*. 219^{c}-219^{d}. Catherine Zuckert reckons that *Lysis* can be read as a preamble to the *Gorgias* (a preamble to a prologue!) on the topic of friendship in the city and specifically politics in *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 531.
[408] Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, 101.

The former is the total order in which the city is situated, and the latter the city's elementary component. And Socrates can be taken to expound this conditioning in a passage in the middle of the *Gorgias*. In this passage, Socrates proclaims that 'I am no politician' and confesses lack of knowledge about even the most rudimentary procedures of conventional, Athenian politics.[409] Then, however, towards the end, Socrates asserts that 'I am the only genuine practitioner of politics in Athens today, the only example of a true statesman'.[410] In Athens, Socrates reckons, politicians pretend to fight over justice, but their concept of 'justice' is only just nominally. In reality, the fight is about their own interests. This is not least evident in the elevation of rhetoric, the topic of the dialogue. For rhetoricians claim to open our eyes to truth but are in fact attempting to dominating us.[411] Once persuasion has provided the politician with office and authority, this soft power hardens and might even turn blind. Indeed, Kallicles admits as much: politics is about domination, about harming enemies and benefitting friends, and is thus a kind of civil war.[412] The goal of this war is to get into a position in which one can satisfy ever-increasing and ever-expanding desires — which, according to Kallicles, is the happy life.[413] Socrates, however, maintains that politics has lost its way precisely because its practitioners pull and push the city in the direction of their misguided desires.[414] Athenian politics has been decoupled from ethics and the good just as rhetoric is decoupled from

[409] *Gorg*. 473[e]. For an interesting examination of friendship, justice, and politics in the *Gorgias*, see Boersma, *Aristotle's Quarrel with Socrates*, 52-84. Boersma concludes that there is a tension between friendship, justice, and politics: 'a Socratic approach to politics is necessarily negative and destructive of the bonds of the city' (82). I argue that this is only half the story. Although Boersma differentiates counterfeit or 'phantom' friendships from real friendships, he does not recognise that a similar distinction is found in justice and politics. The Socratic approach is destructive to *phantom* justice and politics, but only for the sake of reconstructing genuine or real justice and politics — based on genuine friendship.
[410] *Gorg*. 521[d].
[411] *Gorg*. 452[d]; 490[a].
[412] *Gorg*. 447[a].
[413] *Gorg*. 491[d]-492[c].
[414] *Gorg*. 463[d].

truth.[415] Socrates' remedy is therefore to ask and answer questions about the good.[416]

According to the Socrates of *Gorgias*, a happy life consists in virtue, and virtue is found in orderly structure: internal and external order that makes us capable of functioning well and ultimately be perfected. And for the soul, to be rightly ordered is to be temperate. Only a tempered soul will render both gods and humans their due, that is to exercise piety, justice, and courage. Indeed, a soul that is pious, just, and courageous represents the very perfection of a happy life — self-evidently so, for Socrates. In contrast, the selfish soul is unable to order and control their desires and is comparable to a 'robber' or 'rebel' (*leistes*), and is, as such, unfit for community. For that reason, Socrates maintains, Kallicles' understanding of happiness cannot be true: the selfish soul is unfit for community, and without community, 'there can be no friendship'.[417] Socrates' conjecture, then, is that happiness is contingent on friendship. Socrates then expounds this connection. According to 'the wise', Socrates tells Kallicles, 'heaven and earth, gods and humans (*anthropous*) are bound by community and friendship and order and temperance and justice'.[418] Socrates then castigates Kallicles for not having noticed 'the power [of] geometrical equality' among gods and humans; this neglect has made Kallicles 'believe that one should try to gain a disproportionate share of things.[419]

Pointing to Socrates' praise of equality and specifically geometrical equality, John Palmer says that it is 'virtually certain' that 'the wise' refers to the Pythagoreans.[420] For the Pythagoreans were known for emphasising geometrical equality, which is to say that parts are equalised by virtue of harmoniously belonging to the same

[415] Zuckert notes that politics, for Socrates, has two branches: 'formative or legislative and remedial or judicial' (*Plato's Philosophers*, 531). These branches aim at moral development, which Socrates attempts to stimulate via conversation.
[416] *Gorg*. 506^{c}ff.
[417] *Gorg*. 507^{e}.
[418] *Gorg*. 508^{a}.
[419] *Gorg*. 507^{e}.
[420] Palmer, 'The Pythagoreans and Plato', 206.

whole. Geometrical equality is therefore a structure of proportionality that is found in wholes *qua* wholes by which each part can function in complementarian unity and thus be equalised *qua* parts. And the universe is the ultimate whole to which everyone and everything belong. To take an example: the brain, in isolation, seemingly takes on the most critical function of the human body, as the seat of the soul. But the brain cannot function well in the absence of functioning veins and arteries. Thus, insofar as the functioning of an organ is predicated on the functioning of another, and the soul is bound to the body, it is not strictly speaking correct to call the brain *more* important than veins, arteries, and other organs.

Yet we cannot escape the sense that the brain nevertheless *is* in fact more important. We can live without this or that vein or artery, for instance, but not without the brain. It is therefore important to differentiate between geometrical and arithmetic equality: the latter refers to equality among the relata in themselves, upon being isolated from their mutual relation, and the former to equality by relation. There can be geometrical equality despite arithmetic inequality. The organs of a body are arithmetically unequal, as it were, for they differ with respect to matter, shape, and function. Yet to be an organ just is to be a part of a whole. And the brain is geometrically equal to veins and arteries in that they can only exist as members of the body. As we shall see, the same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for citizens with respect to the city.

Here we can point to further evidence of Pythagorean influence: the primacy of friendship. It is *friendship*, and giving rather than taking that brings different parts, arithmetically unequal as they are, into geometrical equality as parts of a whole.[421] Similarly, and as suggested, Iamblichus maintains that the Pythagoreans believed both in universal friendship and intrinsic asymmetries. For instance, friendship is

[421] Iambl. *VP* 33.229-230. See also Porph. *VP* 52.

not restricted to humans but includes gods and even animals.[422] And since friendship in each case is 'the same',[423] this friendship equalises, in some sense, gods, humans, and animals: they are all parts of the whole that is the One. Yet, simultaneously, the Pythagoreans honoured and advocated hierarchies.[424] This apparent tension between universal friendship and intrinsic asymmetries fades, however, when we take the equality of friendship to be geometrical rather than arithmetic. Gods, humans, and animals are different parts of the same whole, and if they come to know the structure of this whole, and function as the kind of part that they are with respect to the whole, then they will participate in the friendship of the whole and thus become friends with one another.

For the Pythagoreans, participating in this kind of friendship amounted to a 'mingling and union with God', which was the end goal of the Pythagorean way of life: 'no one could find anything better, either in words spoken or in ways of life practiced, than this kind of friendship'.[425] The Pythagorean way of life is therefore a shared ascent to divine friendship. Similarly, in Plato's *Timaeus*, the Pythagorean Timaeus makes the casual claim that God harmonised the universe geometrically to secure 'friendship' (*philian*) for it.[426] Thus, by implication, the mysteries of the universe are only known to God and the 'friend' (*philos*) of God.[427] Humans do not compete against each other for such friendship; we ought to strive together, as friends. If someone proves to us that we are going astray, then we should therefore rejoice and regard them precisely as our friend.[428]

This ascent takes us from one end of the spectrum of political conditioning to the other, from universe to soul. Many things, of course, have been said about the soul's ascent in Plato's middle dialogues. I would like to say something more, about its

[422] Iambl. *VP* 16.69-70; 33.229-230.
[423] Iambl. *VP* 33.230; 16.70.
[424] See *e.g.* Iambl. *VP* 28.149. See also Diog. Laert. 8.23-24.
[425] Iambl. *VP* 33.240. See also 18.86, 28.137.
[426] *Tim*. 32^{b}-33^{a}, 34^{b}.
[427] *Tim*. 53^{d}. See also *Tht*. 176^{b}.
[428] *Tim*. 54^{a}-54^{b}.

connections to Pythagoreanism, and specifically to draw three lines between the soul's ascent in the *Phaedrus* and Iamblichus' Pythagoras. Firstly, the soul's ascent consists in the rational moderation of the soul's parts, and especially the desire for the beloved.[429] Secondly, moderation entails deification: the ascent transforms us to gods.[430] And, thirdly, as the soul is transformed to god, its *eros* is transformed to *philia*,[431] which, for the soul, is to arrive at its origin.[432] Put differently, desirous love is stirred by an absence in us, a lack that must be sated, and upon at last finding the missing part, our desire dies — and births a better force: friendship.[433] On both accounts, therefore, the soul's ascent leads to friendship.

Interestingly, this seems to be the case in the *Symposium* also. The steps of Diotima's ladder consist in generalisation and abstraction.[434] In James Bernard Murphy's summary: 'I first love his body, then I love his soul, then he and I share a love of beautiful philosophical discourse, and finally he and I share a love of the beautiful itself'.[435] In this ascent, the beloved, the boy, is left behind, partly because the lover realises that he does not love the boy *as such*, but rather the beauty that the boy represents, and partly because the boy must himself become a lover in order to embark on the same ascent with boys of his own. For Socrates is careful to note that the lover does not find friendship *with the boy*, he finds 'god-friendship' (*theophilei*), which is to say a heavenly friendship among immortals.[436] This friendship is associated with self-sufficiency, for it 'remains entirely unaffected' by other beings and their existence.[437] The boy must therefore find his own boy to ascend himself; only then can the lover and beloved meet again, now as divine friends. Thus, ultimately, there is a gap between the lovers; every man is for himself.[438]

[429] *Phdr*. 246[a]ff; Diog. Laert. 8.30.
[430] *Phdr*. 255[a]ff; Iambl. *VP*, 184.
[431] *Phdr*. 256[b]-256[e]; Iambl. *VP* 33.240.
[432] *Phdr*. 250[a]-250[c]; *Phd*. 62[b]; Iambl. *VP* 16.64.
[433] *Lys*. 221[d]-221[e].
[434] *Sym*. 210[a]ff.
[435] Murphy, *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible*, 154.
[436] *Sym*. 212[a].
[437] *Sym*. 211[b].
[438] See also *Phdr*. 256[c].

That gap gives rise to an aporia, which is made plain in the dialogue's finale, just after Socrates' elevated speech has reached its culmination, and the party is collapsing in vulgarity.[439] This collapse is brought about by the entrance of Alcibiades, a boy that Socrates used to love and that is now left behind, overtaken by jealousy and desire to possess Socrates for himself — prompting Socrates to request protection by another boy he once loved, namely Agathon. The three end up sitting together, and the tensions among them is tangible. The name 'Agathon' means 'good', and Alcibiades is widely recognised as the handsomest of the boys. So Socrates finds himself surrounded by representations of the good and the beautiful. However, in the dialogue, Agathon is forlorn, and Alcibiades wicked. The representations are therefore not the real thing, as it were: the good and the beautiful exist only transcendentally, for Socrates, in another world. And as the drunk ramble eclipses philosophical discussion, and people either leave or fall asleep, Socrates attempts to lead by example as he returns to the city to teach. But he does so alone, without friends.[440]

The scene is paradoxical. The soul's ascent is supposed to bring about divine harmony in and by friendship. But in the *Symposium*, Socrates' ascent leaves people behind in a state of confusion, disappointment, and aporia. The quest for perfect friendship has turned imperfect friends to enemies. We are left with the sense that Socrates' understanding of friendship falls short by somehow going too far. It seems that the ascent cannot, therefore, be the only movement; there must also be

[439] *Sym*. 212^{c}-212^{e}; *cf.* 176^{e}.
[440] This interpretation is in keeping with Martha C. Nussbaum's case that Plato, in the *Symposium* (and as we shall soon come to see, not only here), stands at a critical distance to Socrates: in the devotion to general and abstract principles, Socrates' has lost touch with the particular people with whom friendship is possible. See Martha C Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, 2nd ed (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 167; 198-199.

a kind of descent to our shared, human world, a return to friendship among insufficient mortals. This moment is in fact anticipated in the *Gorgias*, and Socrates' manner of addressing Kallicles as 'friend'.[441]

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates will take no part in rhetoric.[442] For only enemies compete in the game of persuasion, fighting among themselves to seize power; friends join forces in dialogue to grasp truth together.[443] But Kallicles is the antithesis of Socrates, embodying scepticism, hedonism, and cynicism. Thus, Kallicles is *per se* Socrates' enemy. As noted, Socrates is covertly, but clearly enough, identifying Kallicles as such by calling him a robber or rebel.[444] Yet, as we learned in § 3.2, there is a Pythagorean imperative not only to avoid making enemies of friends, but also 'to turn your enemies into friends'. And that is precisely Socrates' goal. In addressing Kallicles' as 'friend', and inviting him to converse about the good, Socrates lays bare the goal of bringing Kallicles back into the fold of community. 'I do count you as a friend, you see', Socrates says, hopefully.[445] As such, Socrates has descended or returned from the friendship of heaven to befriend Kallicles.

In the *Republic*, a similar movement of descent or return is made evident by those who have seen the just constitution as 'it is retained in heaven as a paradigm' or maxim.[446] In the *Gorgias*, Socrates seems to conceptualise the maxim as friendship.[447] The movement of descent is depicted allegorically, and famously, in the return to the cave by those who have seen the sun.[448] It seems, in fact, that descending or returning is not only an obligation,[449] but also a necessity for further ascent,

[441] But, as Zuckert observes, Socrates does not say that Kallicles *becomes* his friend — which he does in the case of another rhetorician: Thrasymachus. And the reason is that Thrasymachus, unlike Kallicles, is willing to jointly seek the good via conversation. See *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues*, 182.
[442] *Gorg*. 449^{b}.
[443] See *Tim*. 54^{a}-54^{b}.
[444] See *Gorg*. 508^{a}.
[445] See *Gorg*. 473^{a}.
[446] *Rep*. 592^{b}; *Leg*. 739^{b}-739^{e}. See also *Tht*. 176^{e}-177^{a}.
[447] See *Gorg*. 507^{e}-508^{a}.
[448] *Rep*. 514^{a}ff. See also Holman, 'Return to the Cave: Philia, Eros, and the Erotic-Hermetic Structure of the Philosophical Life'.
[449] *Rep*. 520^{e}; 540^{b}-540^{e}.

that is, for properly entering into and participating in the oneness of the One. For the One is outside our world, beyond metaphysics itself, and can only exist in it via the many that exists. That means that beings like us, who exist in the world, only can participate in the oneness of the One by befriending the many around us, be they gods, humans, or animals. In sacrificing so-called friends at the altar of the One, the Socrates of the *Symposium* reveals a deficient knowledge of the One. This Socrates has some way to go, therefore, before he can further befriend the wisdom that resides in the One.[450]

Similarly, a stumbling block recurs in the conclusions of the *Lysis* and *Phaedrus*. In the *Lysis*, Socrates makes use of the Pythagorean proverb to identify genuine friendship.[451] Lysis' grave mistake, it seems, consists in his unwillingness to partake in the sharing prescribed by the proverb.[452] This unwillingness prevents him and Socrates from entering into friendship, and thus to know friendship properly, eventually producing the aporia with which the *Lysis* closes: 'although we imagine that we're one another's friends — I count myself as one of you, you see — we've not yet been able to discover what it is to be a friend',[453] or, alternatively rendered, *whether* a friend exists.[454] Strikingly, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates appeals to the gods, praying for the ability to be a friend, upon which Phaedrus immediately adds: 'Say the prayer for me too. For friends share everything'.[455] Put differently, the gods instantaneously gives Socrates a chance to foster friendship. But Socrates does not recognise it, or perhaps he does and refuses to grasp it, answering indifferently: 'Let's go'. Thus Socrates, like Lysis, is stuck in aporia, unable to enter into friend-

[450] See also Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship and Community*, 86-89.
[451] See *Lys*. 207^{c}.
[452] *Lys*. 221^{d}-222^{a}. See Robin Waterfield's comments on 221^{e}: Socrates moves from 'something *philon* (dear) is *oikeion* (one's own)' to '*philoi* are *oikeioi*', upon which 'Lysis kept quiet' (222^{a}). See also George Rudebusch, 'True Love Is Requited: The Argument of Lysis 221d-222a', *Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 24 (2004).
[453] *Lys*. 223^{b}.
[454] David Bolotin, *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship: An Interpretation of the Lysis, with a New Translation* (Cornell University Press, 1979), 61, n. 86 (my emphasis).
[455] *Phdr*. 279^{c}.

ship. The reason seems to be that they both desire counterfeit or phantom friendship. The real thing is all too *real*, which is to say too particular, limiting, and demanding. This issue is echoed in the *Symposium*, where Socrates exclaims 'all I understand' — nothing more, nothing less — is 'the ways of love' — of *eros*, that is, but not *philia*, which *eros* culminates in.[456]

Thus, the One's dual conditioning of the city infuses political theory with a friendship logic that can be expressed in terms of the following argument: first, the soul must participate in the divine order and perfection of the universe; second, the divine order and perfection of the universe just is friendship; third, participation in this kind of friendship requires that we engage in politics.[457] The friendship logic is animated by the Pythagorean friendship ethos, or the 'zeal for friendship', as Iamblichus calls it, which shapes our 'ways of life' as these are practiced here and now, compelling us to befriend one another and even turn enemies to friends.[458] This must be our aim, Plato concurs, even though the best of us, like Socrates, often fall seriously short. For both the Pythagoreans and Plato, therefore, political theory is about friendship, and political practice about befriending.[459] And in the *Republic*, it seems that Socrates has taken important steps in the right direction: he has now come to recognise that the soul's ascent is a communal and even political exercise.

3.4 Justice as friendship in *Rep*.: noble lie, story of the metals, myth of Er

In *Rep*. 1, we are famously presented with three contending views on justice.[460] Cephalus defines justice as giving to each what is their due. But Socrates points out that that the definition is underdetermined, for it is not necessarily just to give even

[456] *Sym*. 177[d].
[457] On the communal or political dimension of the soul's ascent, see also Murphy, *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible*, 194ff.
[458] Iambl. *VP* 33.240.
[459] See Diog. Laert. 8.16.
[460] *Rep*. 331[c]ff.

a friend their due, if doing so for instance causes them unnecessary harm. Polemarchus refines Cephalus' definition: justice is doing that which is appropriate and specifically benefitting friends and harming enemies. Thrasymachus, the rhetorician, then radicalises Polemarchus' definition: the strongest lays down the principles of justice, at the expense of the weak if they so desire, which is to say that politics is about benefitting oneself — and friends only insofar as the strong are benefitted — and harming others.

Neither Polemarchus' nor Thrasymachus' definition are satisfactory. But it is only Thrasymachus' definition that Socrates rejects entirely, for it decouples absolutely justice from the good, subordinating it to the arbitrary and fallible will of whoever happens to be in a position of power. As a consequence, politics is imbued with enmity. There seems, however, to be something going for Polemarchus' definition, for it is indeed just to benefit our friends. But according to Socrates, harming an enemy — that is treating an enemy as an enemy — makes us unjust: 'it is never right to harm anyone'.[461] Socrates is perhaps putting things too categorically, but the point seems to be that harming others, even enemies, will slowly but surely corrupt us and thus our conception of justice.

Socrates is not able to straightway provide an alternative satisfactory definition of justice, and *Rep*. 1 ends in aporia. But we should pay attention to Socrates' distinctively Pythagorean sensibilities. For Socrates affirms that justice consists in benefiting friends, and in claiming that harming enemies is unjust, Socrates seems to propose, albeit still obliquely and implicitly, that justice demands that we befriend our enemies.[462] Put differently, Socrates begins to align justice with friendship *as such*. This makes sense if these enemies are not really our enemies, but rather parts of the same whole that we ourselves belong to — which is to say the city.[463] Indeed,

[461] *Rep*. 335^{e}. See also 336^{a}.
[462] See also *L*.7 349^{d}-351^{c}.
[463] Although my argument is dissimilar from that of Kalimtzis, Rachel Singpurwalla, and Sheffield, beginning from a different starting point and taking a very different route, it leads to similar conclusions as theirs: Kalimtzis that this unity is friendship, Singpurwalla argues that relational unity is

later on in the *Republic*, Socrates defines justice in terms of our designated function as specific members of the city.[464] Justice is the operationalisation of geometrical equality,[465] which is a Pythagorean definition.[466]

As we have seen, the Pythagorean community was based on friendship rather than justice, such that friendship was prior to and thus definitory of justice. My conjecture, as indicated, is that Socrates develops such a conceptualisation of justice as friendship over the course of the *Republic*, and in doing so, ultimately provides a kind of resolution to the definitional justice aporia of *Rep*. 1. Three important steps in that development are found in three key passages in the *Republic*: the noble lie, the story of the metals, and the myth of Er.[467]

In *Rep*. 3, having examined conflicts that ensue with the untangling of justice and goodness in *Rep*. 2, Socrates, in an instance of palpable coyness, proposes to instil a noble lie in the citizenry: all were brought to existence in the womb of mother earth such that the land is their mother, the city their household, and the citizens their brothers and sisters. Above the many households, there is only one household, a household of households, namely the city. And in ancient Greece the household (*oikia*, *oikos*) represented the locus of friendship, which is captured in the fact that '*oikeiotes*' is a synonym of '*philia*' — and, as we have seen, these terms were especially closely connected among the Pythagoreans.

integral to Socrates' concept of justice, and Sheffield that friendship is the source of the philosopher's moral motivation for ruling. Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease*, chap. 2; Rachel G. K. Singpurwalla, 'Plato's Defense of Justice in the Republic', *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's "Republic"*, ed. Gerasimos Santas (Blackwell, 2006), see esp. 276-280; Sheffield, 'Moral Motivation in Plato's Republic? Philia and the Return to the Cave', 120-121.

[464] *Rep*. 433^{b}-433^{c}.

[465] The 'proper product of justice', we learn in the *Clitophon*, is 'to achieve friendship in cities' (409^{d}; see also 409^{d}ff).

[466] See Iambl. *VP* 30.179-180.

[467] For analysis further passage, the allegory of the cave, see Sheffield, 'Moral Motivation in Plato's Republic? Philia and the Return to the Cave', esp. 101-106.

As David Konstan has showed, *philia* covered a wide range of personal, social, and political relations in the ancient world.[468] It covered on the one hand, close-knit kinship constellations, and on the other personal and social relations that procured benefits for the household, such as access to various economical services, like lending and insurance, as well as political alliances inside the city via clubs (*hetairia*, *hetaireiai*) and outside its wall via guest-friendships (*xenia*, *xeinie*, *xeineie*). Unsurprisingly, therefore, the household was the indispensable location of the Pythagorean community. Iamblichus reports that the Pythagoreans were just as admired for their household management as for their philosophy.[469] Crucially, and in the spirit of the proverb, Pythagoreans experimented with increasing friendship by extending the household beyond mere kin.[470] Remarkably, administrators of the community's household were called 'politicians' (*politikoi*).[471] The Pythagorean community, revolving around the household, thus represented a kind of real city within the 'city' that only appears to be a city. And interestingly, as we have seen, Iamblichus says that Pythagoras' concept of justice emerged precisely from friendship as *oikeiotes* — and that the same is true for Plato also.[472]

The extending and increasing of friendship in the noble lie follows indeed a Pythagorean pattern, which is further advanced in Socrates' astonishing proposal in *Rep*. 5: friendship should not only cover cities, but the entire Greek world.[473] Socrates reckons that moral corruption prevents the realisation of peace among friends. This corruption fractionalises the city and eventually erupts in political conflict:

[468] *Philia* is 'the nature of affectionate ties or relations in general', typically conferring obligations on the parties, 'whether between friends [*i.e.* in the modern sense of the term] or in fellow citizens or any other association'. See David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.
[469] Iambl. *VP* 30.170. See also 30.168-172
[470] Diog. Laert. 8.10; Iambl. *VP* 17.72-74, 33.237.
[471] Iambl. *VP* 17.72.
[472] See Iambl. *VP* 30.168.
[473] *Rep*. 470^{b}ff. See also Sheffield, 'Moral Motivation in Plato's Republic? Philia and the Return to the Cave', 97.

'natural friends' are perceived as enemies such that unjustified 'civil war' is conceptualised as legitimate 'war'.[474] Such corruption-*cum*-conflict is epitomised in the Peloponnesian War, the literary and socio-historic context of the *Republic*, in which Greeks made enemies of Greeks. The spectacle of great powers crashing together in violent conflict can render us insensitive to the subtler, hidden causes of the war. Perhaps for that very reason, the *Republic* plays out in Athens, the city which Socrates, in the *Gorgias*, deemed void of genuine practitioners of politics. Here, in this city, moral corruption was laid bare in the war's aftermath.[475] Plato's own family was divided in the political havoc that ensued in Athens with the rise and fall of the Thirty Tyrants.[476] Here, then, it was not only the case that Greeks made enemies of Greeks, but also Athenians of Athenians, and even family of family. And with the noble lie, Socrates begins the work of converting these enemies to friends by attempting to convince them that they in fact belong to the same household, and thus that hostility is unnatural.[477]

That brings us to the story of the metals, where Socrates famously describes the producer class as brass and iron, the auxiliary class as silver, and the guardian class

[474] *Rep*. 470^{b}-470^{d}, this translation is taken from Tom Griffith (Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also 351^{b}.
[475] See *L*.7 325^{d}-326^{a}.
[476] While Plato's stepfather Pyrilampes was a democrat and friend of Pericles, Critias and Charmides, Plato's uncles, assisted the oligarchic revolution of 404. Julia Annas, 'Plato, life and work', *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed., ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford University Press, 2012), 1155.
[477] *L*.7 is especially interesting if read in this light, for it is suffused by concern for genuine friendship — which emerges from philosophy and divine 'living together' with knowledge (340^{d}-341^{e}; see also 333^{e}) — in a world governed by the dangers of war and betrayal (ref. 333^{d}-334^{b}; 347^{e}-348^{a}). Consider only the reflections on Plato's attempts to do good as a politician: it is impossible to engage in politics without 'friends and faithful comrades — and these were not already there and easy to find, for our city was no longer being managed according to the ways and practices of our fathers' (*L*.7 325^{d}). To the contrary, politics is 'corrupted […] to such an amazing degree that […] I ended up becoming dizzy' (*L*.7 325^{e}). The moral corruption in Athens brough about 'a nearly incurable state' such that it was now necessary with a marvellous overhauling (*L*.7 326^{e}; 325^{d}). And Plato's aim is to convert, by philosophy, kings and citizens to justice *in order to* bring them into friendship (*L*.7 328^{d}-328^{e}; 332^{c}-333^{a}). Granted this aim, we clearly see Pythagoras' appeal: a mythic figure renowned for establishing a community of education, virtue, and worship, who sought to eradicate hostility, conflict, and egocentrism, and bring about friendship. The Pythagoreans had already been capable of ushering in such a golden age by basing politics on the Pythagorean way of life. So why not again, and why not now? Moreover, a mist of vagueness surrounded Pythagoras, then as now, granting Plato much creative leeway, so as to craft connections of continuity with the past and developments towards a future as Plato envisioned it.

as gold.[478] Although the different classes should only breed among themselves, Socrates recognises that sometimes members of the classes beget offspring of higher or lower quality than themselves. And when that happens, the offspring should be ordered according to the nature of their metallurgical quality, rather than their bloodline. For, as established by the noble lie, it is mother earth that is their real parentage. This story parallels a Pythagorean analogy between human life and festivals. According to Iamblichus, the Pythagoreans believed that just as the soul is tripartite, the structure of human life is tripartite. Human life is analogous to a festival in which some come to sell and buy, others to compete for prizes, and others again to observe.[479] Each part serves a different function in relation to the whole that is the festival, but the observes are superior to the rest. For their nature is not servile, greedy for gain and fame, but contemplative. The observers behold the festival and by analogue the universe, that is the beauty which consists in participating in the One that pervades everything and everyone. The observers are therefore philosophers — and Pythagoras, according to the Pythagoreans, was the proto-philosopher, the original contemplative, the first friend of wisdom.[480] In beholding the heavenly pattern, the observers or philosophers or Pythagoreans enter a position in which they can align themselves with and thus participate in the heavenly pattern, which is tantamount to achieving happiness.

Similarly, the tripartite classes in the story of the metals reflect the structure of the soul. Just as reason governs spiritedness and desire in a well-functioning soul in the *Phaedrus*, the guardians, in Kallipolis, govern the auxiliary and producers. Their rule is grounded in geometrical equality. For the classes are equal to one another in a geometrical sense: the self-sufficiency of the tripartite whole is contingent on the mutual, functional reciprocity of each part. Yet classes are like the elements of the earth, in that the quality of the metals are arithmetically unequal. With Iamblichus, geometry enables us to find ‘in things unequal, disproportionate, and indefinite that

[478] See also *Leg*. 644^{d}-645^{a}.
[479] Iambl. *VP* 38-40. See also Diog. Laert. 8.8-9.
[480] Iambl. *VP* 38. See also Diog. Laert. 8.8.

which is definite, equal and, proportionate' — and thus just.[481] Such geometrical equality provides the structural condition for justice as friendship in the city: not only between the parts, the citizens and their classes, but also *within* each and every part. And, in a passage towards the end of *Rep*. 3, we learn precisely that justice does not only consists in the proper functioning of each part in relation to the whole, but that each part only functions properly when it is itself in a state of integrity.[482] Echoing the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, moderation is identified as friendship between the soul's parts.[483]

While geometrical equality lays the foundations for the guardians' rule, their aim is the realisation of friendship. In *Rep*. 5-7, Socrates explains that the guardians will be educated to see the world illuminated by natural light, which is to say that they will see the ideal world. This makes them, as we learn in *Rep*. 7-9, uniquely competent to steer the ship that is the city through the treacherous waters that is the present world, towards the rewards of justice, as this is described in *Rep*. 10 and the myth of Er. This passage further corroborates my claim that justice, in the *Republic*, is understood in terms of friendship.

Upon journeying to the afterlife, Er sees that the just are separated from the unjust.[484] The just go up through an opening on the right to be temporarily rewarded by blissful community with the gods, the unjust down below through an opening on the left to be punished, while the irredeemably anti-political — such as murderers and tyrants — are eternally trapped in the pit they are thrown into.[485] In each case, the souls are punished and rewarded in multiples, suggesting that our lives have a cosmic and divine resonance that we are not able to perceive in the mundanity of day-to-day experience. Having been rewarded and punished in appropriate measure, the souls travel to the spindle of necessity to be reincarnated. There, the

[481] Iambl. *VP* 30.179-180.
[482] *Rep*. 433^{b}-433^{c}.
[483] *Rep*. 442^{b}-442^{d}; 443^{d}-443^{e}. See also Palmer, 'The Pythagoreans and Plato', 215.
[484] *Rep*. 614^{d}ff.
[485] See also Iambl. *VP* 29.133, 29.178.

souls come forward to choose their next life in an accordance to lottery. In a sense, the true character of the souls are revealed in this moment of deliberation. For even those that were relatively just in their former life, and thus were rewarded, may have been so first and foremost because of favourable circumstances. If that is the case, they will be tempted to choose a life of power and wealth in their next life, which is likely to lead to their downfall. The genuinely just soul will continuously choose a life of moderation, such that over time, humanity itself might tend towards the good.

The myth of Er aligns neatly with the Pythagorean account of the afterlife,[486] not least the emphasis on reincarnation,[487] and its significance for politics.[488] Notably, the theme of reincarnation also features in the *Phaedrus*' allegory of the chariot,[489] and *Gorgias* even concludes with a similar myth.[490] The apparent political rationale can perhaps be described thus: to make people live as piously as possible.[491] Assuming this rationale, I shall make three observations to expound it, so as to anchor points already made. Firstly, the specific role we play in life is quite irrelevant. For our role is a complicated function of arbitrary coincidences, preference conditioned by experiences, and the decisions we make. Secondly, virtue, the manner by which we play the part we are given in life, is that which really matters. Thirdly, the virtue of justice it not only a temporary concern: by being a political manifestation of friendship, it is cosmic and divine, involving the gods themselves, such that its horizon is eternal. Although we engage in justice here and now, we do so incompletely, as if on a journey towards another world.[492]

[486] Diog. Laert. 8.31-32.
[487] Diog. Laert. 8.4; 14; Porph. *VP* 19.
[488] Iambl. *VP* 30.179.
[489] *Phdr*. 245^{c}-249^{d}.
[490] *Gorg*. 523^{a}ff.
[491] See *Men*. 816^{b}.
[492] *Rep*. 621^{c}-621^{d}.

The ultimate destination, as we have seen in different ways in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, is a divine friendship with the gods and even God.[493] Similarly, in the concluding remarks of the *Republic*, we learn from Socrates that the city must 'keep to the upward path' by acting morally and in accordance with reason, that is to be just, so 'that we may be friendly to ourselves and to the gods, not only during our sojourn here on earth, but also when 'we collect the prizes our morality has earned us'.[494] The friendship aporia, as this is expressed in different ways in the *Symposium* and *Lysis* (and indeed *Phaedrus*), can therefore only be resolved if perfect friendship is reached for collectively, presumably over generations, as a community — here and now, albeit imperfectly.[495] Correspondingly, it is the *friendship* of the city that the guardians guard, against enemies both inside and outside the city.[496] And this guarding consists in a double ascent. The first ascent is to attain the beatific vision, so to say, by which the guardians are revealed the primacy of friendship with the One.[497] Then there is a descent to the many that remains as it were below such oneness: the guardians return as representatives of the One *qua* first friend.[498] The second ascent consists in befriending the many so as to enter into and extend and increase the oneness that exists in the present, immanent world — as representatives of the One — and then lead the way towards the upward path.

This second ascent is necessary for bringing the auxiliary and producers to the One. But, as indicated, it is also necessary for the guardians to fully arrive at the One. For just as the charioteer of the *Phaedrus* cannot ascend to heaven alone, but only in unity with both horses, the guardians must ascend in unity with the auxiliaries and producers.[499] And that is only possible by way of friendship. The soul ascends when reason brings about friendship with spiritedness and desire, the city when the

[493] *Rep*. 612^{e}-613^{b}.
[494] *Rep*. 621^{c}.
[495] *Leg*. 743^{c}.
[496] *Rep*. 414^{b}.
[497] *Rep*. 500^{d}; 540^{a}-^{c}.
[498] See also Sheffield, 'Moral Motivation in Plato's Republic? Philia and the Return to the Cave', 120-126.
[499] We sense here a bridging of the gap between justice in the soul and the city. See also Singpurwalla, 'Plato's Defense of Justice in the *Republic*', 279.

guardians bring about friendship between the classes.[500] The guardians cannot, therefore, rule and steer the city by force; they must lead by example, by their way of life — namely the Pythagorean way of life. And that is a way of life steeped in traditional virtue and religion.[501]

We must here return to Garnsey, according to whom the guardians' way of life is *not* Pythagorean. Garnsey contends that the guardians, in contrast to the Pythagoreans, 'had no property of their own to share' and 'wives and children in common'.[502] But these are scarce grounds compared to the amounting pile of evidence that connects the guardians to the Pythagoreans. Moreover, Garnsey's grounds are also shaky, for two reasons. Firstly, even though there is no private property in the guardian class, there is in some sense *communal* property: the city is theirs. This is reflected in the fact that the guardians 'use these expressions, "mine" and "not mine", to refer to the same things in the same respects'.[503] And the Pythagorean ideal was precisely such communality of property.[504]

Secondly, although offensive to modern sentiments, the ancient Greeks regarded wives and children as the property of male citizens. To share property is therefore not only to share everything, but also everyone. This is reflected in the Pythagorean ideal of sharing the household,[505] which suggests a kind of sharing of wives and children, although not in Socrates' direct and literal sense. According to Iamblichus and other sources, such sharing was probably only realised by an elite among the Pythagoreans. This, of course, aligns well with Kallipolis' guardians. In any case, for both Plato and Pythagoras, the proverbial ideal of total sharing is justified as a

[500] *Rep*. 442^{c}-442^{d}.
[501] Religion, for Plato, simply is philosophy for the people. See Murphy, *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible*, 191-192.
[502] Garnsey, 'Pythagoras, Plato and communality: a note', 87.
[503] *Rep*. 462^{c}.
[504] See esp. Diog. Laert. 8.23.
[505] See Iambl. *VP* 17.72-74.

means to the end of relational oneness, a unity of affection and desire,[506] which for Plato, again like the Pythagoreans, was characteristic of friendship.

If anything, the guardian class is therefore a creatively idealised variant of the Pythagorean paradigm of political community: the guardians embody the political element of the city, mirroring the rational element of the soul. Garnsey's mistake is not only to identify differences where there are none, but also to neglect commonalities. In focusing too narrowly on the specifics of the property arrangement, that is, Garnsey fails to appreciate the broad horizon that unites the Pythagorean community and the guardian class: divine friendship. In the *Republic*, Socrates attempts to demonstrate that 'justice' based on enmity is seriously and dangerously mistaken and then to point in the direction of an alternative. On this alternative, justice only leads to,[507] or supports, that which matters most.[508] That which matters most is presumably the good itself, and we can only possess the good by allowing ourselves to be possessed by it, through philosophical or contemplative efforts. And for Plato and the Pythagoreans, this is tantamount to a life of friendship.

3.5 Nature, deification, and aporia in Plato's Socrates

The guardian class, and thus Kallipolis, seems to be modelled on a maxim of friendship: a divine ordering of soul, city, and universe to perfection in friendship. This maxim is distinctively Pythagorean. This becomes evident as we summarise the structural and functional similarities between the guardian class and the Pythagorean community in terms of three dimensions presented in § 3.2.

[506] *Rep*. 462^{a}-^{e}; Iambl. *VP* 167-168.
[507] See also *Rep*. 504^{c}-504^{d}.
[508] We see something similar in *Laws* also: in *Leg*. 1, the Athenian Stranger addresses Kleinias' view that the universe in a state of flux and strife and demonstrates its implausibility. Then Socrates makes the case that law and reason must accord to the friendship that permeates the universe: politics consist in reconciling (*diallagon*) the good and the wicked by deliberating about and then establishing laws that will secure peace, harmony, and friendship between them (627^{e}-628^{c}). See also Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, 142-143.

(A) The guardian class practices a way of life directed at friendship through education, virtue, and worship. Education (ref. mathematics, astronomy, and music) enables the guardians to understand the universe and their place in it and specifically the city. Exercising virtues and worshipping the traditional gods enable them to play their designated role. Their way of life is epitomised in the sharing of property and household, mirroring divine oneness, and implies ascetic and coenobitic living.

(B) The guardian class consists of men and women of different ages from different socio-economic backgrounds. Potential candidates are carefully considered, and if selected, bound by rules and rituals specific to the guardian class. Guardians are equal in an arithmetic sense, and Kallipolis' three classes in a geometrical sense, such that each class serves mutually reciprocal functions in relation to the city.

(C) The guardian class aims for a regeneration of morality and religion, that is to shape the city in the image of the guardians' way of life — and the other classes are supposed to participate in their way of life by adhering to their rule. The regeneration is mainly pursued by the way of exemplary living and philosophical dialogue.

The political community in the *Republic* fits remarkably well with the three dimensions; Kallipolis can therefore reasonably be taken to be a creatively idealised variant of the Pythagorean community. However, with that said, Plato's idealisation also presents a theoretical tension concerning the meaning of the 'political'. We have seen that the Pythagorean extension of the household seeks to increase friendship and, in doing so, claim to offer a community of true politics and justice. The Pythagorean community therefore suggests to us that the real city is not necessarily identical with the nominal city; a criticism that we found in Socrates also. In the

Republic, Socrates attempts to align nominal politics with this kind of real or genuine politics. But Socrate's method risks over-extending the household, which consequently could diminish rather than increase friendship. I shall, in closing, unpack this tension.

Plato, like the Pythagoreans, aimed at an ethical and religious 'overhauling' of cities,[509] that is, to shape politics in the image of the ideal, namely the One. But the Pythagorean understanding was that such overhauling could only be carried out as a free and voluntary conversion, just as the student must be freely and voluntary be taught the truth. Or with Iamblichus: 'teaching is correctly imparted when it takes place voluntarily, and both the teacher and the student are willing' — for without such mutual freedom and voluntariness, 'the proposed work can never be truly completed'.[510] Similarly, freedom and voluntariness are necessary conditions for genuine friendship. But Socrates' respect for freedom and voluntariness is ambiguous at best. For instance, the guardians only reluctantly respond to the calling to rule, that is to descend so as to ascend again, and citizens often reject the order that is necessary to perfect them.[511]

We might say that the Platonic political theorist — and in our case: Socrates — is a demiurge of sorts. For Socrates discerns the pattern laid up in heaven, and then structures the parts of the city thereafter, like a craftsman, such that the city can function as a self-sufficient whole. Citizens rejecting this pattern are comparable to limbs rejecting being limbs of the body to which they belong. This rejection would be senseless, even self-destructive, and can therefore not be properly free and voluntary. Or, in terms of the analogical interpretation of the *Republic*: although the irrational part of the soul can rebel against the rational part, its proper freedom is found in voluntarily submitting to its rule. The political theorists and their devoted

[509] *L*.7 326[a].
[510] Iambl. *VP* 29.183.
[511] See *Rep*. 500[b]-501[a].

politicians — the former we might crown philosopher-kings; the latter is represented by the guardian class — are analogous to the rational part of the soul, structuring the irrational parts such that their needs and desires can function according to their nature, avoiding conflict and disintegration among the parts, and ordering them all to wholistic perfection.[512] And once the citizens have likewise been convinced about the good and then led to it by freely and voluntarily following the guardians' example, they will also come to *want* the good.

This understanding of political theory reappears in the *Laws*, and specifically the Socratic activity of the unnamed Athenian.[513] By practicing friendship, the unnamed Athenian habituates friendly dialogue between Kleinias the Cretan and Megillus the Spartan — a dialogue revolving around friendship as the form and substance of politics. This dialogue does not only make friends of Kleinias and Megillus, which is to say a friendship that figuratively covers the entire Greek world. The dialogue also makes friendship the basis of the new city Magnesia. The unnamed Athenian does so by demonstrating that the universe is ordered according to Pythagorean principles of divine harmony,[514] and that citizens are perfected by contemplating — and thus participating — in it.[515] Such contemplation can be done directly by philosophy, and indirectly by living well together in accordance with law based on reason. This notion of a common life well lived is epitomised in the friendly, religious festivities of a just city. Thus, according to the *Laws*, the political theorists' demiurgical ordering, when done correctly, goes hand-in-hand with the citizens' needs and desires, leading them where they not only must, but also want to go: a place of friendship.

[512] See *Rep*. 462^{a}-462^{c}; 500^{e}.
[513] See Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, esp. chap. 5-7. See also Rhodes, 'Platonic Philia and Political Order', 22; 47-48.
[514] *Leg*. 893^{c}ff. See Zdravko Planinc, *Plato's Political Philosophy: Prudence in the* Republic *and the* Laws (Duckworth, 1991), 221-233; Ernst G. McClain, *The Pythagorean Plato: Prelude to the Song Itself* (Nicolas-Hays, 1978), 97-116; 130-131.
[515] Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, 184.

But what if the citizens, and especially the politicians among them, reject the ideal and refuse to go for it — as seems the case for Thrasymachus, and especially Kallicles? How can political theorists respond of they are dismissed? In the *Laws*' passage about the Pythagorean proverb, Socrates states that the communality of everything and everyone is contrary to nature and is only fit for gods.[516] But if the order and perfection of humans go against their nature, and is only appropriate for gods, then is friendship really possible for humans after all? And if not, is it relevant for political theory, which is essentially about humans in this world? Similarly, is it possible to 'persuade or compel' citizens for the sake of achieving friendship?[517]

Socrates suggests so: a kind of enmity for the sake of friendship is justified. But if that is the case, it seems that the ideal politicians, the philosopher-kings, will be alienated from friendship if they enter into politics, and even risk turning into tyrants with quasi-noble intentions.[518] For, according to Socrates, genuine politics is about moral development in the city,[519] and we cannot force virtue upon other citizens. Yet, if we do not, then many or most of us will refuse the sacrifices that are necessary for moral development and genuine friendship. Indeed, even Socrates seems unable to enter into genuine friendship. Thus Plato teaches us not only that incomplete friendship is a necessary precondition for politics,[520] and the completion

[516] *Leg*. 739^{b}-739^{d}.
[517] *Rep*. 519^{e}. See also *Gorg*. 505^{b}.
[518] *Rep*. 575^{e}-576^{a}. Similarly, referencing *Leg*. 832^{b}-832^{c}, Lane observes that for the unnamed Athenian, 'no constitution in which the citizens are unwillingly ruled — naming democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny — is a proper *politeia* at all', *Of Rule and Office*, 389.
[519] *Gorg*. 522^{d}.
[520] Horst Hutter makes the interesting case that this was also the case historically: although the clubs of ancient Greece were liable to degenerate into cliques conspiring against one another for power and privilege, thus wreaking havoc on the political order, they were also, when serving their proper function, taken to support and promote the city. And the clubs were uniquely typified by a structure of equality, epitomised in the sharing of property and family, contrary to the prevailing superiority-inferiority structure that organised hierarchies of power and produced privileges in Homeric society. Civic equality as a standard of political justice was therefore rendered conceivable as an extension of this kind of equality among aristocratic clubs to the people — which was only possible if friendship was extended also, as the equality was grounded in friendship. If Hutter's case is correct, then that would provide an interesting historical background for my proposed reading Plato's political theory. See Horst Hutter, *Politics as Friendship: The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978), 37ff. Hutter also connects this historical case to the Pythagoreans, 48-50.

of friendship its ultimate end, but also, and simultaneously, that it is forever beyond its reach.

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In the *Republic*, we have found that the Pythagorean proverb is at the core of an interesting argument about the nature of politics: first, the soul must participate in the divine order and perfection of the universe; second, the divine order and perfection of the universe just is friendship; third, participation in this kind of friendship requires that we engage in politics.[521] This argument lays the premises for further argumentation about the issue in eight important respects.[522] First, Plato's Socrates introduced the distinction between genuine (or true or real) and counterfeit (or phantom or *ersatz*) politics. Second, genuine politics is concerned with completing human nature. Third, human nature is completed in self-sufficiency. Fourth, self-sufficiency consists in friendship with the One. Fifth, friendship with the One can only be achieved by ascending by way of intellectual contemplation and moral development. Sixth, to ascend to the One, it is necessary to befriend the many in which the One exists, and specifically one's fellow citizens — for the political community mirrors the One. Seventh, befriending fellow citizens consists in participating in a good, just, and pious city that ascends communally towards the One via study, virtue, and ritual. Eight, participating in a good, just, and pious city is only possible insofar as the citizens share life as one under the same law.

The image of this kind of politics is a journey towards the One. The guardians *lead* by way of example, that is, as exemplars of moral and intellectual perfection, towards self-sufficiency. The guardians are in a position where they behold the One and can thus *communicate* its goodness and authority. In thus moving towards the One, the difference between ruler and ruled vanishes. Just as the rational part *is* the

[521] On the communal or political dimension of the soul's ascent, see also Murphy, *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible*, 194ff.
[522] For convenience, these premises are provided in Appendix 1.

soul,[523] such that the other parts merge with the rational part in and by perfection, the ruling element *is* the city, and in moving towards the One, the other elements are completely united with it in and by friendship.

However, according to the maxim of friendship in the *Republic*, politics should lead us towards the divine and away from nature, and because both guardians and citizens might resist this, coercion is necessary. Yet such coercion undermines friendship as a condition for politics and makes it unable to move closer to its end: the perfection of friendship. Thus we come to find that politics, in Plato's Socrates, is either unrealistic and indeed irrelevant — in the sense that it is only applicable to the divine — or aporetic: friendship is a precondition for politics, and politics aims at the perfection of such friendship, but since politics necessitates coercion, and friendship is inconsistent with coercion, politics is incapable of reaching its own end. That brings us to Aristotle, who picks up on the *Republic's* argument about friendship and politics in *Pol*. 2, and according to whom politics must deal with things as they are, not as we might have hoped they were in 'our prayers'.[524]

[523] *Rep.* 589^{a}; *Tim*. 69^{c}-90^{c}.
[524] *Pol*. 1295^{a}29.

CHAPTER 4

Property, Sharing, and Friendship in Aristotle

In *Pol.* 2.5, Aristotle says that 'property should in a way be communal', for even though it must be owned in 'private' (*idas*), it ought to be used in 'common' (*koinas*).[525] Variations of communal ownership are ruled.[526] This is due to a couple of reasons. In *Pol*. 1.8, Aristotle has established that there is a kind of property that belongs to us by nature.[527] Communal ownership is therefore unnatural and, *ipso facto*, conjure political fragmentation.[528] Aristotle similarly maintains that property is essential to the household — without which there can be no functioning city. By virtue of being political animals, we are therefore also domestic animals, which is to be a property owning animal.[529] Thus, for Aristotle, property does not demarcate a space of individuality *vis-à-vis* community, but a space of domestic communities

[525] *Pol*. 1263^{a}25-30.
[526] *Pol*. 1263^{a}3-7; 1263^{b}22-1263^{b}29. Total privatisation is ruled out also: if property and its use were private, then citizens would be confined to their household. Such an arrangement would warp the citizens' character, bending them towards themselves, and away from political life, which in turn would fragment the city. See also Peter Simpson, *A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 125.
[527] See Karen Margrethe Nielsen, 'Economy and Private Property', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 74. Thus, eradicating private property entails 'a sort of self-destruction' (*NE* 1120^{a}2).
[528] *Pol*. 1263^{a}10. See also *Pol*. 1262^{b}14-24; 1263^{a}14-15.
[529] *NE* 1162^{a}15-19.

vis-à-vis the political community.[530] This is purportedly a natural space of love and belonging,[531] of *philoi* and *oikeioi*.

A Fred D. Miller has pointed out, for Aristotle, therefore, property is *per se* private.[532] But property ought nonetheless to be used communally. We are told that where such 'use is concerned, it is thanks to virtue that, in accord with the proverb, "friends share everything communally"' (*koina ta philon*).[533] Or, alternatively rendered: 'the things of friends are common'.[534] They are made so by voluntary, generous sharing.[535] The 'special' task of legislators is therefore to dispose citizens to make such communal use of their property.[536] This links *Pol* 2.5 to *NE* 8.1, wherein Aristotle suggests that the aim of legislators is the opposite of political fragmentation, namely friendship: 'if people are friends, there is no need for justice, while people who are just need friendship in addition to justice'.[537]

The proverbial friendship ideal represents a curious point of agreement between Aristotle and Plato's Socrates, whose friendship maxim we considered in the pre-

[530] Private property is attached to households rather than individuals: 'private property' is another way of saying 'household property', since property is *per se* 'part of the household' (*Pol*. 1253^{b}23). Correspondingly '*idias*' can be rendered 'that which pertains to one's self', and for Aristotle, as Elizabeth Belfiore demonstrates, the 'self' is a communal entity. See Elizabeth Belfiore, 'Family Friendship in Aristotle's Ethics', *Ancient Philosophy*, 21 (2001): 122-126.
[531] *Pol*. 1263^{a}40ff.
[532] See Fred D. Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's* Politics (Oxford University Press, 1997), 312.
[533] *Pol*. 1263^{a}25-30.
[534] Simpson, *A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle*, 126.
[535] See also Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's* Politics, 324. Aristotle claims that property is private so that it can be shared generously among friends. Terence Irwin reckons that Aristotle is confused on this issue: the city can lend citizens property which they then can share generously. Against the objection that such an arrangement would diminish the cost of giving something, and therefore the value of generosity, Irwin responds that the virtuous' attachment to the common good is so firm that, for the virtuous, the distinction between mine and thine is already practically eliminated. However, this is unconvincing: assuming that this common good does not require or include a structure of private property is to assume the conclusion. See Terence Irwin, 'Aristotle's Defense of Private Property', in *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, ed. David Keyt and Fred D. Miller (Blackwells, 1991), 200-225, esp. 224. See also Robert Mayhew, 'Aristotle on Property', *Review of Metaphysics* 46, no. 4 (1993): 814-815.
[536] *Pol*. 1263^{a}39-40.
[537] *NE* 1155^{a}22-28.

vious chapter. Both seem to think of friendship as 'the greatest of goods for cities'.[538] For the bond 'that holds cities together'[539] appears to be generated by the 'function of friendship' (*philias ergon*).[540] Thus we sense that the proverbial ideal is a critical component of Aristotle's understanding of happiness and self-sufficiency.[541] Yet it remains more or less unexamined by commentators on Aristotle's political theory.[542] In line with MacIntyre's analysis in Chapter 12 of *After Virtue*, I propose that the proverb serves as a key for unlocking an interesting argument about the nature of politics in Aristotle's political theory. In summary, it runs like this: friendship is the essential and primary relation of the city *qua* city because friendship is uniquely integral to happiness and self-sufficiency; thus the city must aim for friendship.

I begin by exploring the connection between 'community' (*koinonia*) and 'friend' (*philon*) in *NE* 8.9, from which I derive a genus-species distinction: various species of friendship can be differentiated with respect to the goods that the friends commonly recognise and pursue (§ 4.1). This move makes it possible to demonstrate that domestic and civic friendship are different species of the same genus: virtue friendship. I then consider the virtue that governs communities of friendship, namely generosity or liberality (*eleutheriotes*). I point out that generosity defines

[538] *Pol*. 1262^{b}7-8. See also 1261^{b}7-8; *NE* 1155^{a}22-29.
[539] *NE* 1155^{a}22. An essential feature of this bond is that it maintains unity (*NE* 1155^{a}24), which is exactly the kind of function that friendship performs in *Pol*. 2, see esp. *Pol*. 1262^{b}7-8.
[540] *Pol*. 1262^{b}10.
[541] Saunders observes that Aristotle's emphasis on the connection between property, sharing, and friendship in *Pol*. 2, but that it appears to be underdeveloped. See *Politics: Books I and II*, trans. T. J. Saunders (Clarendon Press, 2020), 106-126.
[542] There are of course a number of very illuminating analyses of the critical project Aristotle levels against Plato's Socrates in *Pol*. 2 — this is not my present concern, but it is interesting to observe that the proverb itself usually remains in the dark. See *e.g.* Boersma, *Aristotle's Quarrel with Socrates: Friendship in Political Thought*, 163-164; Robert Mayhew, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's* Republic (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 105-108; R. F. Stalley, 'Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's *Republic*', in *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, ed. D. Keyt and F. D. Miller (Blackwell, 1991), 196. This is even the case for the edited volume which bears the proverb as title, edited by Jakub Jinek and Veronika Konrádová: *For Friends, All Is Shared: Friendship and Politics in Ancient Greek Political Thought*. A notable exception, however, is Eckart Schütrumpf's contribution: '"Being Common for Use as Among Friends": Aristotle on the Advantages of Private Property, 131-156. However, Schütrumpf does not probe into the proverbial connection between property, sharing, and friendship.

the relational mode of friendship: friendship consists in *giving* rather than receiving friendship (§ 4.2). This mode is perfected in the characteristic way of life that virtue friends share — a life well lived in *common* — which I expound. That puts us in a position to see, firstly, that household and property are indispensable to domestic friendship because they provide the location and instruments for achieving friendship. Secondly, we see why and how domestic friendship is uniquely integral to happiness and — as suggested by a passage in *Pol*. 3.9 wherein the aforementioned function of friendship reappears — self-sufficiency. That brings us to the middle constitution in *Pol*. 4.11, which serves to substantiate this suggestion from *Pol*. 3.9: domestic-*cum*-civic friendship is uniquely integral to self-sufficiency, and via self-sufficiency, civic friendship is integral to happiness also (§ 4.3).

Having thus unlocked the aforementioned friendship argument, I respond to two considerable objections. One concerns the meaning of 'concord' (*homonoia*). The proposed argument seems to assume that civic friendship is a species of virtue friendship. Yet Aristotle identifies civic friendship with concord, which is to classify it as an advantage friendship (§ 4.4). The second objection concerns the relation between justice and friendship. The argument seems to imply that friendship is the basic principle of Aristotle's political theory, but it is justice, not friendship, that has this status (§ 4.5).

4.1 Sharing, community, generosity — and the genus-species distinction

In *NE* 8.9, Aristotle considers the relation between community, friendship, and justice. I put the issue of justice momentarily to the side; I return to it in § 4.5. It is important to remember that community (*koinonia*) just is to 'have in common' (*koinonein*) with the members of a community; it is to share with them, such that mem-

bers of a community are per definition sharers (*koinonoi*). The community is therefore literally 'a sharing things in common'.[543] And according to Aristotle, we should conceive of such sharing in terms of friendship: 'the extent to which they share things communally is the extent of their friendship'.[544] Similarly, Aristotle reckons that according to the proverb, 'it is in community that friendship lies'.[545]

Aristotle elaborates that some friends 'have everything in common, others have only specified things — more in some cases, less in others; for some friendships are in fact greater in extent, others less'.[546] Friendships therefore seem to vary both qualitatively and quantitatively with respect to that which is shared. Specifically, Aristotle suggests that there are different species of friendship, corresponding to different types of communities, and that the species are differentiated with respect to the goods the friends share and the manner of their sharing. I shall attempt to develop that suggestion.

What might friendship as a genus be for Aristotle? Aristotle, of course, distinguishes between friendships based on, or aiming for, advantage, pleasure, and virtue.[547] Advantage and pleasure friendships cannot be species of friendship proper, for Aristotle informs us that these so-called 'friendships' are means to something other than friendship; they are friendships 'coincidentally' (*kata symbebekos*), that is, by accidence and not in essence.[548] The genus must therefore be defined in terms

[543] Simpson, *A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle*, 115.
[544] *NE* 1159^{b}27-29. See also 1171^{b}32. Aristotle mentions the proverb on one other occasions in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: it is referred to in *NE* 1168^{b}5-10 as one among 'all the proverbs' that affirm the importance of friendship with oneself — we share, after all, most with ourselves, and thus are most friend with ourselves. (Aristotle also refers to the proverb twice in *EE* 8.2 to demonstrate that vicious people cannot be friends: these kinds of 'friends' are dedicated to their things, rather than dedicating their things to their friend.)
[545] *NE* 1159^{b}30-32.
[546] *NE* 1159^{b}32-35; 1160^{a}30-32.
[547] *NE* 1156^{a}5-1156^{b}24. Lorraine Smith Pangle reckons that virtue never suffices in and of itself, there must be pleasure also. But this introduces a false dichotomy: the necessary kind of pleasure is something that supervenes on virtuous activity. See Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, 54-55.
[548] *NE* 1156^{b}10.

of virtue friendship. A fairly standard definition of Aristotle's virtue friendship focuses on goodwill (*eunoia*).

> *Standard Definition*: Friendship is (1) 'reciprocated goodwill' (2) for the sake of the friend (3) which is recognised as such among the friends.[549]

It is necessary to briefly expound this definition. I shall do so in terms of Aquinas' three acts or effects of friendship: benevolence (*benovelentia*), beneficence (*beneficentia*), and concord (*concordia*) — to will our friend's good and not their evil; do good deeds for him or her and avoiding harming them; and affirm and rejecting the same things as them.[550] It is important to note that Aristotle's concord, which I consider in § 4.4, is neither a contractual compromise nor an agreement in opinion; it is an action (*praxis*) that involves the sharing of life, either in part or as a whole.[551] The Standard Definition, however, does not adequately capture friendship's relational core, the-sake-for-which potential friends enter into actual friendship. According to Aristotle, potential friends come together to advance in 'virtue'[552] and achieve the good in and by 'the sharing of activity'.[553] We have found a second and alternative definition — complementary, I should stress, not rivalling — in MacIntyre.[554]

> *Alternative Definition*: Friendship is a shared recognition and pursuit of goods and ultimately the good.[555]

[549] *NE* 1155^{b}30-1156^{a}5; 1156^{b}7-1156^{b}10; 1166^{a}1-8.
[550] *ST* II-II q. 80, a. 2; *Eth*. 9.5. See Schwartz, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 7-8. According to Schwartz, Aquinas' *concordia* is 'equivalent to Aristotle's *homonoia*' (however, Aquinas's emphasis is on unity of wills and choices).
[551] Kostas Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease* (State University of New York Press, 2000), 57; 59-60.
[552] *NE* 1162^{b}6.
[553] Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, 55.
[554] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 155.
[555] This definition centres on the co-perception (*sunaisthesis*) of the good, which comes about in living well together (*NE* 1170^{b}9-14). See also Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, 43-48.

I take these two definitions to define friendship as a genus. Both are able to accommodate the aforementioned species differentiation. The Standard Definition, for instance, can be differentiated with respect to different kinds of benevolence, beneficence, and concord. Similarly, in terms of the Alternative Definition, friendship species can be differentiated with respect to the goods that the friends recognise and the manner by which they pursue them. I examine the friendship species that are integral to happiness and self-sufficiency in §§ 4.2 and 4.3, and in doing so, we will get a better sense of the genus also. For the remainder of this present section, however, I center on sharing — since friendship is located in the aforementioned communities of sharing — and specifically generosity, which is the virtue governing such sharing.

In *NE* 4.1, we find that the virtuous value their wealth 'for the sake of giving', not for itself.[556] Generosity is however only secondarily about the things given, that is wealth or property,[557] and primarily about a virtuous disposition *to give*.[558] We can therefore distinguish between generosity in a narrow sense, giving concerning specifically wealth or property, and in a broader sense: a certain mode of relationality that takes pleasure in giving not only money or material goods, but also such things as time, effort, and love. It is important to note, however, that although generosity consists 'especially' in the giving, receiving is a necessary component of generosity.[559] That is not only because giving necessarily demands a prior endowment — we were all given life by our parents, the 'greatest of goods' — but also because it is typically ungenerous to avoid or refuse to receive.[560] The virtue of generosity is therefore completed in receiving *and* giving, that is, in sharing. Specifically, it is a mean between unkindness and prodigality, between receiving without giving and giving without receiving.[561]

[556] *NE* 1120^{b}15-16.
[557] *NE* 1120^{a}14-15.
[558] *NE* 1120^{b}8.
[559] *NE* 1119^{b}26.
[560] *NE* 1117^{b}14; 1120^{b}33; 1163^{b}15. Aristotle reckons that even acquired wealth is in fact given to us (if it is integral to self-sufficiency): it is 'given by nature itself' (*Pol*. 1256^{b}7; *cf.* 1256^{b}40ff).
[561] *NE* 1120^{a}27.

Crucially, this generous disposition is characterised by appropriateness. Generosity is to 'give to the people one should, in the amount one should, when one should, and so on for all the other things that go along with correct giving'.[562] Such appropriateness is relative to our roles in relation to one another — roles given to us by nature or culture or a combination thereof. In *Pol*. 2.5, Aristotle criticises Plato's Socrates for not appreciating this fact. Aristotle says that people cannot be forced to 'live together and share in any human concern'; this kind of sharing is only appropriate for friendship in the household, among whom everything is shared.[563] Friendship in the city, as we shall see, consist in the appropriate sharing of *some* things, but certainly not everything.[564]

I now turn to the 'various sorts of friendship' that we find in the two communities that are indispensable to Aristotle's political theory: household and city.[565] The household is the 'first community'.[566] It is not only the historical origin of the city, but also the home of every citizen such that, in *their* life, the household remains the first community.[567] The city, however, is 'prior in nature'.[568] This priority is teleological: the city represents the completion of the household, or put differently, the household in a state of self-sufficiency.[569] Thus, I begin by considering friendship in and around the household.

[562] *NE* 1120^{a}24-25.
[563] See *Pol*. 1263^{a}14-15.
[564] *Pol*. 1260^{b}35-40.
[565] *NE* 1160^{a}29.
[566] *Pol*. 1253^{a}19, 1257^{a}19. See also *NE* 1160^{a}20-30.
[567] See *Pol.* 1252^{b}14ff.
[568] *Pol*. 1257^{a}19; *NE* 1160^{a}20-30. See also Brendan Nagle, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle's* Polis (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19.
[569] *Pol.* 1252^{b}25-31.

4.2 Domestic friendship in *NE*: the wise and their mothers

With Elizabeth Belfiore, I propose that Aristotle presents us with two 'paradigms' of domestic friendship: friendship in the family (esp. between mother and child) and among the wise (*i.e.* male aristocrats). Belfiore's argument focuses on the idea, which is so important in Aristotle's friendship account, that virtuous friends are other selves.[570] Belfiore argues convincingly that family members are also other selves, and thus friends. I make a complementary argument, focusing on the proverb. That argument consists in defending two claims. Firstly, if we apply the Alternative Definition, we see that familial relations comprise species of virtue friendship. Secondly, friendship among the wise is modelled on their mother's friendship with her children. Put simply, our gaze is easily drawn to the grandeur of the pinnacle of friendship, friendship among the wise, and we do well in beholding it, for it enables us to see important things about friendship as a shared recognition and pursuit of the good. But the pinnacle is not everything, especially not for students of Aristotle's political theory — specifically, it is not the foundational thing.

Interestingly, Aristotle tells us that the household (like the city) is bound by a shared recognition or 'perception of the good and the bad'.[571] That, in turn makes it possible to go on pursuing the good in and by familial relations, which comprise the essential core of the household. If we apply the Alternative Definition, we appreciate that this immediately means that familial relations are friendships. And the household's basic, indispensable friendship is that between the spouses. This friendship is 'natural' in the sense that it is a requirement for life itself.[572] However, the spousal friendship is also 'for virtue, if both parties are decent'.[573] I return to decency (*epieikeia*) in § 4.4 — for the moment, let us simply stipulate that decent

[570] *NE* 1166^{a}29-32.
[571] *Pol*. 1253^{a}16-17. See also *EE* 1242^{a}40.
[572] *NE* 1161^{b}16.
[573] *NE* 1162^{a}24-25; 1162^{a}27-30.

spouses share a recognition and pursuit of the goods of the household.[574] How might they do so?

If they are decent, the spouses serve reciprocal functions in relation to one another *qua* husband and wife.[575] Aristotle does not think that men and women are arithmetically equal. But they can nonetheless be said to be geometrically equalised, as friends are,[576] *in their friendship* by virtue of being complementary parts of the same communal whole, that is, as a community bound together in a shared recognition and pursuit of the good. Antagonism in any such community arises when there is no shared recognition of the communal whole to which the parts belong, and the kind of roles each part play in relation to one another, which in turn impedes their shard pursuit of the good. Friends that are geometrically rather than arithmetically equalised do 'not get the same things from the other and should not seek them either'.[577] For they inhabit interlocking roles with complementary duties, privileges, and manners of sharing.[578] Similarly, they receive complementary goods. For instance, the common good of family can only be achieved by members of the family, but different members will achieve complementary 'family goods', such as the goods of parenthood and childhood.

This brings us to the constitutive good of family, 'a good common to both' spouses: children.[579] Children are generated by the spouses' friendship and extend and enlarge that friendship, transforming it into a family; there is therefore also a 'natural friendship' among parents and children.[580] This friendship is characterised by total

[574] *NE* 1162^{a}19-30.
[575] *NE* 1158^{b}17-18.
[576] *NE* 1158^{b}20-28.
[577] *NE* 1158^{b}20-21.
[578] Bradford Jean-Hyuk Kim helpfully distinguishes between bi-directional and mono-directional dimensions of friendships: the former refers to friendship *between* individuals, *e.g.* within the family, and the latter to friendship *towards* individuals, *e.g.* parent to child and *vice versa*. Bradford Jean-Hyuk Kim, 'Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* on the Sameness of Friendship and Justice', *Apeiron* 56, no. 3: 397. See also David Riesbeck, *Aristotle on Political Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 164-165.
[579] *NE* 1162^{a}27.
[580] *NE* 1163^{b}24.

sharing. Indeed, mothers provide their children with goods of their very own body, such as warmth and milk. Together with her husband, the children are initiated into the family's rites and customs, educated in various disciplines and crafts, and habituated in the virtues.[581] In due course, the spouses must offer, so to say, their offspring to the city — as morally representative citizens that are capable of establishing households of their own and contributing to the life of the city in various capacities. In fact, the family is a unique training ground for practicing the friendships that are integral to each of Aristotle's three kinds of just constitutions.[582] This emphasises the profound connection between flourishing households and flourishing cities, which we shall return to.

Flourishing households are also able to introduce its members to 'complete' or 'perfect' (*teleia*) friendship. This friendship species can only be achieved among the wise, for they are not only geometrically but also arithmetically equal with respect to virtue.[583] This brings us to the virtue of friends *qua* friends (*philos*), which is perfected by the wise: this virtue consists in 'loving' (*to philein*) — it is important to note that the noun and verb are cognate — rather than being loved.[584] This means that friendship assumes a mode of generosity: we have seen that generosity consists principally in giving, and friendship, similarly, consists principally in giving love or friendship. This mode gives itself to the characteristic way of life among complete friends, that is, 'living together'.[585] Put differently, virtuous friends share life itself virtuously.

Aristotle suggests that we are naturally exposed to both the virtue of friendship and friends' corresponding way of life even as we were woven forth in the wombs of our mothers. For according to Aristotle, mothers embody the virtue of friendship,

[581] See also *NE* 1168^{a}20-22.
[582] See *NE* 1160^{b}22-1161^{a}6. In Belfiore's summary, 'the relationship of father to son is kingly, that between husband and wife is aristocratic, and that among brothers is timocratic'. See Belfiore, 'Family Friendship in Aristotle's Ethics', 115-116.
[583] See 1163^{b}1-24. See also 1169^{b}29-1170^{a}4; 1172^{a}13,
[584] *NE* 1159^{a}32.
[585] *NE* 1162^{a}24-25.

that is, loving.[586] And upon being born by our mothers and raised in her home, we find ourselves invariably living together with family members. If our parents are decent, then they will therefore make known to us the paradox of friendship: extending one's love of self to a friend does not lessen one's self-love but rather enlarges it, for the friend is another self. This makes it possible to understand that a life without another selves is incomplete, which ought to awaken in us a desire for the virtues that are integral to friendship, and specifically complete friendship.[587]

For Aristotle, it is not only the case that mothers reveal the virtue of complete friendship to the wise and thus makes it possible to habituate and practice this virtue and other virtues required for such friendship; the household is also the principal location for exercising complete friendship. My claim is not that 'living together' means cohabitation; complete friends need not share the same household. Rather, the claim is that living together also involves the sharing of one another's households, and necessarily so. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, 'living together' requires spatial proximity, which is made evident upon considering the fact that friends must spend time together: complete friends must be available to one another, help one another out, and 'spend their days together'.[588] Moreover, they must do so *over* time. For only then can 'intimacy' and 'trust' develop, which makes possible the kind of care by which friends correct one another for sake of becoming better.[589] Thus, although it is possible to engage in the activities of friends (*e.g.* drinking and feasting, training and hunting, playing and philosophising)[590] in the city, and as we shall see it is necessary for complete friends to be active in the city, it is nonetheless practically impossible for complete friends to avoid sharing in one another's households. According to Aristotle, such living together makes it possible to share a common recognition and pursuit of the good — this 'comes about in their

[586] *NE* 1161^{b}27. See also 1159^{a}25-30; 1166^{a}1-5. Sybil Schwarzenbach pioneered attentiveness to motherhood in Aristotle's friendship account, 'On Civic Friendship,' *Ethics* 107, no. 1 (1996): 97-128.
[587] See *NE* 1172^{a}1-7.
[588] *NE* 1158^{a}7-10; 1171^{b}12-19.
[589] *NE* 1156^{b}25-27; 1172^{a}9-15.
[590] *NE* 1162^{a}24-25.

living together and sharing in talk and thought, for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of human beings'.[591] Thus, to live together as friends is to live *well* together, that is, for the sake of the good. And this brings us to the second reason: in Aristotle's understanding of living well, the household is indispensable. This is epitomised in *Pol*. 3.9, which I shall turn to momentarily. Put simply: although completed in the city, the life well lived emerges from the household. And since complete friends share even their self with one another, that must involve the entirety of their lives, including the life in the household.

To summarise: the virtue of friends consist in loving, and loving is generosity. We can now point to three important ways that the wise must similarly exercise generosity in and by their friendship. Firstly in the sharing of that property and wealth and material goods (*e.g.* vineyards, hunting dogs, books) which is required for living well together. Secondly, to thus live well together, the friends must share life itself. Thirdly, the friend is an external good that is internalised, and thus better than any and all other external goods.[592] But the friends can only remain *friends* if they avoid taking one another for granted or clinging to one another; they must as it were possess one another in a spirit of generosity.

This brings us to the connection between friendship and contemplation: in *NE* 9.9 Aristotle says that the virtuous come to be self-sufficient — which is the perfection of the life well lived — in and by contemplation, and that such contemplation is only possible as a shared activity among friends.[593] I shall suggest that contemplation, the essential and constitutive activity of friendship among the wise, also operates according to a principle of generosity. In *NE* 10.7-9, Aristotle suggest this very

[591] *NE* 1170^{b}10-13. See also 1171^{b}30-32; 1159^{b}31; 1157^{b}20. See also Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, 42-44; Irene Liu, 'Love Life: Aristotle on Living Together with Friends', *Inquiry* 53, no. 6 (2010): 579-601.
[592] *NE* 1155^{a}5-6; 1170^{b}1-19.
[593] See Bradford Jean-Hyuk Kim, 'Aristotle's NE ix 9 on Why the Happy Person Needs Friends', *Ancient Philosophy* 41 (2021): 495-518.

thing himself, for Aristotle remarks that humans can only contemplate because we have been *gifted* a 'divine element'.[594] I shall attempt to expound this remark.

Contemplation does not, by any act of the will, *produce* the good. We can only attain the good by giving ourselves to the act of contemplation, that is by being receptive to the good and offering ourselves to its unfolding within us.[595] If we were to receive it, it would make no sense to try to keep it for ourselves — that is, to withhold it from sharing. For if we share the good in and by conversation, thus extending it to others, it does not diminish, but rather increases. Before we were alone in contemplation, now we do it with our friends, speaking our thoughts to one another, and thereby come to know and thus possess the good more fully than we otherwise could. The political import is significant. In *NE* 10.7, Aristotle says that contemplation is the natural ruler,[596] and then, in *Pol*. 7.3, that the political life is revealed to us in the life of the philosopher.[597] Similarly, according to James Bernard Murphy, the 'best politics is one chastened by the understanding that philosophy transcends politics', making the philosopher the city's 'best friend'.[598] The philosophers reveal to us politics' proper end: the nature of self-sufficiency. Thus, just as the mother must give her children to the city, and be enriched rather than impoverished by doing so, the wise should give of their knowledge to the city and its rulers, like Socratic midwives, and in the process become more and not less wise.[599]

We see that for Aristotle, then, generous possession of *goods* among friends is entangled with generous possession of *the* good. We should not be surprised, therefore, that the virtuous are materially comfortable and even well-off, but not very rich.[600] The wise share their property, lives, and selves in order to come to possess

[594] *NE* 1177^{a}27-29.
[595] See Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 349ff.
[596] *NE* 1177^{a}10-17.
[597] *Pol.* 1325^{b}12ff.
[598] Murphy, *Deification in Classical Greek Philosophy and the Bible*, 263.
[599] Daniel P. Maher, 'Contemplative Friendship in "Nicomachean Ethics"', *Review of Metaphysics* 65, no. 4 (2012): 794.
[600] *NE* 1179^{a}193.

the good together as a shared and generous activity, which is to possess the good more fully than what would otherwise be possible. Thus, whereas familial friendships are per definition friendships in the household, friendship among the wise is as it so happens only possible in and around the friends' households. Moreover, the former is a precondition for the latter: the wise do not come into being out of nothing, but in the family. Conversely, the latter is a perfection of the former. This kind of perfection is integral to happiness. It is also the beginning of self-sufficiency. For as the wise come together across households in order to live well together, their households are 'extended' in that their households are united and thus give rise to villages and ultimately cities. This extension serves to 'increase' the friendship of the household, because it moves the household towards its completion as a part of whole that is the city. The significance of friendship for self-sufficiency is made evident when Aristotle returns to the 'function of friendship' in *Pol*. 3.9.

> Rather the city is the community in living well for both households and families, namely, complete and self-sufficient living. […] That is why marriage connections arose in cities, as well as brotherhoods, religious sacrifices, and the pastimes characteristic of living together. And things of this sort are the function of friendship, since the deliberate choice to live together is friendship.[601]

Aristotle seems to say that domestic friendship is not only integral to happiness, but also self-sufficiency. This brings us to civic friendship. For self-sufficiency, of course, is the ultimate good that civic friends attempt to achieve by virtue of their friendship.[602] In the next section, I attempt to expound this passage from *Pol*. 3.9, and specifically the political function of friendship, in terms of the middle constitution in *Pol*. 4.11.

[601] *Pol*. 1280^{b}30-1281^{a}1. See also *NE* 1155^{a}22-29.
[602] *Pol*. 1263^{a}15. To strengthen the political bond by severing the ties of the household is therefore an impossible strategy. See John M. Cooper, 'Political Animals and Civic Friendship', in *Aristotle's* Politik*. Akten des XI sium Aristotelicum 1987*, ed. G. Patzig (Gôttingen, 1990), 233, n. 15; Nielsen, 'Economy and Private Property', 78.

4.3 Civic friendship in *Pol.*: the bestness of the middle constitution

For Aristotle, politics is 'architectonic'.[603] It consists in ruling and especially legislating, that is, making good laws (*nomos*) that make good citizens.[604] Political theorisation furnishes politicians with maxims for doing so.[605] And the *Politics* is concerned with the maxim of sharing straight from the outset: 'the citizens must share either everything, or nothing, or some things but not others'.[606] Aristotle immediately rules out the possibility of sharing nothing, for citizens *qua* citizens must at least share the city. What more are they to share, and how? Their sharing is presumably constitutive of their friendship *qua* members of the political community.

It is striking that Aristotle refers to the proverb *koina ta philon* in outlining the best city. The citizens of this city share not only law, but also education, rituals, and meals.[607] The rich make common use of their private property by giving the poor access to their lands, according to the proverbial ideal, 'as it is among friends'.[608]. In some profound sense, therefore, Aristotle takes the citizens of the best city to live communally like friends.[609] However, Aristotle is careful to stress that the best city simpliciter is 'divine' in that it requires extraordinary virtue and depends on

[603] *NE* 1094^{a}27-28; 1094^{b}4.
[604] *NE* 1102^{a}5-10; 1103^{b}3-6; 1180^{a}29-1180^{b}5.
[605] Within the political architecture, politicians must deliberate about the good way to administer or rule the city. As Aristotle describes in *NE* 6.6-7, both the architectural ordering and the deliberation in accordance with this order is governed by practical wisdom (*phronesis*), *viz.* 'a true practical state involving reason, concerned with human goods' (*NE* 1140^{b}19-20), not theoretical wisdom (*sopia*). However, these are not entirely unrelated: theoretical wisdom concerns first-principles and the most honourable things (*NE* 1141^{a}16-17), which might inform our understanding of human goods. The important point is that politics is not concerned with 'the good' in an abstract sense, but the good *for* humans and specifically citizens of the political community.
[606] *Pol*. 1260^{b}35-40.
[607] *Pol.* 1330^{a}9-24.
[608] *Pol.* 1329^{b}40.
[609] For friendship in the best city, see Elena Irrera, 'Primary Friendship in the City', in *For Friends, All Is Shared: Friendship and Politics in Ancient Greek Political Thought*, ed. Jakub Jinek and Veronika Konrádová (OIKOYMENH, 2016), esp. 207.

'luck'.[610] It is, in Aristotle's famous phrase, the city of 'our prayers'.[611] Political theory must therefore factor in deficient virtues, imperfect knowledge, and limited resources, for that is the human predicament.[612] Thus, it is not evident that the constitutional arrangements of the ideal city simpliciter is ideal *for us*, insofar as we are not ideal humans.[613] If we aim at the best simpliciter, our attempts will typically miss, leading us astray and into a city with 'little or no friendship'[614] — possibly even tyranny, the 'worst' kind of constitution.[615] Yet civic friendship remains integral to self-sufficiency, for it manifests itself in concord,[616] and without concord any city will fragment and ultimately collapse. And we are told that such civic friends share, broadly, in the life of the city, and narrowly in the constitution.[617] And Aristotle seems to think that this kind of civic friendship is possible for ordinary people under normal conditions. This is made evident in *Pol*. 4.11, to which we now turn.

Let us begin by distinguishing the middle constitutions from mixed constitutions. Aristotle appears to apply the term '*politeia*' to two different referents. The first is a constitution or regime in general.[618] The second is a specific kind of constitution: the second-best constitution, which mixes the best elements of oligarchy and democracy (typically translated 'timocracy', 'republic', or 'polity').[619] Some commentators interpret the middle constitution in *Pol*. 4.11 as a variant of the mixed

[610] *Pol.* 1289^{a}39; 1295^{a}27.
[611] *Pol.* 1325^{b}36. It could be challenged that *koina ta philon* is only possible in such a divine city. But immediately upon introducing it in *Pol*. 2.5, Aristotle states that 'this way of arranging things exists in outline in some cities', pointing to the sharing of slaves, dogs, and horses in Sparta as a concrete example (1263^{a}3ff).
[612] *NE* 1141^{b}6-23.
[613] See *Pol*. 1296^{b}5ff. Heyking notes that Aristotle's inquiry into the best city 'is realistic insofar as it is based on what is possible; it is idealistic insofar as it recommends something that is unlikely to happen. The value of this intellectual exercise, however, consists in illuminating how the internal logic of existing regimes points towards the good regime as the model toward which they strive', *The Form of Politics*, 59.
[614] *NE* 1161^{a}33.
[615] *Pol*. 1289^{b}39.
[616] *NE* 1155^{a}22-26.
[617] See esp. *Pol*. 1260^{b}37-40.
[618] *Pol*. 1279^{a}37-9.
[619] *Pol*. 1293^{a}39-40.

constitution.[620] According to them, the middle constitution is a distinct, specific mixed constitution. But this interpretation fails to make sense of three important facts about *Pol*. 4.11. Firstly, Aristotle does not label it a 'mixed constitution'.[621] Secondly, Aristotle's middle constitution encompasses a variety of different, specific constitutions, both best and second-best.[622] Thirdly, and crucially, the middle constitution represents a middle life that Aristotle does not only deem 'best', but even 'best of all'.[623]

We should also note that Aristotle's discussion of the middle constitution is preceded by discussions of specific constitutions and then proceeded by general observations and reflections about constitutions as such. It therefore seems that *Pol*. 4.11 marks a transition from the specific to the general sense of *politeia*, for Aristotle asks, in the beginning of *Pol*. 4.11, a general question about the 'best life for most cities and most human beings'.[624] The answer appears to be that best and second-best constitutions, which Aristotle has explored in the preceding chapters, do not differ in principle, but rather in the people and conditions to which the same principle is applied.

My proposal is therefore that although the middle constitution should be regarded as a distinct, specific constitution, it cannot be classified as mixed constitution. Rather, the middle constitution represents the general principle of just constitutions in Aristotle's political theory. This is made evident as Aristotle explains to us that political theory adheres to the same rationale as ethical theory: the 'same defining marks must also define the virtue and vice of a city or constitution' for 'a constitution is a sort of life of a city'.[625] And for both individual citizens and the political

[620] Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's* Politics, 262-269; n. 26. See also Ann Ward, 'Generosity and Inequality in Aristotle's Ethics', *Polis* 2 (2011): 272.
[621] Curtis Johnson, *Aristotle's Theory of the State* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), chap. 8.
[622] *Pol*. 1295^{a}31-34. See Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's* Politics, 262-269; n. 26. See also Ann Ward, 'Generosity and Inequality in Aristotle's Ethics', 272.
[623] *Pol*. 1295^{b}3-5.
[624] *Pol*. 1295^{a}25-26.
[625] *Pol*. 1295^{a}39-40.

community, Aristotle reckons, 'the middle life is best'.[626] Thus, just as the doctrine of the mean is Aristotle's principle for ethical deliberation, the middle constitution should be taken as Aristotle's principle for political deliberation; both represent the middle life.[627]

This interpretation relies on Aristotle's aforementioned comparison of ethical and political theory, which reoccurs in *Pol*. 7.[628] Just as there is such a thing as an excellent character in the abstract, there is a best constitution in the abstract,[629] and we do well in thinking and speaking about such abstractions: the virtues are, after all, precisely such kinds of abstractions.[630] However, the manifestation of these abstractions in the concrete world will vary according to the specific people we are dealing with and their circumstances. Just as most people can only hope to be generous, even though being magnificent — for Aristotle — is better, most cities can only hope for a mixed constitution, even though monarchy and aristocracy are better. And if so, then the second-best is best *for them*.[631] Although magnificence represents the medial balance for some very extraordinary people under anomalous conditions, generosity is an appropriate and indeed impressive medial balance for most people.[632] Similarly, the mixed constitution and monarchies or aristocracies represent the middle constitution for different cities. For most cities, that is, a variant of the second-best constitution is best *qua* the middle relative to the people's virtue and the city's access to natural resources, strategic positioning, and so on and so forth.

[626] *Pol*. 1295^{a}37.
[627] *Pol*. 1295^{a}35ff.
[628] *Pol*. 1334^{a}11-13.
[629] *NE* 1135^{a}5.
[630] *NE* 1181^{b}12-22.
[631] There can be no general, theoretical answers as to the question about the correct mixing in each and every case. There certainly are general, theoretical paradigms for proper deliberation about the matter, namely Aristotle's political theory — *viz*. the middle constitution — but the deliberation about the best constitution in any particular situation must be carried out locally, by the citizens that know the people and their conditions (see *Pol*. 1296^{b}10; see also *NE* 1180^{b}14-29).
[632] *Cf.* Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's* Politics, 265.

But what, precisely, is the middle constitution, and why is it best? In *Pol*. 4.11, Aristotle divides the city's households into three classes: 'the very rich, the very poor, and third those who are in the middle between these'.[633] A city dominated by the very rich and very poor is a city of masters and slaves, 'not of free people,' since one class is contemptuous and the other envious. This kind of structural oppression 'is the furthest thing from civic friendship and community'.[634] The middle constitution is best, then, because it is most conducive to friendship — and the function of friendship is integral to self-sufficiency. That is, the middle constitution is best negatively because 'it *alone* is free from factional conflict' (*stasis*),[635] and positively because its citizens rule as friends: 'those in the middle are least inclined either to avoid rule or to be eager to rule, both of which things are harmful to cities'.[636]

The middle constitution also 'makes it easiest to obey reason', such that its politics, in that sense, harmonises with philosophy.[637] We can perhaps think of the middle constitution as the political equivalent to living well together in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: generous possession of moderate wealth under the rulership of the good as communicated by, to, and among friends, rendering them equal in relation to one another as citizens.[638] This is reflected in the fact that the middle class dominates. For, in the middle constitution, equality 'especially holds for those in the middle' and, as we have seen, friendship is said to be equality.[639] Similarly, the middle constitution is dominated by those who have the modest wealth that is necessary for 'living the good life'[640] and therefore are prone to communicate the rulership of the good to one another. This communication can be exercised in the ruling, but also via the kind of functions that Aristotle takes to be indispensable for self-sufficiency.

[633] *Pol.* 1295^{b}2.
[634] *Pol.* 1295^{b}21-23.
[635] *Pol.* 1296^{a}7-8 (my emphasis).
[636] *Pol.* 1295^{b}12-13.
[637] *Pol.* 1295^{b}5-6.
[638] *Cf.* Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's* Politics, 265.
[639] *Pol*. 1295^{b}25-26.
[640] *Pol.* 1257^{b}30-32.

In *Pol*. 7.8, we learn that these functions include farming and food-supply; toolmaking and crafts; soldiering and defence; acquisition and management of wealth; worship and priesthood; courts and legislation. There must also be fellowship, of course, made possible for instance by communal messes.[641]

This brings us back to Aristotle's property arrangement from *Pol*. 2.5 — private ownership communal use — which represents the socio-economic arrangement of the middle constitution. How is it achieved? What means are available? Specifically, if property is private, can and should communal use be enforced? For Aristotle, the whole is prior in nature to its parts: the city is prior in nature to individual citizens and the households that they represent.[642] This ontological priority also entails normative priority: *prima facie*, citizens and households have no independent right to act in ways that damage the city. And since refusing to share property can damage the city, for instance by causing unnecessary inequality and even injustice,[643] it seems that political authorities can justly force citizens to share property if they do not do so voluntarily. This is a position that Martha C. Nussbaum has famously defended.[644]

Yet, unqualified, this position is unsatisfactory, as it seems to imply either that political authorities can force citizens to act virtuously, or that political authorities can justly deprive citizens of the possibility to act virtuously in order to realise some other end. Both implications would contradict Aristotle. Firstly, involuntary and nonvoluntary action cannot be virtuous, since that would locate the principle of virtuous action outside the person.[645] Secondly, the city exists ultimately for the life

[641] The communal messes are proposed immediately following the repetition of *koina ta philon* in *Pol*. 7.9 (1329^{b}40-1330^{a}8). Focusing on Aristotle's *Poetics*, Heyking further demonstrates the importance of shared feasts, commemorations, and storytelling, *The Form of Politics*, chap. 3.
[642] *Pol*. 1253^{a}19-1253^{b}5. The city is a social whole *analogous* to biological wholes, *i.e.* organisms like human body. See Robert Mayhew, 'Part and Whole in Aristotle's Political Philosophy', *The Journal of Ethics* 1, no. 4 (1997).
[643] See *Pol*. 1295^{b}1-13.
[644] See Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Aristotelian Social Democracy', in *Liberalism and the Good*, ed. B. Douglass, G. Mara, and H. Richardson (Routledge, 1990), 232; *cf.* 205.
[645] See *NE* 1111^{a}22-23; 1135^{a}16-20. See also Øyvind Rabbås, 'Virtue, Respect, and Morality in Aristotle', *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 49 (2015): 622-625.

well lived, which is only possible as a life lived in community.[646] But it is not *simply* a life lived in community; it is a communal life of virtuous activity. Thus the city, *ceteris paribus*, cannot justly deprive its citizens of the possibility to act virtuously in order to realise other ends, for instance a preferred distributive pattern.

It should be added immediately that not all instances of forced redistribution, even comprehensive ones, are necessarily unjust for Aristotle. Needless to say, Aristotle's political theory certainly does not sanction doing as one pleases.[647] Just as we must avoid imposition of social democracy on Aristotle, we must likewise avoid liberalism and libertarianism.[648] For although voluntariness is necessary for virtuous activity, it is not sufficient: the virtuous person must also act in knowledge, from a stable disposition, and for the sake of virtues. If the forced redistribution aims at securing the citizens' possibility to act virtuously, to protect or promote an 'order characteristic of correct laws',[649] and alternative feasible means have been exhausted, then force might, for Aristotle, be just, insofar as it is conducive to virtue.[650] But precisely for that reason, 'it would be more choiceworthy' if there were no need for force.[651]

It remains, therefore an open question whether Aristotle would compel citizens to make communal use of their property. The answer depends on the particulars as evaluated by the practitioners of politics.[652] But we can now see that the question's openness is restricted in two ways. Firstly, by the principle of happiness and self-sufficiency, according to which the particulars are evaluated. The master maxim for such evaluation is friendship, and specifically the function of friendship. Aristotle's political theory is not concerned with specific patterns of redistribution in and of

[646] *Pol*. 1252^{b}25-40.
[647] *Pol*. 1310^{a}30-35; 1318^{b}35-40.
[648] Nielsen, 'Economy and Private Property', 75; 85-87. Nielsen describes Aristotle's political theory as a 'householdism'. See also Robert Mulgan, 'Was Aristotle an "Aristotelian Social Democrat"?', *Ethics* 111, no. 1 (2000): 93-99.
[649] *Pol*. 1263^{a}23-24.
[650] See also *Pol*. 1256^{b}26-36
[651] *Pol*. 1328^{b}7-10; 1325^{a}25-1325^{b}16; 1336^{b}3-12.
[652] See *Pol*. 1325^{a}5-14.

themselves, but the self-sufficiency of the city, which depends on the virtuous activity of citizens, and manifests itself in life lived well together. Property must therefore, *ceteris paribus*, be made communal by voluntary 'virtue' rather than force.[653] Secondly, and relatedly, only some kinds of private property can be forcefully redistributed. This brings us back to the natural property or the 'true wealth' (*alethinos ploutos*) of *Pol*. 1.8, mentioned briefly in the introduction to the present chapter.[654] Wealth is true to the extent that it pertains to our flourishing, that is, our happiness and self-sufficiency.[655] It is presumably only this kind of true wealth, which is to say moderate wealth,[656] that should be protected and promoted absolutely, and not the luxury of the very rich.

It is important to stress that this voluntariness does not undermine the obligation to use the property communally; this is an obligation, we do well in remembering, that also holds for the less-than-very rich. It is not up to individuals to decide whether communally using their property is right for them.[657] As Aristotle states plainly: 'the function of the good friend is to assist those who are in need'.[658] If the very rich systematically do not share their wealth and property with the very poor, then the very rich act viciously, and thus justify forced redistribution.[659] For if the very rich do not share with the very poor, then they pit themselves against them, rendering the city unfriendly, and therefore unstable. However, according to Aristotle,

[653] *Pol*. 1263^{a}29. See Nielsen, 'Economy and Private Property', 83-84. Correspondingly, Aristotle remains critical to Plato's *Laws*' restriction in wealth: in *Pol*. 2.7, forced redistribution of wealth is depicted as an insufficient and ineffective means for realising virtue (1266^{b}27-29.)
[654] *Pol*. 1256^{b}30.
[655] Nielsen, 'Economy and Private Property', 74.
[656] Ibid.
[657] Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's* Politics, 323-324.
[658] *NE* 1163^{a}33.
[659] See *Pol*. 1330^{a}1-2. In Aquinas, this idea seems to be developed even further: the very poor have a conditional right on some of the property of the very rich if the very rich do not act generously when the poor depend on such generosity (*ST* II-II, q. 66, a. 7). See also Susanne E. Foster, 'Virtues and Material Good: Aristotle on Justice and Liberality', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1998): esp. 615.

such evils are not primarily effects of unfriendly distributive patterns but of a deeper 'depravity' that in turn produces patterns of material inequality.[660]

Yet, for Aristotle, forced redistribution can only ever be justified as a provisional course of political action. It cannot be a fixed scheme, for it is not just in and of itself and runs the risk of either establishing more or less subtle master-slave dynamics or cementing patterns of complacency that can easily turn into discontent. In the best city, the rich share of their property voluntarily because they are virtuous: they value their property not for its own sake, but for the sake of giving.[661] If the citizens give according to their means, which is required by the virtue of generosity,[662] then the city will naturally converge towards a situation in which unequal relations are restored to equality through friendship, as whoever is rich would give more than whoever is poor. According to Aristotle, it is by such generosity, such liberality, that the citizens are liberated from the master-slave dynamics that imprison both master and slave.[663] If forced redistribution is necessary, it should therefore come as 'lump sums' such that the very poor can acquire land or establish a business,[664] and political authorities can step back and make space for the function of friendship to generate happiness and self-sufficiency. Only then can the very poor be liberated into the community of civic friendship that is found in the middle constitution.[665]

In cities other than the very best, spanning from second-best to worst, the rich and poor alike are inclined to value wealth and property for its own sake. The second-

[660] *Pol*. 1263^{b}15-22. For Aristotle, citizens are equalized to the extent that they are virtuous. This equalisation does not necessarily implicate formal equality, codified in duties and privileges; it rather concerns substantial equality, *viz*. the extent to which the city really belongs to a given citizen (see *Pol*. 1281^{a}4-5).
[661] *Pol*. 1329^{b}40-1330^{a}10.
[662] *NE* 1120^{b}5-10.
[663] *Pol*. 7.7 is interesting in this regard: the same spiritedness that drives citizens to liberty, is also a source of friendship in the city. See Roderick T. Long, 'Aristotle's Conception of Freedom', *The Review of Metaphysics* 49, no. 4 (1996): 783.
[664] *Pol*. 1320^{a}28-1320^{b}5.
[665] *Pol*. 1320^{b}4-15.

best city is characterised by its ability to appreciate that it cannot be best (*simpliciter*) while still making it possible to become better, which is to be best for *its* people. Specifically, there is a keen attentiveness to the danger of, and indeed temptation to, confusing means and ends: the political authorities of the second-best city refrain from permanently responding to the call for redistribution on behalf of the rich, as that would render them perpetually unable to do so voluntarily themselves, making friendly communion impossible. For even 'if one were to arrange a moderate property for everyone, it would be no benefit'.[666] This is to accept that the city will only ever be *second*-best. This is not to settle for mediocracy, but to strive for excellence on the terms that are given us.

4.4 Virtue, advantage, and the challenge of concord

For Aristotle, then, friendship seems to be uniquely integral to happiness and self-sufficiency, because specifically domestic and civic friendship are uniquely integral to happiness and self-sufficiency. Friendship is therefore the essential and primary relation of the city *qua* city. Thus the city must aim for both domestic and civic friendship. However, this conclusion only follows if my application of the genus-species distinction is correct, that is, domestic and civic friendships are species of the same genus. If it is, however, then that implies that civic friendship is a species of virtue friendship. That conflicts with an interpretation that has prevailed since John M. Cooper's landmark article: civic friendship is a kind of advantage friendship.[667] As I see it, the best argument in favour of this interpretation relies on the

[666] *Pol*. 1266^{b}27-28.
[667] Cooper, 'Political Animals and Civic Friendship'. See also John M. Cooper, 'Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship', *Review of Metaphysics* 30, no. 4 (1977). Views on Aristotle's civic friendship can be divided into three categories. Cooper represents the first view, according to which civic friendship is an ennobled advantage friendship — for variations of this interpretation, see *e.g.* Delba Winthrop, 'Aristotle and Theories of Justice', *The American Political Science Review* 72, no. 4 (1978): esp. 1215; Elena Irrera, 'Between Advantage and Virtue: Aristotle's Theory of Civic friendship', *History of Political Thought* 26, no. 4 (2005): esp. 567; Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease*, esp. 82-83; Terence Irwin, 'Aristotle on the Good of Political Activity', in *Aristotle's* Politik*. Akten des XI sium Aristotelicum 1987*, ed. G. Patzig (Gôttingen, 1990), 87-95. On the

observation that Aristotle connects civic friendship to concord.[668] This argument crystalizes in Kazutaka Inamura: because concord is principally about advantage rather than virtue, civic friendship is also principally about advantage rather than virtue.[669] My response shall be twofold. I will show that concord is principally about virtue and then challenge the implicit virtue-advantage distinction. For Aristotle, advantage that is not ordered to virtue is in fact not properly advantageous.

We should note, preliminarily, that concord, *homonoia*, just means to be of the same mind (*nous*).[670] It is *prima facie* unlikely that Aristotle would regard such a relation as essentially utilitarian. Yet, in *NE* 9.6, Aristotle does say that 'a city is in concord when people are of one mind about things that are advantageous, deliberately choose the same things, and put into action the things they have resolved in common'.[671] Commentators like Inamura point to this statement to demonstrate that concord is utilitarian. But they typically fail to appreciate that Aristotle here speaks about agreement ordered to certain practical ends of significance and common concern.[672] Aristotle's examples are about how public officials should be elected and even who they should be; and according to Aristotle, such agreement is only possible if the citizens know the character of the candidates.[673] It is here important to stress that concord, for Aristote, is 'fitted to friendship'.[674] Similarly, Kostas Kalimtzis comments that the advantage of concord lies 'in the actual performance of

second view, civic friendship is simply an advantage friendship, see *e.g.* Bernard Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal: Community, Justice, and Conflict in Aristotelian Political Thought* (Berkeley, 1993), 122-123; Julia Annas, 'Comments on J. Cooper', in *Aristotle's* Politik*. Akten des XI sium Aristotelicum 1987*, ed. G. Patzig (Gôttingen, 1990), esp. 243; Kazutaka Inamura, *Justice and Reciprocity in Aristotle's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), chap. 5; Suzanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (State University of New York Press, 1995), 150ff. Thirdly, there is the view I am offering, that civic friendship is virtue friendship, which can be found in one way or another in Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, 9, 36, 65; *cf.* 88-89; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, esp. 155. See also Kalimtzis' for a different and finer grained summary of interpretations, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease*, 65-84.

[668] See *NE* 1167^{b}1-3.

[669] Inamura, *Justice and Reciprocity in Aristotle's Political Philosophy*, 164.

[670] See Richard J. Klonoski, '"Homonoia" in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics', *History of Political Thought* 17, no. 3 (1996): 319-320.

[671] *NE* 1167^{a}26-28.

[672] *NE* 1167^{a}28-30.

[673] *Pol*. 1326^{b}12-18.

[674] *NE* 1167^{a}21-23.

actions for the common good'.[675] It is participatory deliberation among citizens with executive authority about important concerns that makes one mind.

I shall now make a twofold case for understanding concord as a deliberative, relational state by which parts are structured to and function as communal wholes — and in our case specifically the city — a function that pertains to virtue friendship.[676] I begin with the negative case. Aristotle provides two reasons for rejecting the view that concord is an advantage friendship. 'Complaints and grievances', Aristotle reckons, 'arise only or mostly in friendships that are in accord with advantage, and reasonably so'.[677] It would therefore be odd if concord, which is agreement about important matters, presumably for the purpose self-sufficiency, is a species of advantage friendship.[678] Aristotle goes on to say that there is, conversely, least disagreement in virtue friendship, for in aiming for the good, this relation is oriented around giving rather than receiving or claiming.[679] Put differently, the relational mode of advantage friendship is greed, whereas for virtue friendship, it is generosity. Thus, we would expect that concord pertains to virtue friendship. In fact, Aristotle says forthrightly that although the vicious can engage in advantage

[675] Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease*, 83. *Cf.* Steven Skultety, *Conflict in Aristotle's Political Philosophy* (Suny Press, 2019), esp. 158. Steven Skultety makes the case that achieving the common good demands competition, and thus conflict. However, Skultety fails to appreciate that competition in virtue for the common good is something very different from conflict. For conflict produces winners and losers, but in the case of competition in virtues and for the common good, that is not the case: for neither virtues nor the common good are scarce resources.

[676] In *EE* 7, as Inamura emphasises, Aristotle says plainly that civic friendship is based on advantage, and repetitively so (*EE* 1242^{a}5-10, 1242^{b}20-25). But Inamura is not sufficiently critical to the account of friendship that Aristotles offers in the *Eudemian Ethics*. This criticism must be elaborated elsewhere, but I shall briefly suggest that especially *EE* 7.10, which deals with civic friendship, is not only underdeveloped, but confused or even corrupt. Consider 1242^{b}30-1243^{b}30, the passage that apparently establishes that civic friendship is an advantage friendship. Here we find three claims: first, true civic friendship exists only among good citizen; second, civic friendship is correspondingly 'most of all just' and *ethical* civic friendship the 'just thing', such that civic friendship must be of the ethical kind; third, it is contrary to nature to engage with other citizens *as if* they are good since ethical civic friendship tends to collapse in quarrels and complaints. Thus, the only kind of civic friendship that exists is contrary to nature.

[677] *NE* 1162^{b}4-5.

[678] This aligns well with Kalimtzis' argument that the opposite of concord, *stasis*, is the privation of friendship, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease*, chap. 5.

[679] *NE* 1162^{b}5-12.

friendships,[680] they are not capable of concord.[681] This implies that 'advantage friendship' and 'concord' are concepts with mutually exclusive extensions such that the latter cannot, even hypothetically, be a species of the former.

The positive case points back to *Pol*. 3.9. There Aristotle states that the function of friendship is not principally about advantage or preventing mutual injustices, but about the sharing of life well lived, which is a happy and self-sufficient life. Such a life is principally desirable because it is good, and only secondarily because it tends to be pleasurable and useful. Contrary to the advantage *tout court* of advantage friendships, then, the advantage of virtue friendships — like its pleasure — is ordered to the good.[682] Commentators seldom make this distinction, which in turn gives rise to confusions and reductionisms. And with it, we can see more clearly that I am not proposing an interpretation that involves an irresolvable conflict between advantage and virtue.

For Aristotle, that which is truly advantageous for an organism is defined in terms of that which makes it flourish. And an organism flourishes by virtue of actualising potential, which for humans consists in virtuous activity. This is made evident in the famous function argument of *NE* 1.7. Although the term 'function' conjures a sense of that which is advantageous, this function consists in realising the organism's nature *qua* the good for that organism, such that the organism is completed or perfected as the kind of organism that it is.[683] Analogously, in the *Politics*, Aristotle demonstrates that true or real political advantage cannot be separated from the good of the city: people come together to make households, villages, and then a city, not with a conscious view to the end of self-sufficiency, but because pursuing happiness in accordance with reason, which we are inclined to by nature, makes it necessary to take each of the step that leads to self-sufficency. Put differently, we

[680] *NE* 1157^{a}15-20.
[681] *NE* 1167^{b}1-15.
[682] See *Pol*. 1333^{a}30-1333^{b}5.
[683] *NE* 1098^{a}15-21.

take the steps in order to satisfy important, immediate needs and desires there and then that arises from our domestic-*cum*-political nature.[684]

In that sense, the city is constituted on the principle of 'common advantage'.[685] Aristotle's analogy between the body and the city speaks to the entanglement of advantage and virtue and thus the good. The human organism develops from infanthood to adulthood — it is a matter of satisfying important needs and desires, of becoming that which one is — even if the organism is not conscious of the full breadth and depth of the development's end, and therefore who and what it really is. Again, analogously, the political community must develop according to its inherent principle, from embryonic existence in the spousal friendship to full maturity in the city of friends. And although the stages of the developments are advantageous there and then, they are ultimately only so because they culminate in self-sufficiency: the development is not good because it is advantageous, but advantageous because it is good. Even though the city comes to be for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well. We must be aware of and attentive to this priority of the good. Similarly, politics is also advantageous, but only to the extent it is ordered to the good; it is not good because it is ordered to the advantageous.

It is possible to make a parallel to Aristotle's understanding of pleasure as the completion or perfection of virtuous activity in *NE* 10. There, pleasure is depicted as the bliss that emanates from a flourishing organism.[686] We might perhaps say that pleasure can be understood as the qualia of the bliss. As an independent and isolated object of pursuit, true pleasure is forever elusive. But that does not render such pleasure superfluous.[687] It rather implies that the path to pleasure goes through, and is ultimately found in, virtuous activity. If that path is abandoned, then true pleasure will inevitably be lost on us also. Indeed, over time, we will probably render ourselves incapable of perceiving the difference between true pleasure and phantom or

[684] See *Pol*. 1252^{b}15ff.
[685] *NE* 1129^{b}14-19; *Pol*. 1278^{b}19-28; 1279^{a}17-21.
[686] *NE* 1174^{b}20-25; 1178^{a}4-10.
[687] *NE* 1099^{a}24.

ersatz pleasures, compelling us to pursue the latter rather than the former simply because they are easier to achieve.

The same goes for the advantage of concord. We take pleasure *in* some good; similarly, we value advantage *for* the sake of some other good than advantage itself. And it is upon this further good that friendship must be based. If political 'advantage' is separated from that which is politically good — that is, the common good of self-sufficiency, generated in crucial respects by the function of friendship — then we will not be able to grasp our true common advantage. If advantage is pursued in and of itself, such that friendship is subtly undermined, then it seems likely that greed will become the explicit or implicit standard for interactions among the citizens. This will serve to undermine not only justice,[688] but also the function of friendship, and a city without this function cannot prevail. Indeed, as Aristotle maintains in *Pol*. 3.9, this is a phantom or *ersatz* city, for the true city does not exist for the sake of 'preventing mutual injustice or for the sake of exchange'.[689] Rather, it exists for the sake of the sharing of life well lived.

4.5 Decency, justice beyond justice, and Aristotle's paradox

At this point it could be challenged that too much is being made of friendship in Aristotle's political theory, and too little of justice. For, surely, Aristotle says that justice is 'complete virtue' and 'a political community's order'.[690] It is therefore justice that represents the essential and primary relation of political community. Conversely, as Julia Annas points out, Aristotle makes frequent use of the term 'civic friendship' (*politike philia*) neither in the *Nicomachean Ethics* nor in the *Politics*. Yet my argument makes friendship the essential and primary relation of the city, and therefore its ultimate aim: politics aims at the perfection of friendship.

[688] *NE* 1136^{b}34-37^{a}1; *Pol*. 1302^{a}29ff.
[689] *Pol*. 1280^{b}37; 1280^{b}29-30.
[690] *NE* 1129b25; *Pol*. 1253^{a}37-8.

Conversely, Annas infers that 'Aristotle is not especially interested in civic friendship' — and if that is the case, then that would render my account rather fanciful.[691]

But Aristotle does not mention the term 'political justice' (*politikon dikaion*) frequently either and it is only accounted for in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Yet no commentator would infer that discussions of justice simpliciter are *ipso facto* irrelevant for Aristotle's political theory.[692] Just as we can reasonably assume that Aristotle says important things about the concept of justice in the city even if the term 'political justice' is not used, we can therefore assume — as I have done — that Aristotle might say important things about the concept of friendship in the city without using the term 'civic friendship'. This assumption is supported by the fact that ethics and politics, for Aristotle, are parts of the same whole, and thus implicate one another.

I shall now further detail and defend the claim that friendship rather than justice captures the essence of Aristotle's politics. This brings us back to *NE* 8.9, where Aristotle not only connects friendship to community, as we have seen, but also to justice. It is important to note that Aristotle opens this passage by referring back to a claim made in the introduction to the friendship account: it 'seems that friendship holds cities together and that legislators take it more seriously than justice'.[693] Aristotle says that there are different kinds of friendships and justices for different communities — and that 'the extent to which' the members of a community 'share things communally is the extent of their friendship; for it is also the extent of justice'.[694]

[691] Annas, 'Comments on J. Cooper', 246.
[692] Moreover, just as Aristotle seems to connect justice simpliciter to political justice via 'reciprocity' (*NE* 1134^{a}23-25), friendship simpliciter is connected to civic friendship via 'concord' (1167^{a}21-1167^{b}3).
[693] *NE* 1155^{a}22-28.
[694] *NE* 1159^{b}29-30.

Commentators typically hold that justice is normatively prior to justice, by which I mean that justice is a necessary condition for, and normatively informs, friendship.[695] Put simply, friendship is grounded in justice: it is from relations governed by some kind of justice as desert that friendship can arises. Thus, when Aristotle directly and explicitly seems to do the opposite, grounding justice in friendship, Aristotle is often taken to merely report on common views. But there are two problems with this approach. Firstly, it requires a strained interpretation of the introduction in which this grounding occurs. Having allegedly reported on the common views, Aristotle goes on to say that there are, 'however' (*de*), a number of disputed points about friendship, such as whether there are different kinds of friendships and how friendship connects to virtue.[696] The context suggests that the conjunctive particle '*de*' should be taken to carry adversative force.[697] If so, '*de*' marks the transition from one part of the introduction to another: the first contain claims Aristotle more or less accepts — among which we find the grounding of justice in friendship — whereas the second comprise unsettled questions to be, presumably, addressed. And in *NE* 8.9, as we have seen, Aristotle addresses precisely the issue of different kinds of friendship. That brings us to the second problem. Picking up on the claims about friendship and justice in *NE* 8.9, Aristotle does not seem to reject them, rather, he seems to attempt to explain why and how they not only appear to be true, but in fact are true.

David J. Riesbeck thinks that Aristotle accepts the reported views, but only if these views are qualified. It is not the case that justice is normatively grounded by friendship, but rather that these are normatively equal, interdependent, that is grounded

[695] Kim labels this the 'standard interpretation', in 'Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* on the Sameness of Friendship and Justice', 397. Although not mentioned by Kim, examples of this interpretation are found in Ann Ward, who claims that justice, for Aristotle, is a 'necessary if not sufficient building block to friendship', *Contemplating Friendship in Aristotle's Ethics* (State University of New York Press, 2016), 8; 106. And according to Pangle, 'justice is necessary to friendship', but only the 'rudimentary elements of friendship, beginning with a recognised common interest, are essential for the establishment of justice', *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, 80; *cf.* 81.
[696] *NE* 1155^{b}9-15.
[697] This adversative force is captured in the translations of Reeve and Terrence Irwin 2019 (Hackett Publishing Company), but not, for instance, in Michael Pakaluk 2020 (Oxford University Press) and Roger Crisp 2014 (Cambridge University Press).

by each other. For Riesbeck, 'community, justice, and friendship are coextensive'.[698] And Aristotle does indeed say that justice and friendship are found in communities and 'are about the same things and between the same people'.[699] Specifically, according to Riesbeck, friends 'will aim at each other's good', since being in a community is to share goods, and fairness is a good shared by communities.[700]

However, Riesbeck's analysis commits two errors. Firstly, Riesbeck does not sufficiently distinguish conceptual extension from intension, that is, the variety of relational phenomena that a given concept covers from that concept's proper meaning.[701] Even if friendship and justice apply to the same set of communities, and thus are conceptually coextensive, it can still be the case that these concepts have different normative statuses and thus apply differently to the communities in question. Aristotle says that justice — as well as 'community'[702] — is 'fitted' to friendship, which seems to mean that friendship is more foundational. Moreover, it is important to note that we are not give any reason to believe that Aristotle disagrees with the view that legislators should be more concerned with friendship than justice.[703] To the contrary, *Pol*. 3.9 and 4.11 indicate that this is Aristotle's position precisely. If so, then justice is indeed normatively grounded by friendship. Similarly, in *NE* 8.9, Aristotle says that justice 'naturally *increases along with* the friendship'.[704] This further corroborates that claim that friendship, for Aristotle, is foundational in a way justice is not.

Secondly, and relatedly, Riesbeck equivocates fairness or partial justice with justice simpliciter.[705] If friendship is coextensive with justice, we would expect it to be

[698] Riesbeck, *Aristotle on Political Community*, 45; 81-83.
[699] *NE* 1159^{b}24-32.
[700] Ibid, 86-87. See also ibid, 93; 91,
[701] *E.g.*, from the claim that 'the three are coextensive phenomena', Riesbeck simply assumes that 'each *implies* the other two'. See Riesbeck, *Aristotle on Political Community*, 58 (my emphasis).
[702] *Pol*. 1295^{b}23.
[703] *NE* 1155^{a}25-29.
[704] *NE* 1160^{a}7-8 (my emphasis).
[705] Kalimtzis describes this elevation of partial, and especially distributive justice, as a modern bias: 'it is not possible to view Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *Politics* as treatises on distributive justice'. See Kalimtzis, *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease*, 48. See also ibid, 46-49.

coextensive with complete rather than partial justice — for friendship and complete justice, contrary to partial justice, are morally demanding. Bradford Jean-Hyuk Kim has reworked Riesbeck's coextension along these very lines: insofar as friendship is virtuous, that is friendship proper, it must be coextensive with complete justice.[706] If Kim is correct, then friendship cannot be simultaneously coextensive with partial justice. I shall buttress Kim's interpretation by focusing in on an ambiguity in Aristotle's justice account.

In *NE* 5.10, Aristotle points out that law is universal, but virtuous activity manifests differently for different persons in different circumstances, and thus not everything can be regulated by law.[707] Justice is therefore not found in always and everywhere adhering to the law; in some circumstances it is 'necessary to speak in universal terms but not possible to do so correctly'.[708] In such circumstances, the virtuous citizen must be like the just ruler, and the just ruler is guided by prudence.[709] We must therefore ask: how and to which end does prudence guide us when law comes short?

However, it is interesting to note that Aristotle does not focus on prudence in this passage, but decency. It is by virtue of decency that. And the 'decent' is shorthand for a moral exemplar.[710] In this specific context, it captures the capacity for 'rectification of the legally just'.[711] However, this does not add much to our understanding, although it does place the moral exemplar, somewhat paradoxically, both under and above the law (*nomos*). We should also note that in the passage, Aristotle suggests that decency is even corrective even of lawfulness (*nomimon*) — which, in Aristotle's justice account, is connected to *complete* justice — and not only con-

[706] Kim, 'Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* on the Sameness of Friendship and Justice', 402.
[707] *NE* 1137^{b}28. See also 1134^{a}29-31.
[708] *NE* 1137^{b}14-15.
[709] *NE* 1134^{a}35-1134^{b}5.
[710] George Duke, *Aristotle and Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 159.
[711] *NE* 1137^{b}12.

ventional justice (*nomikon*). The decent thus exercises 'a sort of justice' that is enigmatically better than or 'beyond (*beltion*) the just'.[712] This justice-beyond-justice is 'more excellent' than justice, yet 'not some different state' compared to that which is simply just.[713] Put differently, Aristotle seems to regard a single-minded focus on justice as an obstacle to achieving that which justice aims for; the decent should therefore refrain from being 'a stickler for justice'.[714] Even if the law is on their side, Aristotle says, decent citizens must be open to the possibility for refraining to claim their right; the decent takes less and gives more than the law prescribes.[715]

How, then, are we to think of this justice-beyond-justice in Aristotle's political theory? To summarise: Aristotle says that complete justice consists in being lawful,[716] yet the generosity of the decent is better than such lawfulness.[717] There are three important reasons to think that this kind og decency in relation to others classifies as friendship for Aristotle. Firstly, Aristotle seems to say so straightforwardly.[718] Secondly, in the manner by which they conduct their affairs, we have seen that the decent are essentially characterised by generosity rather than fairness, just as we found friendship to be characteristically about generosity. Thirdly, in the introduction to the justice account, Aristotle says that complete justice is 'complete virtue […] in relation to another person'.[719] Such justice is exercised by the 'lawful' in relation to their 'friends',[720] which in turn preserves and promotes the self-sufficiency of the city.[721] These remarks are seemingly in demand of further elaboration:

[712] *NE* 1137^{b}3 (my emphasis).
[713] *NE* 1137^{b}19, 1138^{a}3; see also 1159^{b}24-25.
[714] *NE* 1137^{b}35.
[715] *NE* 1137^{b}35-1138^{a}3. *Pace* Riesbeck, who reckons that it is the institutions and their representatives that should be above and beyond the law, not virtuous citizens. See Riesbeck*, Aristotle on Political Community*, 119-120.
[716] *NE* 1129^{a}20ff; eps. 1129^{b}34. See also Charles M. Young, 'Aristotle's Justice', in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics, ed. Richard Kraut (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 182.
[717] Christoph Horn, 'Epieikeia: The Competence of the perfectly just person in Aristotle', in *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics*, ed. Burkhard Reis (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 166.
[718] *NE* 1166^{a}29-35; 1172^{a}9-12.
[719] *NE* 1129^{b}25-26.
[720] *NE* 1129^{b}11; 1130^{a}5-8.
[721] *NE* 1129^{b}18-19.

what does it mean to be lawful such that one exercises complete virtue in relation to one another in the manner of friends — if such lawfulness is perfected in a state beyond itself? And how does it, precisely, preserve and promote the self-sufficiency of the city? In *NE* 5.6, Aristotle says that justice in the city, political justice, 'belongs to those who share in common life with a view to self-sufficiency and are free and equal, either geometrically or arithmetically equal'.[722] But this seems to only make justice possible within friendship, especially according to the Alternative Definition, such that a precondition for justice is friendship — at least in some rudimentary and imperfect, yet still functional form. This understanding finds support in *Pol*. 3.9, in which Aristotle seems to say, as we have seen, that the function of friendship in crucial respects generates self-sufficiency.

Jumping forward in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, to the introduction to Aristotle's friendship account, we find aforementioned claims such as: 'the most just of all seems to be fitted to friendship'.[723] This suggests that, for Aristotle, friendship is the kind of justice that lies beyond justice. Friendship is that which legislators aim for and thus informs law and even justice itself about its nature and function. This would also explain why the friendship account in the *Nicomachean Ethics* serves as the elaborate finale of Aristotle's catalogue of moral virtues — and, as pointed out, a bridge to contemplation — for it provides us with an understanding of complete virtue in relation to other people, and correspondingly why friends do not, strictly speaking, need justice. Put differently, friendship is the precondition for and end of justice, and thus, transitively, politics.[724] This possibility raises however a problem, indeed, a paradox.

[722] *NE* 1134ª25-27, I have exchanged 'proportional' with 'geometrically'.
[723] *NE* 1155ª29.
[724] Interestingly, according to Schwartz, this is also Aquinas' understanding of justice, *Aquinas on Friendship*, 124-125; 147-148, 159-160, 164. Some commentators on Aquinas maintain that friendship is the end of justice, but that justice is the precondition for friendship. See Gerald B. Phelan, 'Justice and Friendship', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 5 (1943): 168. See also James V. Schall, 'The Totality of Society: From Justice to Friendship', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 20, no. 1 (1957): esp. 13-14; 19-20.

As a technical, architectonic discipline, politics cannot itself make friends of citizens. Sharing is the paradigmatic activity of friends, but politicians can only protect the *means* for achieving the end of sharing property and activity; the citizens must themselves voluntarily make good use of these means in accordance with the virtue of generosity. The moment politicians attempt to enforce sharing via redistribution, then generosity, that is giving, is made impossible. This leaves us with a paradox: the more politics is exercised, the less likely it is that it will achieve its end. If politicians operate on the conviction that it is politics that make the city self-sufficient,[725] in the sense that the city is made self-sufficient by *its* instruments, then the function of friendship will be undermined and thus happiness and self-sufficiency also.[726] Let me conclude by way of briefly elaborating on this paradox.

Although laws and corresponding norms can contribute to cultivating virtue, no law can, in itself, make people generous: for generosity is to go beyond the law. In a city governed by partial justice, that would probably be regarded as irrational and perhaps even reckless. In this city, distorted ideals of political virtue will begin to shape the political imagination of the people. Subtle and overt variations of greed become the explicit or implicit standard for interactions among the citizens. In such a city, greed will be regarded as necessary and desirable, even good. To counteract this tendency, if it emerges, people have to decide to live according to friendship, even if this brings misfortune. But politicians cannot *make* people do so even if they wanted to; the city has to wait and hope that it will be 'given' such exemplary citizens and that the rest of the people will follow suit. In this way, the rulers are also themselves 'ruled' by the citizens — politics as a technical, architectonic discipline goes in hand with politics as a shared way of life for the sake of the good.

The best we can do as theorists and practitioners of politics as a technical, architectonic discipline is therefore to protect and promote the conditions for friendship. According to Aristotle, we do so by protecting household and property, as well as

[725] *Pol*. 1325^{b}40-1326^{a}4.
[726] See also Winthrop, 'Aristotle and Theories of Justice', 1215.

promoting a culture of voluntary but expected sharing.[727] The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, if there is no private property, then there can be no sense of belonging, and thus no 'home' — and without a shared sense of home, there will be no common life of the city, and thus no willingness to make sacrifices for one another. Secondly, it is friendship in and around the household that enables citizens to, in due course, enter into friendships in the city. These friendships will vary according to what kind of goods the friends recognise, and how they are pursued. They might for instance pertain to our children's school, research group, or chess club. But the paradigms of such friendships emerge in and around the household, extending concentrically outwards to the city, and on its way, perfecting these other kinds of friendships.[728] Thus, if politics were to degenerate, then Aristotle does not propose redistributory reform, but rather to return to the household, to family and friends.[729] For the ultimate or complete community can only be regenerated its first community.

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Aristotle accepts, with three important caveats, the eight premises concerning the nature of politics, and its connection to friendship, as we found them in Plato's Socrates in Chapter 3.[730] Firstly, Aristotle makes it evident that there can be no conflict between the completion of an individual human life, *i.e.* happiness, and the completion of that individual's political community, *viz*. self-sufficiency. Secondly, Aristotle differentiates the genus of friendship from its species. The friendship genus, according to Aristotle, is a shared recognition and pursuit of the good, and

[727] A relevant historic example is, of course, the liturgical system: the rich alternated in taking responsibility for public festivals, which including covering the expenses. For a critical consideration of this example. See Nielsen, 'Economy and Private Property', 86.
[728] See Heyking, *The Form of Politics*, 36. See also Corinne A. Gartner, 'Aristotle on Love and Friendship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Ethics*, ed. Christopher Bobonich (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 143-163.
[729] *NE* 1180^{a}30-33.
[730] For convenience, these premises are provided in Appendix 2.

various species of friendship can be differentiated with respect to the good in question. Thirdly, Aristotle naturalises friendship — it makes no sense, for Aristotle, to aspire to friendship with the gods, not to mention the One. Friendship wells up naturally from within human nature; 'deification' is to actualise this potential, not to reach a destination beyond human nature.

Aristotle thus offers a revised variant of Plato's friendship argument: friendship is the essential and primary relation of the city *qua* city, since friendship is essential to happiness and self-sufficiency, and thus the city must aim for friendship. This argument retains the basic shape of Plato's argument: politics exists for the sake of justice, and justice for the sake of friendship. That is not to say that justice is not valuable in itself. It is rather to say, firstly, that although justice is an end in itself, it is more fundamentally a means to friendship, whereas friendship is only an end in itself, by virtue of being the relational form of happiness and self-sufficiency. Secondly, if justice does not serve as a means to friendship, it ceases to be truly just, and thus to be an end in itself.

However, according to Aristotle, the guardian class must be as it were laicised in terms of a virtuous aristocracy. This aristocracy can only be brought forth from the household. Yet the aristocracy nevertheless promulgates some of the features of the guardian life: theirs is also a life of quasi-ascetic and quasi-coenobitic elements, and crucially, their household is modelled on the proverbial that friends share everything communally. It is in and by this shared life that the aristocracy can rule the city according to the maxim of friendship. In this way, Aristotle's political theory avoids the Platonic friendship aporia — by diversifying and naturalising friendship and thus politics — but only to find it arise again in a new shape, as an Aristotelian paradox: the more politics, as a discipline, is exercised, the less likely it is to achieve its end and indeed secure its own condition, suggesting again an intrinsic conflict between politics' means on the one hand, and its precondition and end on the other.

CHAPTER 5

The Inclination to Politics in Augustine

In *conf*. 6.14.24, Augustine convenes with Alypius and Nebridius to pursue a truly happy way of life. Their deliberations revolve around the meaning of walking faithfully and lovingly with their friends. Specifically, does coenobitic living, which they find themselves attracted to, demand some kind of asceticism?[731] With the help of Romanianus, the friends appear to reach a moment of penetrating clarity. They will establish 'one household out of all, so that, as a result of true friendship, nothing would belong to one person rather than to another'.[732] Enthused by their vision, the friends quickly settle on the administrative arrangements.

But the moment of lucidity and energy is ephemeral. For as the friends consider whether the wives whom some had, and others hoped to have, would permit such a way of life, the ideal 'went to pieces' in their hands and was 'cast aside'.[733] We sense, however, that perhaps more than anything, the actual and possible wives were a convenient excuse to go on with business as usual. For Augustine displays no earnest attempt to resolve the tensions between family life and coenobitic asceticism; the men do not even present their vision to the women. It appears that, albeit recognising that coenobitic asceticism is a way to true happiness, Augustine is not

[731] *conf*. 6.12.21-22.
[732] *conf*. 6.14.24.
[733] *conf*. 6.14.24.

yet prepared to walk it. The older Augustine's reflections on his younger self are in this regard telling: though enamoured by a happy life, Augustine confides, 'I feared it in its own abode (*sede*); I sought it while actually fleeing from it'.[734]

Interestingly, the abode that Augustine stands on the threshold of in Milan 386 is strikingly reminiscent of the coenobitic asceticism that he came to enter in Tagaste 388. And that community is in turn the precursor of the monastery Augustine established in Hippo 391, from which we received the original monastic rule in Latin Christianity.[735] A couple of terminological remarks are in place here. I take Augustinian monasticism to comprise two elements, coenobitism and asceticism, such that although the Tagaste arrangement was not a monastery proper — for instance, it was not ordered by a rule — it was still monastic. It is also important to note that, for Augustine, the *monos* of monasticism does not mean 'isolation', but 'oneness'.[736] And as Augustine states in the *Rule*, oneness is only possible if people come together in Christ to sacrifice certain earthly goods for the sake of heavenly goods.[737] In Augustine, then, there is a deep and strong connection between coenobitism and asceticism.

As Carol Harrison observes, it seems that an important line in the genealogy of Latin Christian monasticism goes all the way back to *conf.* 6.14.24 and its vision of coenobitic asceticism among friends, to which I refer as the 'Milan ideal' hereafter.[738] Yet this origin remains insufficiently examined by commentators.[739] My conjecture is that by focusing our attention on the Milan ideal, we will come to better

[734] *conf.* 6.11.20. See also 6.15.25; 8.7.17.
[735] For an examination of similarities and differences between these constellations, and the evolution from one to the other, see George Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Clarendon, 1990), Part One; Marie Aquinas McNamara, *Friends and Friendship for Saint Augustine* (Alba House, 1957), 104-107, 118-124.
[736] *en. in Ps.* 132.6.
[737] *reg.* 1.2; 3.1.
[738] Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 178.
[739] For instance, it is simply touched on but not scrutinised by Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, 3. The same holds for other, more recent, sources in the literature. See for instance

understand the animating spirit of Augustine's monasticism. We will also come to appreciate that Père Luc Verheijen is not exactly right in claiming that, for Augustine, 'the whole monastic history' consists in the unfolding of Acts 4:32-35.[740] I propose that, for Augustine, Acts 4:32-35 serves to christen pagan and classical ideals of happiness, self-sufficiency, friendship, and deification. This is hinted at in *conf*. 6.14.24. Looking back on the failed plans of coenobitic and possibly ascetic living, Augustine says, secretively, that Christian monasticism was 'prepared' (*praeparabas*) in the Milan ideal.[741] We are left to wonder how, precisely, and to what extent? In attempting to answer such questions, I venture to demonstrate that R. J. Halliburton's theory, which has enjoyed such a predominant status in the literature, must be discarded: Augustine's monasticism does not manifests an inclination to retreat away from politics.[742] Rather, I make the case that Augustine's monasticism is a quest for true or real politics — which ultimately took Augustine to the monastery as the paradigmatic political community.

Thomas F. Martin has sketched the contours of this alternative theory.[743] In that sketch Martin shows us, firstly, that faith or trust (*fides*), concord (*concordia*), and the common good (*bonum commune*) are crucial features of Augustine's conception of the political. Secondly, in Augustine, these features are exemplarily combined in the monastery. Politics aim for happiness and self-sufficiency, and this is made uniquely possible by the monastery.[744] As such, Augustine's monastery has 'a po-

Marilyn Dunn, 'Monasticism/Asceticism', in *Augustine in Context*, ed. T. Toom (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 171; Paul van Geest 'The Rule of Saint Augustine', in *A Companion to Medieval Rules and Customaries*, ed. K. Pansters (Brill, 2020), 131-132.

[740] Luc Verheijen, *Saint Augustine's Monasticism in the Light of Acts 4.32-35* (Villanova University Press, 1979), 80 (cited in Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 183, n. 88).

[741] *conf*. 6.14.24.

[742] R. J. Halliburton, 'The Inclination to Retirement — the Retreat of Cassiciacum and the "Monastery" of Tagaste', *SP* 5 (1962). It is important to note that my argument is about Augustine's inclinations specifically, not the inclination of monastics in Latin (or Greek) Christianity in general. See also Carolinne White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 164-165.

[743] See Martin's contribution in *Augustine and Politics*, edited by John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth (Lexington Books, 2005): 'Augustine and the Politics of Monasticism'.

[744] Martin, 'Augustine and the Politics of Monasticism', 172.

litical agenda' — concretely, it provides us with an alternative political imagination, a new model of political community.[745] I shall attempt to develop this sketch by situating Augustine's monasticism in classical arguments about the nature of politics and friendship, as explored in Chapter 3 and 4, and specifically about the political meaning of the proverb that friends share everything communally. To do so, however, some preliminary demarcations and definitions concerning the term 'political' and its cognates in Augustine are required.

For Plato and Aristotle, political community is the kind of association that realises our political nature. Political community is therefore constitutive of happiness culminating in self-sufficiency. In classical antiquity, the political community took predominantly the form of city (*polis*, *civitas*). Politics is therefore the activity by which cities achieve self-sufficiency, involving deliberation about laws and justice and typically, albeit not necessarily,[746] the exercise of power and coercion, punishment of wrongdoing, and distribution of rights and privileges. This is the theoretical context also for Augustine's thinking about politics, and it makes itself visible in Augustine's writing in at least three different but related ways.

The first is the fact that Augustine operates within a Platonic tradition in which politics, happiness, and self-sufficiency belong to the same conceptual complex, outlined in Chapter 3. Secondly, as Michael W. Tkacz has established, Augustine was 'significantly influenced by Aristotle's conception of the good life', and this was the life of a *zoon politikon*, as detailed in Chapter 4.[747] According to John von

[745] Ibid, 183.
[746] See Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (Bloomsbury, 2016), 113-122. Andrew Williard Jones offers a helpful explanation of this caveat: 'coercion is not very important for an understanding of the nature of politics as such. Its significance, of course, enters in because of the effects of sin', *The Church Against the State*, 115. See also ibid, 'The Priority of Peace,' esp. 115ff.
[747] Michael W. Tkacz, 'St. Augustine's Appropriation and Transformation of Aristotelian *Eudaimonia*', in *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 82-83. Augustine also recognises our 'social nature' (*sociale natura*), and this, we will come to understand, is more or less the same as political nature (*ciu*. 12.28; 19.5; 19.12). It is also interesting to note the teleological logic that infuses Augustine's approach to politics: just as Aristotle defines the city in terms of the good it aims for (*Pol*. 1252^{a}1-6), Augustine defines the people that constitutes a republic in terms of the objects of its loves (*ciu*. 19.24). This kind of teleology is presumably mediated by Cicero. For Aristotle's influence on the intellectual environment in which Augustine's

Heyking, Augustine specifically 'inherited the Aristotelian insight that political community is somehow analogous to friendship', and that virtue and friendship, for Augustine, are 'the ends of politics'.[748] Thirdly, on the topics of friendship and politics, Cicero is Augustine's starting point. Cicero maintains that the political inclination is 'natural' (*naturalis*).[749] Furthermore, according to Cicero, political nature is realised in friendship.[750] And Cicero's understanding of friendship is not only Aristotelian, it even expresses itself in the aforementioned proverb that friends share everything communally.[751] Indeed, this proverb connects to the very basis of the Roman city: the republic or commonwealth (*res publica*) is a shared 'thing' among the people (*res populi*) — and the people (*populus*) an association of humans united by agreement about the common good.[752]

I shall return to Augustine's criticism of Ciceronian politics. But even this preliminary exposition demonstrates that Augustine's criticism of Ciceronian politics does

ideas developed, including Cicero's stoicism, see Christopher Gill, 'The Transformation of Aristotle's ethics in Roman Philosophy', in *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller (Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 35-37; 45-48.

[748] John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (University of Missouri Press, 2001), 208; 'The Luminous Path of Friendship', Friendship and Politics: Essays in Political Thought' (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 116. *Cf.* David Konstan, 'Philosophers and Roman Friendship', in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Philosophy*, ed. David Konstan, Myrto Garani, Gretchen Reydams-Schils (Oxford University Press, 2023), 111. See also Eoin Cassidy, 'The Recovery of the Classical Ideal of Friendship in Augustine's Portrayal of Caritas', in *The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity*, ed Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Four Courts Press, 1992), 138.

[749] *Rep*. 1.25. See also *e.g. Off*. 1.12. Cicero's conception of human nature is strikingly reminiscent of Aristotle's, note especially the amalgamation of our political and rational natures: Cary J. Nederman, 'Nature, Sin and the Origins of Society: The Ciceronian Tradition in Medieval Political Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 1 (1988): 7-8; Roderick T. Long, 'Aristotle's Conception of Freedom', *The Review of Metaphysics* 49, no. 4 (1996): 781.

[750] *Amic*. 23; *Off*. 1.56.

[751] *Off*. 1.50-57. As we noted, according to Pangle, Cicero's understanding of friendship is 'thoroughly Aristotelian [in] spirit', *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, 104. See also See J. G. F. Powell, 'Introduction', in *Cicero On Friendship and The Dream of Scipio, Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Aris & Phillips. Prost, 1990), 18; Walter Nicgorski, 'Cicero's Distinctive Voice on Friendship: *De Amicitia and De Re Publica*', in *Friendship and Politics: Essays in Political Thought*, ed. John von Heyking and Richard Avramenko (University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 90-92.

[752] *Rep*. 1.25.39. Cicero uses the phrase *utilitatis communione sociatus*, which is challenging to translate, for in addition to 'common good' (*e.g.* G. Zetzel, Cambridge University Press, 2017), it can also be rendered 'common advantage (or interest)' (*e.g.* Niall Rudd, Oxford University Press, 1989).

not necessarily mean that Augustine regards politics *as such* a distortion of human nature. To the contrary, if we avoid imposing Roman paradigms of political community on Augustine's political thought, and specifically empire,[753] we come to see, as Martin's indicates, that Augustine writes about the realisation of our political nature in terms of the monastic community.

To make this case, I examine the nature and aim of Augustine's monastic inclination in *conf.* 6.14.24. I consider a possible influence for the Milan ideal that thus far has been overlooked: Pythagoras (§ 5.1).[754] I argue that the evidence in support of Pythagorean influence is formidable and that the Milan ideal is most likely modelled on a Pythagorean community (§ 5.2). That community was intrinsically political, which prompts a reconceptualisation of Halliburton's interpretation of the Milan ideal: Augustine retreats from phantom or *ersatz* politics to enter true politics (§ 5.3). Then I turn to the *Rule* and the monastery in Hippo (§ 5.4). In conclusion, I demonstrate that politics-as-monasticism finds compelling textual support in the *City of God* (§ 5.5).

5.1 Pythagoras as a possible influence for the Milan ideal in *conf.*

Let us begin by considering possible influences for the Milan. It is important to remember that in *conf.* 6.14, Augustine's pursuit of a truly happy way of life has taken a decisively Christian turn; the conversion in *conf.* 8 is just around the corner. Yet, at this point, it is still improbable that Augustine would have been familiar

[753] Or, for that matter, modern conceptions that emphasise the institutional agency of the nation-state. See Veronica R. Ogle, *Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine's* City of God (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 146-148.

[754] An exception is James J. O'Donnell commentary on *conf.* 6.14.24: 'more credit should be given to the suggestion A. knew of Pythagorean communities mentioned by Iamblichus'. However, O'Donnell does not elaborate on what kind of credit or how it should be given, *Augustine: Confessions, Vol. III, Commentary Book 1-7* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 379. Other brief, unelaborated mentions: David Konstans, 'Problems in the History of Christian Friendship Konstan', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, no. 11 (1996): 112-113; Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, 33.

with Acts 4:32-35 (or 2:44-45) — and very improbable indeed that it could have served as the basis for the Milan ideal. This estimation is based on four observations. Firstly, Augustine's knowledge of Scripture would have been limited and fragmentary prior to becoming a catechumen. Secondly, Augustine repeatedly says that Acts 4:32-35 is the *Rule*'s Scriptural bedrock,[755] and its absence in the deliberation about the Milan ideal is therefore notable. Thirdly, Augustine admits remarkable unawareness about Christian asceticism and coenobitic living subsequent to *conf.* 6.14.24. In *conf.* 8, Ponticianus informs Augustine not only about the Egyptian monk Antony, but also monasteries under Ambrose just outside Milan — examples of which Augustine and his friends report total ignorance: 'of all this we knew nothing'.[756] Fourthly, Augustine wrote *Confessions* after the establishment of the Hippo monastery. If he were in fact influenced by Christian sources in Milan 386, we would have expected Augustine to make this front and center, showing his readers that Acts 4:32-35 was the bedrock of monasticism straight from the beginning. It is notable that he does not.

These observations indicate that the Milan ideal was modelled on pagan influences. Building on Pierre Courcelle's work, Halliburton considers two possibilities: Manichaeism and Plotinus.[757] However, Austin Steen demonstrates that Augustine's understanding of coenobitic asceticism in fact informs his early anti-Manichaean polemic.[758] That leaves us with Plotinus. But unfortunately, rather than examining the possible Plotinian influence, Halliburton silently shifts focus to Augustine's retreat to Verecundus' Cassiciacum villa in *conf.* 9.3-4. Halliburton's reason for doing so

[755] *ep.* 211.
[756] *ciu.* 8.14-15.
[757] Halliburton, 'The Inclination to Retirement — the Retreat of Cassiciacum and the "Monastery" of Tagaste': 330-331; see also Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de St. Augustin* (E. de Boccard, 1950), 178ff (cited in Halliburton).
[758] Austin Seen, 'Monasticism in Augustine's Early Argument Against Manichaeism', *Augustiniana* 74, vol. 2 (2024): esp. 336-341. According to Augustine, the Manichaeans restrictions with respect to food allegedly encourages overconsumption, to the detriment of the needs and moral development of the community. We should also note that by *conf.* 6, Augustine has allegedly turned decisively away from Manichaeism. It is therefore *prima facie* doubtful that Augustine would have been attracted to its style of living and thinking. In fact, Halliburton recounts that, according to Courcelle, Manichaeism might even have served to discourage Augustine from coenobitic asceticism. See Halliburton, 'The Inclination to Retirement', 331; *cf.* O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions, Vol. III*, 379.

is the alleged 'obvious association' between the Milan ideal and the Cassiciacum retreat.[759] Certainly, with respect to time and place, the passages are in immediate proximity to one another (Milan area in 386-387). To a certain extent the composition, organisation, and activities of the communities themselves are 'proximate' too. The Cassiciacum retreat, like the Milan ideal, revolves around a kind of coenobitic life among family and friends and contains ascetic-like elements, such as a daily discipline of praying, labour, and studying.[760] Moreover, Halliburton notes that Augustine connects the Cassiciacum retreat to the Milan ideal in the preface to *Against the Academics*, which was produced during the retreat.[761]

But Halliburton fails to appreciate the sheer vagueness and elusiveness of that connection. Augustine, addressing Romanianus, simply refers to the philosophical way of life which the wives allegedly prevented them from pursuing — but he does not elaborate on that life's connection to the Cassiciacum retreat. Halliburton nonetheless assumes that the connection, coupled with the aforementioned proximity, justifies the following inference: the Milan ideal, on the basis of its connection and proximity to the Cassiciacum retreat, should be conceptualised as a retreat. That in turn renders Augustine's monastic impulse essentially non-political, and possibly even anti-political.

There is some textual support for Halliburton's inference. Importantly, Augustine tells us about his longing to get away from commitments and to the villa with 'all my associates',[762] which echoes the Milan ideal, and its prospective peace 'removed from crowds'.[763] Halliburton also supports the inference contextually. In classical antiquity, retreat or retirement (*anachoresis*) entailed withdrawal from world, city, and politics, so that one could enter into oneself. Via retirement, the lovers of wisdom — exemplified by Plotinus precisely — sought to discover order beneath or

[759] Halliburton, 'The Inclination to Retirement', 329.
[760] Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, 31-32.
[761] *c. Acad.* 2.2.4-6.
[762] *conf.* 9.4.7.
[763] *conf.* 6.14.24.

behind the chaos of city life as they knew it, 'and from whose trammels they sought to disentangle themselves' to thereby achieve perfection.[764] We should attempt to bolster Halliburton's case by appealing to Ciceronian leisure (*otium*).[765] However, although leisure is conceptually akin to retirement, it 'does not serve as an escape from political realities', and especially not permanently so.[766] Leisure enabled citizens to move between private contemplation and conversation on the one hand, and public discourse and affairs on the other, which dignified and stabilised the political community; it was not a way to flee from it.

My conjecture is that Halliburton's inference is unsatisfactory. For despite their immediate proximity, there are two crucial differences that separate the Cassiciacum retreat from the Milan ideal. Firstly, suffering from an ailment, Augustine desires to get away from work and people so as to recover.[767] Secondly, and relatedly, Augustine has converted to Christianity by the time of the Cassiciacum retreat and, as a catechumen under Ambrose, seeks an opportunity to prepare for baptism.[768] Thus, whereas the Milan ideal envisioned a permanent way of life, the Cassiciacum retreat is in its very nature transitory: contrary to the Milan ideal, the Cassiciacum retreat is not for its own sake. My point is neither that the concepts of retirement or leisure fail to capture anything important about the Milan ideal, nor that the Cassiciacum realises aspirations that are altogether different from those expressed in the Milan ideal. The point is rather, firstly, that we should not take the concepts of retirement or leisure to by themselves capture everything, and especially not the most important thing. Secondly, we should not regard the Cassiciacum retreat as an attempt to fully realise the Milan ideal, even if it is in some respects motivated by that ideal. This becomes clearer if we return to the Plotinian influence.

[764] Halliburton, 'The Inclination to Retirement', 336. See also 333.
[765] See Dan Hancey, 'Otium as Civic and Personal Stability in Cicero's Dialogues', *Classical World* 106, no. 2 (2013): esp. 182. See also 179ff.
[766] Ibid, 172.
[767] *conf.* 9.2.4.
[768] *conf.* 9.2.4-3.5; 9.4.7; 9.6.14.

According to Porphyry, Plotinus' withdrawal from world, city, and politics was not only an entering into oneself. It was also an entering into a new but old kind of city and politics: Platonopolis, which is modelled on Plato's political theory.[769] If Plotinus did influence the Milan ideal, it is therefore possible that Augustine, like Plotinus, sought to retreat from one kind of politics to enter another, different kind of politics. And if so, then it is presumably this end (*i.e.* the entering into) rather than the means (*i.e.* the retreat from) which should be taken to capture the most important thing about Augustine's monastic inclination.[770] I shall argue for that conclusion by considering another possible influence for the Milan ideal which to my knowledge is largely overlooked, namely Pythagoras. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 3, the Pythagorean community served as the model for Plato's political theory, which in turn serves as Plotinus' model. The omission of Pythagoras should surprise us, for in the *Retractions* Augustine admits — in a passage commenting on *On Order,* also produced in the Cassiciacum retreat — to having bestowed 'so much praise on the philosopher, Pythagoras, with the result that anyone who hears or reads can think that I believed that there are no errors in the teachings of Pythagoras'.[771]

I will soon examine *On Order*. But before doing so I shall by way of preparation make three textual and contextual observations — by looking back to our discoveries in Chapter 3 — to show that we cannot dismiss Augustine's admission as hyperbole. The first is that although the key components of Augustinian monasticism, coenobitism and asceticism, were not uncommon in the classical antiquity,[772] we must be attentive to the extent to which the Milan ideal, and specifically the

[769] Porph. *VPlot* 12. See also 2. Halliburton mentions Platonopolis elsewhere, but still with a distorting emphasis on that which Augustine' retreats (or flees) from. See R. J. Halliburton, 'The Concept of the *Fugae Saeculi* in St Augustine', *The Downside Review* 86, no. 280 (1967): 257-258. See also Brian Patrick McGuire's description of Augustine's monastery as a safe haven for friends of God against 'heretics and barbarians', *Friendship and Community: the monastic experience, 350-1250* (Cistercian Publications, 1988), 57.
[770] It is also worth to point out, with R. A. Markus, that Augustine establishes his monastery in the middle of world, city, and politics. See A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 11.
[771] *retr*. 1.3.3.
[772] See Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, 5.

phraseology by which it is presented in *conf*. 6.14.24, resembles the distinctive Pythagorean proverb that friends share everything communally.[773] The Milan ideal appears to be more or less a direct restatement of the proverb. Might this resemblance be coincidental? We have preliminary reasons for thinking otherwise, bringing us to the second observation.

In classical antiquity, the Pythagorean way of life, epitomised in the proverb, came to represent virtue and piety *par excellence* — for instance, Cicero also esteemed Pythagoras.[774] Importantly, Pythagoras was especially admired in the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions Augustine was so perceptive to: Socrates makes the proverb constitutive of Kallipolis and connects it to the friendship and deification of the guardian class. Furthermore, in the *City of God*, Pythagoras is described as an archetypical natural theologian. That is because Pythagoras recognised that God is the creator of everything and everyone, 'the source from which our nature has its origin, our learning truth, our life its happiness'.[775] Thus, even much later, at the time of writing the *City of God*, Augustine affirms that the overall direction of the Pythagorean way of life is correct.

The third observation buttresses the second. Platonism or Neoplatonism is identified as the best of all available philosophical paths in *ciu*. 8. According to Augustine, it takes its adherents to the threshold of wisdom. Although this path ends with Plato, Augustine takes Pythagoras to be its starting point.[776] Augustine mentions a handful of contemporary Platonists that are seemingly taken to be especially significant: Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Apuleius.[777] These are all either directly or indirectly associated with Pythagoras. The great merit of Plotinus, according to

[773] Iambl. *VP* 17.72.
[774] See also Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, 89-93.
[775] *ciu.* 8.9. See also *c. Acad*. 3.17.37; *ep.* 137.3.12.
[776] See also *trin*. 14.1.2. Hans Feichtinger's evaluation is that, on Augustine's account, 'Pythagoras seems to outdo Socrates and appears in some respects closer to Plato than Plato's own master'. See Hans Feichtinger, '"Nothing Rash Must Be Said": Augustine on Pythagoras', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (2015): 260.
[777] *ciu.* 8.12.

Porphyry, was to 'set the principles of Pythagoras and of Plato in a clearer light than anyone before' while still adhering to the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition.[778] Porphyry authored two great lives, one on Plotinus and the other Pythagoras. In Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Plato is depicted as a Pythagorean.[779] And Apuleius proclaims that Plato was a faithful Pythagorean and insinuates that Platonists, insofar as they are Platonists, should aspire to the same.[780]

From these observations we can reasonably infer that Augustine did indeed sincerely and intensively esteem Pythagoras and that he thus would be receptive to Pythagorean influences — not only at the time of the Milan ideal, but also well after the monastery in Hippo had been established and the *Rule* had been written.[781] Put differently, we certainly cannot dismiss the aforementioned admission in the *Retractions* about Pythagoras as hyperbole. Then again, this inference can be challenged. If Pythagoras was such an important influence, would we not expect Augustine to mention Pythagoras' name in deliberating about the Milan ideal? This challenge drives us back to the admission, as we find it presented in the *Retractions*. Firstly, Augustine says quite overtly in the passage that Pythagoras was an important influence, thus even though it might be odd that Pythagoras is absent in Augustine's description of the Milan ideal, we should not read too much into it. Secondly, and crucially, we also find a plausible explanation for the absence. Augustine says that he 'regrets' the praise he bestowed upon Pythagoras, which suggests that Augustine decided not to go on praising Pythagoras. We should therefore expect Augustine to moderate due credit in order to avoid unnecessary confusion about the sole supremacy of God — especially since *Confessions* is concerned with directing us to God.

[778] Porph. *VPlot* 20, 21; 22, 23.
[779] Iambl. *VP* 30.167-168; see also 131.
[780] Apule. *Florida* 15.
[781] For instance, Augustine remains far more interested in Pythagorean approaches to natural theology, and specifically cosmological number speculation, than Ambrose. See Paul Elliott, *Creation and Literary Re-Creation: Ambrose's use of Philo in the Hexaemeral Letters* (Gorgias Press, 2019), esp. 143-157.

5.2 Augustine's monastic inclination: escaping or entering politics?

Before we turn to *On Order*, I shall linger for a moment on Augustine's regret in the *Retractions*. Held together with the three preparatory observations from the previous section, it enables us to establish two further points. Firstly, Pythagoreanism did not only influence Augustine as some kind of nebulous feature of Neoplatonism. Rather, Augustine was aware of and appreciated Pythagoreanism itself as an influence which, although mediated by Neoplatonism, was not reducible to it. Secondly, with striking precision, we can infer that, since this influence was so present and operative during the Cassiciacum retreat, it would have been so when Augustine and his friends were deliberating about the Milan ideal — seeing as both happened in Milan 386. We should also note that Augustine does not regret the praise given to Pythagoras in *itself*, but the 'result' of the praise, and specifically the obfuscation of Christianity as the one and only way to God.[782] If anything, that speaks to the sheer extent and intensity of Augustine's praise, and, transitively, his admiration.

With that said, let us turn to *On Order*. It is the third dialogue in a tetralogy composed during the Cassiciacum retreat and concerns the manner by which we can follow the way of God.[783] For our present purposes, *ord.* 2.8-19 stand out. According to Augustine, we enter the way of God by guiding our moral and intellectual endeavours toward God. We do so by adhering to certain rules (*praecepta*). These rules govern such things as chastity, modesty, fasting, labour, study, and worship

[782] For the Neoplatonists, Pythagoras served as a pagan holy teacher rivalling Jesus. See John Dillon and Jackson Hershbell, 'Introduction', 14.
[783] In *Against the Academics*, scepticism is criticised for deadening the desire for truth by preaching its unattainability; *On the Happy Life* establishes that a rightly ordered desire for truth only can be satisfied in God; *On Order* approaches God in and by the soul's coming to know itself and the ordering of its desires to perfection; and *Soliloquies* explores the soul's love and knowledge of God.

— put simply, a way of life that is coenobitic and ascetic. Interestngly, Lawless observes that a number of the precepts in *ord*. 2 'anticipate' the *Rule*.[784]

In *ord.* 10, we learn that Augustine does not make these rules out of nothing; he adapts 'great and almost divine' philosophers to his own purposes. The philosophers' identities remain hidden until the very end of the dialogue, at which point Alypius probes into the source of the rules. 'Is it not that venerable and almost divine discipline that is both rightly held and proved to be that of Pythagoras?'[785] Augustine 'gladly accepts' the suggestion and then elaborates:

> I truly believe it came to your mind through unseen divine order, whatever it may be. For I had entirely overlooked a very important point, which, if we ought to believe anything from history […] I am wont to admire in Pythagoras, and, as you well know, to proclaim by almost daily praise; namely, that he taught the science of government last of all, taught it to disciples already learned, of mature years, already wise and happy. He indeed saw the political tempests to be of such magnitude that he was unwilling to commit anyone to them except a man who, in governing, would — almost like a god — avoid destructive rocks, and who, if all things failed, would himself become, as it were, a rock against the waves.[786]

This passage is striking, for if read against the background provided in the previous section, it shows beyond reasonable doubt that the coenobitic asceticism of Augustine's monasticism was enthused by Pythagorean influences. Moreover, Augustine does not only praise Pythagoras as some kind of general influence, but specifically as the influence of the rules governing a coenobitic and ascetic way of life. And

[784] Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, 33. See also Luc Verheijen, *Nouvelle Approche de la Règle de saint Augustin* (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1980), 239 (cited in Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 180, n. 80).
[785] *ord*. 2.20.54.
[786] *ord*. 2.20.54 (adaptions in accordance with Feichtinger, 'Nothing Rash Must Be Said', 256-257).

remarkably, in the passage, this way of life seems to culminate in politics and deification, which aligns perfectly with our discoveries concerning the Pythagoreans in Chapter 3.

The meaning and importance of this Pythagorean influences becomes all the more evident if we recall the three features of the Pythagorean community from § 3.2, derived from the three extant ancient lives of Pythagoras, produced in the Neoplatonists' milieu in which Augustine was steeped. I will briefly return to Iamblichus's account, since J. O'Donnell reckons that Augustine was familiar with it,[787] to bring out and to the fore the proto-monastic character of the Pythagorean community. According to Iamblichus, the initiated disciples of Pythagoras practiced ascetic and coenobitic living for the sake of friendship with God and one another.[788] Such divine befriending was at once intellectual and moral. Contemplation consists in befriending wisdom, by which we come to know God as Friend.[789] This knowledge illuminates our mind; we come to see everyone and everything as parts of the same whole that is the universe, in which God or the One, although beneath and beyond the realm of being, nevertheless is found to *be* in the many that exists. To love God or the One, therefore, is to love the many; it is to love forth friendship in the whole, to 'turn enemies into friends'.[790] Correspondingly, among the Neoplatonists, Pythagoras was not only regarded as the first philosopher, but also as the 'discoverer and legislator' of friendship.[791]

Pythagorean asceticism involved adherence to the rules to which Augustine refers. These rules provided a daily rhythm of exercise, labour, education, meals, worship and sacrifice.[792] There is also evidence of a habit,[793] chanting,[794] and silence among

[787] O'Donnell reckons that 'Varro would be the intermediate source'. See O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, *Vol III*, 379-380.
[788] Iambl. *VP* 18.80-81.
[789] Iambl. *VP* 33.240; see also 15.65-66; Porph. *VPyth* 38, 49; Diog. Laer. 8.25-26, 29, 33.
[790] Diog. Laert. 8.23. See also Iambl. *VP* 33.232.
[791] Iambl. *VP* 16.69-70; 33.229-230.
[792] Iambl. *VP* 21.96-100.
[793] Iambl. *VP* 28.149.
[794] Iambl. *VP* 24.114.

the initiated disciples.[795] Importantly, the rules guided its adherents to denial of self, for instance by resisting wealth and fame,[796] abstaining from certain foods and drinks,[797] and practicing sexual chastity.[798] The purpose of such self-denial was to cure the wounds of the souls — 'pains and angers, pangs of pity, absurd jealousies and fears, all sorts of desires, outbursts of indignation, yearnings, feelings of superiority, outbreaks of laziness and violence'[799] — so that the initiated disciples could 'be assimilated' to 'heavenly beings' by way of 'imitation'.[800] This assimilation consisted in the aforementioned divine befriending, and thus goes hand in hand with contemplation.[801]

> [All] their zeal for friendship, both in words and deeds, aimed at some kind of mingling and union with God, and at communion with intellect and with the divine soul. For no one could find anything better, either in words spoken or in ways of life practiced, than this kind of friendship.[802]

For the Pythagoreans, proper friendship expressed itself in a common household; for according to the Pythagorean proverb, friends share everything communally.[803] The common household therefore represented the focal meaning of true politics: administrators of the Pythagorean households were even, and notably, called 'politicians' (*politikoi*).[804] Correspondingly, Iamblichus reports that the Pythagoreans were just as admired for their household management as for their philosophy.[805]

[795] Iambl. *VP* 21.96-100.
[796] Iambl. *VP* 16.68.
[797] Iambl. *VP* 16.68; 24.106.
[798] Iambl. *VP* 27.132.
[799] Iambl. *VP* 14.64.
[800] Iambl. *VP* 15.66; 28.148.
[801] Iambl. *VP* 15.65-66; 16.69-70; 33.240. See also Diog. Laer. 8.25-26, 29, 33; Porph. *VPyth* 38, 49.
[802] Iambl. *VP* 33.240.
[803] Iambl. *VP* 17.71-72.
[804] Iambl. *VP* 17.72; Porph. *VPyth* 20, 33; Diog. Laert. 8.10, 23. See also Iambl. *VP* 17.72; 30.168.
[805] Iambl. *VP* 30.170. See also 30.168-172.

It is important to recall that the Pythagorean community consisted of two circles. The initiated or esoteric disciples belonged to the common household, and the exoteric disciples participated in this way of life of the common household from the outside, as it were as laypeople. The initiated disciples were tested rigorously before initiation and, if initiated, bound by vows and to rules of traditional faith and morality, as well as rituals that were kept secret. Their way of life consisted in the coenobitic-ascetic Pythagorean way of life that I have just described. The uninitiated disciples presumably adhered to the Pythagorean way of life adapted to their circumstances as laypeople.

Outside these two circles we find all those that did not pursue the Pythagorean way of life and were thus 'enemies' in one sense or another. Since the One exists in the many, and therefore even in enemies, it was imperative to befriend them, that is, to convert them to the Pythagorean way of life. The exercise of true politics in the Pythagorean community therefore drove the initiated disciples out of their common household and into the affairs of the — if we were to apply the Augustinian grammar — earthly city. They were ambassadors on a mission to mould 'earthly politics' in the heavenly image of their Pythagorean community, and they attempted to do so by awakening a longing in the citizens to be assimilated to and thus be one with the divine, and to that end, heal the aforementioned spiritual wounds that impede individual and communal flourishing.[806]

We now find ourselves in a position to appreciate the salient similarities between the Pythagorean community and Augustine's monastic impulse in Milan 386. These similarities do not only pertain to the rules governing their respective instances of coenobitic asceticism, but also to their *raison d'etre*: the sharing of a certain kind of way of life for the sake of divine friendship.[807] For Augustine, such divine and indeed deificating friendship involves the exercise of ethical, intellectual, and theological virtues. These Pythagorean-Augustinian similarities do not fade away with

[806] Iambl. *VP* 7.33-34; 27.128; 130.
[807] *ord*. 2.8.25; 18.48. See also *sol*. 1.13.22.

the development to fully fledged Christian monasticism in Hippo in 391.[808] On the contrary, when we examine Augustine's *Rule* in greater detail, we find that the similarities become more pronounced and prominent, yet simultaneously, in crucial respects, they are also subverted.

Before doing so, let us consider the fact that for Augustine, the Christian monastics demonstrate a willingness to sacrifice everything, even themselves, to enter into friendship with God. They revealed to Augustine the chains of unruly unwillingness and disordered desires by which he is enslaved.[809] As a convert, Augustine recognises that, for him, liberation from these chains could only be possible in Christ. However, this would seem to conflict with the proposed Pythagorean inspiration. Pythagoras, after all, was no Christian. But for Augustine, Pythagoras was no ordinary pagan. Commenting on *s.* 26, discovered by François Dolbeau, Hans Feichtinger notes that Augustine depicts Pythagoras as one who 'may have received a special revelation of Christ'.[810] This aligns well with Augustine's description in *On Order*: Pythagoras is 'great and almost divine'. The Pythagoreans approximated friendship with God but were unable to identify the *Christian* God and could therefore not find that which they were looking for. Thus, they were doomed to perish. But in Christianity, Augustine can go all the way — for in Christianity, it is not the case that humans ascend to friendship with God; rather, God descends to friendship with humans via incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Jesus is therefore the archetypical Friend by whom we are made friends with God and one another.[811]

For Augustine, then, Christian monasticism completes and transforms the Pythagorean community by turning it on its head. The One descends to us, the many, since

[808] Lawless takes Tagaste to be a 'halfway house' between the Cassiciacum retreat and the monastery in Hippo. See Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, 46.
[809] *conf.* 9.7.16. See also 9.4.7; 5.4.7.
[810] Feichtinger, 'Nothing Rash Must Be Said', 272.
[811] Jn 15:12-13; 17:1-25. Similarly, as Heyking observes, in *On the Trinity*, friendship is exercised in conversation, in the sharing of *logos*, and with Christ, we can share in convocation with the *Logos* itself made flesh. See Heyking, 'The Luminous Path of Friendship', 126. See *trin*. 9.7.12; 11.8.14; 11.9.16.

the many are incapable of ascending to the One. And in Christ, we come to know God, the One, as a *person* that truly, and not only analogically, befriends us. This implicated politics, for it is concerned with happiness culminating in self-sufficiency, which for the Pythagoreans only could be found in friendship and deification. We should expect that the same holds for Augustine and thus that politics is similarly completed, transformed, and realised in Christ. As hinted at, Augustine suggests this very thing at the end of *On Order*, in connecting coenobitic asceticism under a common rule to a better kind of politics: Augustine praises Pythagoras for teaching politics 'last of all', when the disciples were 'already learned, of mature years, already wise and happy' — such that the aspiring politician, 'almost like a god', and strikingly akin to a Platonic guardian, could govern justly.[812]

The political significance of friendship for Augustine is repeated in the subsequent Cassiciacum dialogue: 'I consider that law of friendship to be most just which commands everyone to love his friend not less and not more than himself'.[813] In converting to Christianity, Augustine would come to think and speak about this law in terms of the twofold love commandment. That takes us to the *Rule*, wherein the love commandment is decomposed to a set of rules.[814] But before examining the *Rule*, we must briefly consider Augustine's understanding of the love commandment itself. For as Carolinne White points out, it lies 'at the heart of Augustine's view of friendship'.[815]

[812] *ord*. 2.20.54.
[813] *sol*. 2.3.8. This language of the 'law of friendship' echoes Cicero's *Amic*. 44. Cicero says that friends must seek what is appropriate from their friends, and do what is appropriate for them — which includes rebuking one another in the pursuit of truth. This is picked up on by Augustine. Interestingly, Thomas N. Habinek connects such examination of our friend to examination of self in 'Towards a History of Friendly Advice: The Politics of Candor in Cicero's *de Amicitia*', *Apeiron* 23, no. 4 (1990): 167-169. Augustine demonstrates the practice of friendly rebuking in various relations in his letters, see Jennifer Ebbeler, *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine's Letters* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Math Osseforth, 'Friendship in Saint Augustine's Confessions: Between Social Convention and Christian Morals', Dissertation, Free University Press (2017).
[814] *reg.* 1.2. In *Ordo Monasterii*, the twofold love commandment features explicitly in the opening. See also Charles W. Brockwell, 'Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community', *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977): 95.
[815] White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 197.

5.3 Three friends, two commandments, one friendship

In the Cassiciacum dialogues, Augustine says that Cicero 'most rightly and piously defined' friendship as 'an agreement, in kindness and charity, on human and divine things'.[816] But then Augustine's thoughts change in important respects. In *ep.* 258, written during Augustine's episcopacy in Hippo, an important caveat is added: Cicero's definition only holds if the agreement in kindness and charity — simply 'love' hereafter — is situated in God. Friendship is an agreement in love on things human and divine 'in Christ Jesus, our Lord, who is our truest peace'.[817] This definition immediately connects true friendship to true politics: true peace within oneself and among friends is integral to the true political order.[818]

The famous incident of the pear tree in *conf.* 2.4 illustrates Augustine's distinction between true and phantom friendships. Augustine and a group of friends sneak into

[816] *c. Acad.* 2.6.13. See also Cicer. *Amic*. 6.20. I approach friendship in Augustine specifically from an angle in which politics, monasticism, and the twofold love commandment overlaps, and thus my focus will be correspondingly narrow and selective. There are, on the topic of friendship in Augustine, a number of entries available, see *e.g.* Kim Paffenroth, 'Friendship as Personal, Social, and Theological Virtue in Augustine', in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth (Lexington Books, 2005); Liz Carmichael, *Friendship: A Way of Interpreting Christian Love* (T&T Clark, 2004), 55-69: White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, chap. 11. For a broader and more comprehensive treatment of personal friendship, see McNamara, *Friends and Friendship for Saint Augustine*. McNamara argues that Augustine's view on friendship develops from a classical to a Christian concept (9). However, Cassidy rightly criticises McNamara for not sufficiently appreciating that for Augustine, universal *caritas* does not replace particular *amicitia*; rather, these remain intrinsically connected concepts (see 'The Recovery of the Classical Ideal of Friendship in Augustine's Portrayal of *Caritas*', 131ff). For an overview of social and even political friendship in Augustine, see Donald X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustin's Practical Philosophy* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), chap. 4-5. Burt argues that political community, for Augustine, is 'a society of friends' (149). For more on friendship in Cicero, see *e.g.* Konstan, 'Philosophers and Roman Friendship'; Nicgorski, 'Cicero's Distinctive Voice on Friendship: *De Amicitia and De Re Publica*'; Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, chap. 5; Thornton C. Lockwood, 'Defining Friendship in Cicero's *De amicitia*', *Ancient Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (2019).

[817] *ep.* 258. See also McNamara, *Friends and Friendship for Saint Augustine*, 217-22.

[818] *ciu*. 19.13. See also Williams, *On Augustine*, 119. True peace is also, and simultaneously, integral to true contemplation, which for Augustine is a 'blending of spiritual ascension with continual confession', and, as such, is 'propaedeutic to divine grace'. See John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Re-reading the Confessio*ns (Routledge, 2005), 97; 92; *Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 163.

a neighbour's orchard at night and decide to ruin a bountiful pear tree simply for the hell of it.[819] However, since the group was bound together by love for sin,[820] expressing itself in stealing rather than sharing, breaking rather than adhering to rules, their friendship cannot be true. 'O friendship most unfriendly', Augustine exclaims.[821] In *ep.* 258, Augustine reflects precisely on this distinction between true and phantom friendship and claims that it can only be perceived correctly from the perspective of friendship with Jesus Christ. For a soul that loves sin is in fact an enemy onto itself. If the agreement with our 'friends' reinforces such sinfulness, and prevents us from conversion, then there can be no true friendship, only enmity concealing itself in phantom friendship.

Unsurprisingly, then, for Augustine, true friendship is triune — an analogy that is elaborated on in *ep.* 258. Firstly, we are befriended by God. Secondly, in God, we befriend ourselves. Then thirdly, still in God, we befriend our neighbour. To be friends in God is to ground one's friendship in true agreement about divine things. Such true agreement, or agreement about truth, is summed up in the twofold love commandment. This commandment is important not only because it represents, for Augustine, the meaning of true friendship, but also because of its political significance in the biblical sources: Jesus makes the twofold love commandment foundational to the kingdom of the new covenant,[822] just as it was foundational to the kingdom of old.[823] Indeed, Jesus is crowned King in the same sacrifice by which he befriends us — a sacrifice that serves as the paradigmatic perfection of the twofold love commandment.[824] This connects interestingly to the classical sources, wherein

[819] *conf.* 2.4.9.
[820] *conf.* 2.4.9-6.14.
[821] *conf.* 2.9.17.
[822] Jn 15:14; Mk 12:28-34.
[823] Deut. 11:9; see also 6:4-9, 11:13-21, Num. 15:37-41; Lev. 19:9-18.
[824] 'Your kingdom come, your will be done', Jesus teaches us to pray (Matt. 6:10). If do pray so, we imitate Christ's sacrifice of self: 'not my will, but yours' (Lk. 22:42). In this offering up of ourselves, the twofold love commandment is perfected. 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you' (Jn. 15:12-14).

friendship is regarded as the bond of political community. As if combining the biblical and classical deposits, Augustine identifies justice with the second love commandment, labelling it a 'law of friendship'. Since Augustine decomposes the twofold love commandment to a set of rules in the *Rule*, we can now begin to sense that the *Rule* is simultaneously a spiritual, moral, and political document: Augustine attempts to establish a true political community — a 'heavenly city' so to say (with the indefinite article and in the lower case) that mirrors the Heavenly City (definite article, upper case) — in the *saeculum*.

This observation is reinforced if we inquire further into Augustine's understanding of the twofold love commandment. To do so, I shall turn to the *Tractates on the Gospel John* and Augustine's associated *Sermons on the First Epistle of John*. According to Tarcisius J. van Bavel, the *Tractates* exposes a shift in Augustine. The shift can be traced to 391, which coincides with the establishment of the monastery in Hippo. In this shift, Augustine moves away from a clear and strong, yet not absolute, distinction between love of God and neighbour. Augustine, Bavel explains, took the second love commandment to pertain to lower and lesser things, a 'necessary condition of love for God, a preparation for it, a cradle for it, a ladder or step to it'.[825] But in the shift, Augustine came to 'experience' — presumably, given the timing of shift, in the monastery — that Scripture requires us to obey both commandments simultaneously.[826] In the *Tractates*, the two love commandments melt into one in the furnace of John's definition that 'God is love'.[827]

Similarly, in sermon 10 on the First Epistle of John, Augustine recognises Jesus Christ not only as the head of the Christian body, but also as the body itself. As suggested, Christ is foreshadowed in the One of Pythagoreanism, which then came to be center of interest among the Neoplatonists: although beneath and beyond the body, Christ nevertheless *is* the body. Thus, just as loving the One is to love the

[825] *sol*. 2.3.8.
[826] *ep.* 55.
[827] 1. Jn 4:8; 16. See also Tarcisius J. van Bavel, 'The Double Face of Love in Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 17 (1986): 169.

many, loving Christ is to love one's neighbours. This Pythagorean and Neoplatonic (and indeed Pauline)[828] vision is intensified in a striking inversion of John's definition of love in sermon 7. It is not only the case that God is love, but also that 'love is God'. Love, insofar as it is true, is divine. If our love is indeed true, then God, according to Augustine, is *ipso facto* in us. We see this also in a comment on 1 John 4:20 from *On the Trinity,* written in 400: the 'perfection of justice' is found in love of neighbour, and 'God should be understood as neighbourly (*fratris*) love itself'.[829]

The fire that consumes the distinction between the commandments to love God and neighbour is threefold. Firstly, we cannot keep the commandment to love God without also loving our neighbour, for in important respects, God dwells in our neighbour. Secondly, in the *saeculum*, love of neighbour is typically more immediate to us. In reaching for God, we must often go through, as it were, our neighbour. Thirdly, and for that very reason, our shortcomings in keeping the love commandments are revealed more immediately to us in the face of our neighbour. Thus, Augustine's triune friendship scheme — from God to self to other — is not so straightforward after all, at least not in the *saeculum*, at least not in everyday life. Here we transition into the monastery. For it seems that for Augustine, love of neighbour is perfected and even deified in the monastery.

In transitioning to the monastery, it might be helpful to stop by Augustine's famous 'order of love'.[830] No order exists for the sake of ordering itself; the order exists for the sake of completing or perfecting something or someone. And the order of love (*amor*, *caritas*, *dilectio*), as a desire or virtue, is completed or perfected in a relation: friendship (*amicitia*).[831] Augustine makes this evident in sermon 10.7 on the First Epistle of John: 'you love to the end he may be a brother', and to love a brother,

[828] See 1 Cor. 12:12-27.
[829] *trin*. 8.8.12.
[830] *ciu.* 15.22. See also *doc. Chr.* 1.72.
[831] 'Augustine does not make an essential difference between the three Latin words *amor*, *caritas*, and *dilectio*'. See Tarcisius J. van Bavel, 'Love', in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Eerdmans, 1999), 509.

Augustine says, is to 'love a friend'.[832] The reason is clear enough: love without abiding agreement and fellowship is incomplete — loving, and the order of such loving, exists for the sake of divine friendship. In Augustine, then, divine befriending is cruciform: vertical befriending goes together with horizontal befriending. There cannot be one without the other. In becoming friends with God, we must receive Christ's gift of self and give ourselves in return, both to God and neighbour. Unlike God, however, we cannot fully give ourselves to everyone and everywhere. We are already given into the world at a specific time and place and to specific persons — to participate in God's gift-dynamics is to participate in becoming that particular gift which we were meant to be and receive the gifts that are given to us.[833] That is only possible if we enter divine friendship with someone, somewhere. For Augustine, the monastery and its rules, to which we now turn, make this very thing possible.

5.4 The politics of friendship in Augustine's *Rule*

The purpose of the *Rule* is to make 'one heart and one soul seeking God'.[834] For Augustine, like the Pythagoreans and Neoplatonists, such oneness is friendship that expresses itself in a common household ordered by rules.[835] The rationale behind Augustine's monasticism seems to be that humans can only befriend God by befriending one another; humans befriend one another by sharing a life seeking God; and sharing a life seeking God goes hand-in-hand with 'subduing the flesh' by poverty, abstinence, fasting, and celibacy — so that contemplation and imitation of the sacrificial image of Christ converge.[836] Put differently, for Augustine, monasticism enables us to give ourselves to one another as parts of a whole, and to be sanctified

[832] See also Cassidy, 'The Recovery of the Classical Ideal of Friendship in Augustine's Portrayal of *Caritas*', 133; 135-136.
[833] *trin.* 10.1.2. See also *ciu.* 19.14.
[834] *reg.* 1.2, 4, 8.
[835] *reg.* 1.2-8.
[836] *reg.* 3.1.

in oneness with the One that is beneath, within, and beyond that whole. To be parts of the whole, and enter into the One, consists in participating in the divine sacrifice that is the One's or God's friendship with humans — and in that friendship, befriend other humans.

I have thus far demonstrated not only that the animating spirit of this monasticism, but also its embodiment — coenobitic asceticism for the sake of divine friendship — is distinctively Pythagorean. And for the Pythagoreans, coenobitic asceticism for the sake of divine friendship was intrinsically political. Specifically, it represents true politics, the heart of an alternative body politic. We should expect the same to be the case for Augustine; going forward, I attempt to show that it is. To do so, I shall begin by speaking to the significance of the household in Augustine's political thought.

In classical antiquity, the household was the basic component of political community. This was not only the case in Greece, as we have seen in Pythagoras, Plato's Socrates, and Aristotle, but also in Rome. According to Cicero, the 'primary bond of union lies in marriage, and the second liaison lies in children' — then 'comes the unity of the household, which shares all things in common'.[837] The household, held together by bloodlines and religious ritual, is the republic's originating principle and foundation.[838] Referencing Pythagoras, Cicero adds that it is friendship among good people — people, we should add, that remain representatives for their household — that unites the many to one republic.[839] Put simply, the unity of the city is generated in the friendship of the household and then enforced by friendship between households.

Carol Harrison shows us that we can see a similar connection between the household and the political community in Augustine.[840] For Augustine, the union of man

[837] *Off*. 1.54. See also *Dom*. 109 and *Leg*. 2.30.
[838] *Off*. 1.54-1.55.
[839] *Off*. 1.56.
[840] See Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 162.

and wife in marriage, as one heart and one mind towards God, signifies the unity of the Heavenly City itself.[841] Strikingly, Augustine points to Acts 4:32, suggesting that the household is a kind of 'monastery' by blood (and the monastery a household by spirit). And according to Augustine, its unity consists in familial 'friendship', which extends from the household and outwards to the city.[842] Conversely, the monastery is a 'household' by spirit, united in divine friendship.[843] The household and the monastery are therefore mirror images of one another, the former representing an Edenic order of unity and perfection, the latter an eschatological order of unity and perfection. In the *saeculum*, these orders are not in conflict; they exist in harmony, and even interdependence.[844] The monastery represents the possibility of true, eschatologically transformed political communities, extending from the monastery to heavenly cities. This is congruent with Augustine's suggestion that monasticism represent the mode of heavenly citizenship; the monastics are perfected by their sharing, by the activity of making common, and living and enjoying that which is common.[845] But, what, precisely, are we to make of this kind of true politics? How are we to understand the heavenly cities as political communities in the *saeculum*, inaugurating the Heavenly City? We are to do so in terms of pilgrimage.[846]

[841] *b. coniug* 18.21. See also 13.15.
[842] *b. coniug* 1.1.
[843] Throughout *reg*. and other monastic documents, Augustine refers to the monks and nuns as 'brothers' and 'sisters' (7.1; see also 5.3; 6.3; 7.3). The monks and nuns are to obey their superiors 'as a father' or mother.
[844] For Augustine, monastic relationships take precedence over blood relationships (*epis*. 243). But as Harrison notes, the identity of the monastic is inherently nuptial, and especially so for the nuns: 'the virgin is Christ's wife and lover; He is her husband and unites Himself to her in a spiritual marriage bond'. The monks realise fatherhood Christologically, in terms of servanthood (*reg.* 5.8). Central to this servanthood is the administration of the sacraments to the people of God. And the very sacrament that expresses the monastic identity, marriage, is not available to the monastics. Thus, interestingly, it is not only the case that the monastery reveals the true nature of the household; the monastery finds its true nature revealed in the household, without which there would be no spouses, and thus no children to enter the monastery. See Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 172-173. See also *b. coniug.* 55.
[845] See *op. mon*. 32-33.
[846] Augustine's pilgrimage goes from Eden to Eschaton through the valley of death: 'let us walk in hope', Augustine declares, 'and progress from day to day as we mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit' so that we might 'lose our condition of sin and mortality' (*ciu*. 21.15.). This 'us' is presumably the people of God. We should note three things about the condition of sin and death. Firstly, human nature in the prelapsarian state does not necessarily appear natural to us in our postlapsarian state, yet it remains the paradigm of human nature — we therefore only access genuine nature by way of

The monastics are pilgrims on their way to the Heavenly City, and Augustine invites us to follow their lead.[847] As Sarah Stewart-Kroeker has demonstrated, Augustine's pilgrimage consists in spiritual and moral transformation through sacrament and mortification. If we are to follow the monastics on their pilgrimage, we must mortify our sinfulness so as to be united to God. This can only happen if that very same God has already been communicated to us. And Augustine's monastery is a monastery of priests; they can therefore communicate God through the sacraments. We are able to ascend to God, that is, but only by the power of God's prior descent. Augustine's monastics can therefore be compared to Pythagorean esoterics or Platonic guardians: these ruling elites represent exemplar citizens and *ipso facto* true politicians. However, Augustine's monastics are elites not because of their superiority, but because of their willingness to enter into the eschatological order and be perfected accordingly by giving themselves over to special contemplation and imitation of Christ. It is in this sense that the monastery represents the center of true although certainly imperfect heavenly cities.[848]

> Those who love one another and love God who dwells in them, constitute a heavenly city. A city is held together by a law. The law of this city is love. And love itself is God. For it is written: 'God is love'. Therefore, the one who is full of love is full of God, and many people full of love constitute a heavenly city. […] Be in that city.[849]

The Pythagorean esoterics and Platonic guardians represent a way of life that, although elitist, is not supposed to be restricted to that elite. Plato's aforementioned

apocalypse, that is unveiling. Secondly, if the veil is lifted from our eyes, we come to see our postlapsarian 'nature' as a distortion, which stirs in us a desire for eschatological transformation. Thirdly, this transformation is our pilgrimage in the *saeculum*, and it will be fraught with conflict and trials, indeed, it will require mortification of our postlapsarian pseudo-nature (See also *ciu.* 14.7; 15.4.). And this will implicate our political nature.

[847] See also Martin, 'Augustine and the Politics of Monasticism', 168-169.

[848] Martin, 'Augustine and the Politics of Monasticism', 183-184. See also Brockwell, 'Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community', 92-93; 96; Heyking, 'The Luminous Path of Friendship', 116.

[849] *en. in Ps.* 99.4.

analogy of the soul is instructive in this regard. Reason is exercised by the rational part of the soul, but the two other parts — spirit and desire — can only be perfected as spirit and desire if they are ordered by reason. The same holds not only for the classes of Plato's Kallipolis, but also for Augustine's monastery. The invitation to join the monastic pilgrimage is an invitation to a coenobitic-like and ascetic-like way of life. For the monastics reveal to the people of God the meaning of being 'no longer slaves under the law, but a people living in freedom under grace'.[850]

According to Augustine, the laity should therefore lean into the monastic order to be perfected. Consider, for instance, the basic goods of property and family, which monastics relinquish in special ways that are not available to the laity. However, the laity is nonetheless called to participate in this way of life, that is, not only to share things and fast at certain days, but even to exercise the kind of chastity that Augustine found so difficult: Augustine advises married people to partake in monastic celibacy via temporary abstinence from sexual relations.[851] Doing so will turn the household away from earthly concerns to faith in God.[852] Put differently, by leaning into the monastic order, such households of faith are transformed to 'monasteries' by blood. And if they also physically center around monasteries, and participate in their ways of life — or in Aristotelian parlance: if Edenic and eschatological households come together for the sake of living well — then heavenly cities can arise in the *saeculum.*

Conversely, Augustine's monastics must lean out beyond its walls, not only to the laity, but also to earthly politics and the people dominated by it. For instance, the

[850] *reg*. 8.1.
[851] *b. coniug.* 6.6. However, Augustine's emphasis is on loving God *and* neighbour. Thus, Augustine does not advice Edicia to pursue celibacy in marriage when her husband is reluctant, but in fact rebukes her for an overzealous asceticism that has led her husband into sin (*ep.* 262.2). This demonstrates that for Augustine, love for God cannot be dethatched for love for neighbour.
[852] See Kevin L. Hughes, 'Local Politics: The Political Place of the Household in Augustine's City of God', in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 152-153; Philip Cary, 'United Inwardly by Love: Augustine's Social Ontology', in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth (Lexington Books, 2015), 16-17, 23.

Rule demands that the abundance of the monastery — produced not only by the monastic's labour, but also their exercise of temperance and fasting — be shared with the poor outside its walls, such that the monastery can serve as sacrificial witness in and to the earthly city. There should therefore be a monastic presence in the earthly city, such that their genuine, heavenly politics is not a light put under a basket but rather comes to enlighten earthly politics. For as Robert Dodaro has demonstrated, earthly politics is *per se* deficient, wanting, and at best instrumental; it yearns for the grace that is true politics.[853] Similarly, *On the Work of Monks*, we learn that Augustine's monastics, in Charles W. Brockwell's summary, should engage in 'administration of ecclesiastical justice, arbitration of civil court cases, intercession with the government on behalf of criminals, extension of the Church's right of sanctuary and the practice of hospitality'.[854] Thus, in the *saeculum*, the heavenly cities are not only supposed to witness to but also serve earthly cities. In Possidius's *Life of St. Augustine*, we see this service exemplified: Augustine intervenes on behalf of people facing trial by the earthly government, assists the needy, settles legal disputes, and provides moral education.[855]

In being the central and ruling element of heavenly cities within or alongside earthly cities, Augustine's monastery represents the true mode of politics. Consider for instance Augustine's recurrent 'plea to refrain from retaliatory punishment'.[856] Stewart-Kroeker observes that for Augustine, discipline is concerned with two things:

[853] Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), see esp. 183ff. Notably, Dodaro also says that, according to Augustine, 'the just society is penitential. True justice requires believers to seek from God the forgiveness of their sins and the grace to perform good works' (112).
[854] Brockwell, 'Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community', 105.
[855] Possi. *VA*, chap. 19-27. See also Peter Dennis Bathory, *Political Theory as Public Confession: The Social and Political Thought of St. Augustine of Hippo* (Transaction Books, 1981), 160ff; Robert Dodaro, 'Between the Two Cities: Political Action in Augustine of Hippo', in *Augustine and Social Justice*, ed. Teresa Delgado, John Doody and Kim Paffenroth (Lexington Books, 2015), esp. 110-111.
[856] Sarah Stewart-Kroeker, 'Friendship and Moral Formation: Implications for Restorative Justice', in *Augustine and Social Justice*, ed. Teresa Delgado, John Doody and Kim Paffenroth (Lexington Books, 2015), 253.

restraining evil and reforming the sinner. Put simply, the aim of discipline is conversion, of turning enemies to friends.[857] In each case, we must therefore exercise 'discernment and reasoning' about the right kind of punishment.[858] This kind of mercy is to go *beyond* the law, as we grappled with in Chapter 3 and especially Chapter 4.[859] And the heavenly cities do not only intercede on behalf of sinners, wrongdoers, and criminals, calling for this kind of mercy. They also offer a fellowship of restoration and a way to happiness: prayer, confession, forgiveness.[860] As such, the heavenly cities, and especially the monastery,[861] give the earthly cities that for which they grasp but never can reach with their own instruments, that is, true happiness culminating in true self-sufficiency: friendship with God.

Here we must consider an important objection: the Pythagorean-Platonic concept of the political, which I apply to Augustine, is only 'political' in an analogical or otherwise overly flexible sense. There are three ways of responding to this objection. The first is to return to our preliminary Ciceronian definition of politics: the monastery is a shared 'thing' among the monastics, indeed paradigmatically so, for everything is shared among every member. Moreover, the monastics engage in deliberation about laws and justice, represented in the *Rule* and its authorities.[862] Similarly, we can return to the definition of friendship, which represent the political bond for Cicero: monastics are united in agreement about the common good, again paradigmatically so, for there is agreement about the true common good that is God which then manifests in shared deliberation and achievement of more proximate

[857] See *ep. Io. tr.* 1.9.
[858] Sarah Stewart-Kroeker, 'Friendship and Moral Formation', 255.
[859] Interestingly, this idea is not only found among the Greeks; a very similar idea is found among the Israelites and Talmudic legal-ethical principle of 'going beyond the limits of the law'. See Alan L. Mittleman, *A Short History of Jewish Ethics: Conduct and Character in the Context of Covenant* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 78.
[860] Ibid, 260; 262-270.
[861] Martin, 'Augustine and the Politics of Monasticism', 176.
[862] *reg.* 7.1. The father and mother have power (*potestas*) and authority (*auctoritas regendi*) to rule (*reg.* 5.3; 6.3), *i.e.* to discipline and care for his sons or her daughters (7.3), who must render him or her obedience (7.1). If they do not, the superiors can 'expel' (*reg*. 5.9) him or her from the monastery.

common goods. Thus, to reiterate, the monastery can be said to represents the political in the truest sense of the term.

A second and complementary way of responding is to follow Ogle in critiquing the imposition upon Augustine of a narrow and specifically modern and secular concept of the political, informed by if not modelled on the institutions of the nation-state.[863] But we must let Augustine speak about political concerns in his own terms. And if we do so, we see that he understands the realisation of our political nature to be a kind deification, like Pythagoras and Plato before him. Emphasis on this realisation yields only a flexible concept of the political from the perspective of secular 'political' configurations. But these configurations can be said to be distorted, from an Augustinian perspective: they do not represent the political in any true sense. Thus, from this Augustinian perspective, it is the secular configurations that are 'political' in a flexible sense.

The third way is to identify characteristic features of Augustine's politics-as-monasticism and demonstrate its presence in Augustine's central political work: *City of God*. I shall, to conclude my argument, offer a cursory statement of this third response. I do so by focusing on three connected features that are characteristic of politics-as-monasticism. First, the paradigmatic Friend and King is Jesus, and this reveals to us that friendship, and the bond of the true political community, is sacrificial. The second is that, since earthly politics is not sacrificial in the Christian sense (in fact, quite the contrary) it cannot, *for that reason*, represent true politics. Thirdly, and crucially, although rejecting the possibility for true earthly politics, Augustine affirms the possibility and necessity of true heavenly politics in the *saeculum* — a politics modelled on the monastery. Thus, politics-as-monasticism is unique in that it combines Dodaro style realism with Lamb style idealism about

[863] Ogle, *Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine's* City of God, 144-159, 170-171, 180-183.

politics: the referent of the realism is earthly politics whereas the referent of the idealism is heavenly (and, *pace* Lamb, not earthly)[864] politics in the *saeculum*.

5.5 Politics-as-monasticism: a eudaimonist-eschatological reading of *ciu*.

Through his mouthpiece Scipio, Cicero laments the deterioration of the Roman republic: 'it is through our own faults, not by any accident, that we retain only the form of the republic (*res publica*), but have long since lost its substance'.[865] Here Cicero distinguishes between true and phantom politics. The Roman republic used to be a true republic but is now only a phantom republic. In the *City of God*, Augustine famously cites this distinction.[866] According to Augustine, however, it is not the case that Rome lost the substance of the commonwealth; Rome never truly possessed it.

This audacious claim is expounded in *ciu*. 19.21-24, wherein Augustine probes into the meaning of 'republic', as noted in the introduction to this chapter, and Cicero's subsequent specification: the republic is 'the good of the people'. Augustine identifies two problems with the application of this definition to the Roman republic. Firstly, 'the people's good was never attained'.[867] Secondly, and similarly, Cicero defines a people with respect to their agreement about the good, and specifically justice.[868] There cannot, therefore, be a people 'where there is not true justice', there can only be a 'promiscuous multitude unworthy of the name of people'.[869] Augustine reckons that such is the case with the Roman republic.

[864] Michael Lamb, *A Commonwealth of Hope: Augustine's Political Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2023), esp. 264-268.
[865] *Rep*. 4.1.1.
[866] *ciu*. 2.21. See also Williams, *On Augustine*, 111-113; 124.
[867] In *ciu.* 4.4 and 6, Augustine compares kings and emperors to robbers. Note, however, that Rex Martin has identified a distinction between commonwealth (*res publica*) and kingdom (*regnum*) in Augustine, the latter being worse than the former. Rex Martin, 'The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33, no. 2 (1972), 211-212.
[868] *ciu*. 2.21.
[869] *ciu*. 2.21.

According to Augustine, then, Cicero is conceptually confused. The confusion is serious, for in basing their theorisation about politics on the Roman republic, Roman philosophers and politicians can only ever theorise about phantom politics. This confusion obfuscates cogent discussion about politics in the *saeculum* — for that which is true politics for Cicero is, according to Augustine, phantom politics. Augustine is keenly aware of this dialectical impasse, and to overcome it, he introduces a 'more feasible' category of political theory in *ciu*. 19.24: Augustine revises the definition of a 'people' such that it denotes 'an assembled multitude of rational creatures bound together by common agreement on the objects of their love'. Insofar as there is agreement on the objects of their love, the Romans qualify as a people. And 'obviously', Augustine goes on, 'the better the objects of this agreement, the better the people; the worse the objects of this love, the worse the people'.[870] Here we must recall that proper love, for Augustine, can only be completed in friendship.

Thus, whether a people practices true or phantom politics, that is, whether their friendship is true or not, is ultimately a question about their shared love. In suggesting that this love can be better or worse, Augustine suggests that this alternative concept of 'people' can serve as a mediating element between true and phantom politics, such that we can conceive of a spectrum running from true to phantom politics. For Augustine, the poles of this spectrum are eschatological societies, the Heavenly and Earthly City, acting on us in the *saeculum*. God does not allow these cities to do so against our will, that is, by coercion. They must therefore appeal to the basic principle of human agency: our loves. And that takes us to the ultimate manifestation of love, on Augustine's understanding — sacrifice.

[870] For a more comprehensive analysis of the concept of 'people' in Augustine, see John von Heyking, 'A Headless Body Politic? Augustine's understanding of a *Populus* and its Representation', *History of Political Thought* 20, no. 4 (1999): 561-563. For the purposes of this inquiry, the connections that are drawn between 'people' and 'concord' (*concordia*) is especially interesting — for Cicero's friendship account is distinctively Aristotelian, and for Aristotle, concord is intimately connected to civic friendship (*NE* $1167^{a}22$-$1167^{b}3$).

The Heavenly City is based on love of God and is destined to dwell in eternal unity with God. The Earthly City, founded in and by the conspiracy of the fallen angels,[871] is based on love of self and destined to eternal separation from God.[872] Throughout the *saeculum*, we come to know the two cities as opposing powers and principalities that wage war on one another. This war is not only waged in the individual's heart but also cuts through the 'heart' of the earthly body politic, for it fractures and weakens the constitutive agreement of the political community. And according to Augustine, it was Cain's fratricide that summoned the powers and principalities of the Earthly City into the world.[873] Augustine points out that Rome, similarly, was founded on fratricide: Romulus murdered his brother Remus in order to reign over Rome alone. Thus, although Rome is not identical to the Earthly City, its imperial ordering testifies to their amalgamation. Rome gives itself to be dominated by the Earthly City so that it can dominate itself.[874] Conversely, and in Ogle's rendering, Rome 'is coveted, besieged' by the Earthly City.[875] We should therefore take Rome to be an earthly city, enslaved to the Earthly City via the enslavement to its own *libido dominandi*.

Whereas Cain summons the forces of the Earthly City, Abel simultaneously gives himself to the Heavenly City.[876] Abel seems to do so in two sacrifices. First, in sacrificing goods for the sake of befriending God. Secondly, since this first sacrifice proved to be pleasing to God, and thus revealed Cain's fakery, Abel was slain or 'sacrificed' at the altar of jealousy, rage, and violence. There is a primordial connection, therefore, between true sacrifice to God and sacrifice of self, and even between the presence of the Heavenly and Earthy City in the world. In *ciu.* 10, Augustine elaborates on the sacrificial basis of the Heavenly City, archetypically realised in the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Specifically, in a striking passage in *ciu*.

[871] *ciu.* 12.1.
[872] See *ciu.* 12.1, 9; 14.1, 26, 28; 15.1; 19.11, 23-24.
[873] *ciu.* 15.5. The Heavenly City was founded in and by the conspiracy of the fallen angels (*ciu.* 12.1).
[874] Ogle, *Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine's* City of God, 145.
[875] Ibid.
[876] *ciu.* 15.1.

10.3, holy and godly love — which makes possible divine friendship — is conceptualised in terms of sacrifice of self, of submitting to the order of love, and specifically the twofold love commandment, by which we are made blessed and happy.

In *ciu*. 10.6, Augustine says that this sacrificial love manifests in 'every work done in order that we may draw near to God in holy fellowship' — making '"one heart" out of many'.[877] Augustine tells us that this oneness is brought about 'in the sacrament of the alter'.[878] There we come to know the essence of sacrifice as 'gift'. We can only give this gift of self to God in response to God's prior gift to us.[879] In reciprocating, we can participate in the mystery of God giving God to God, that is to say, in God's friendship with God. In the *saeculum*, however, this gift is easily corrupted to transaction, and if we resist such corruption, we are liable to experience suffering — for to give ourselves to God is to enter into oneness with God, and that oneness is opposed by the world in and around the faithful.

Then, in *ciu*. 10.7, Augustine points out that divine self-sacrifice is not only the basis, but even the *modus operandi* of the Heavenly City. We are made immortal, blessed and happy, that is self-sufficient, by participating in God's self-sacrifice. This self-sacrifice establishes full unity between saints, angels, and God. The whole is harmonious because each part loves perfectly, and this whole just is the Heavenly City. Although the Heavenly City is an eschatological society, it is therefore inaugurated here and now by way of pilgrimage: a 'pilgrim part' of the Heavenly City can be found in the *saeculum*, collaborating with the powers and principalities of the Heavenly City by way of participation. We have seen that the monastics lead this pilgrimage. In *ciu*. 10.3, Augustine says that we 'ought to be led to this good',

[877] *ciu*. 15.3. For an exposition of sacrament and sacrifice in *ciu.* 10.6, and the sacrament as both sacrifice and symbol of the sacrifice of Christ and the Christian, see Sarah Stewart-Kroeker's *Pilgrimage as Moral and Aesthetic Formation in Augustine's Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2017), chap. 5, esp. 186-187.
[878] For the importance of sacrament for Augustine's politics, see Ogle, *Politics and the Earthly City in Augustine's* City of God, 146-148; chap. 6.
[879] *trin*. 6.5.7.

that is unity with God, 'by those who love us, and we ought to lead those whom we love to it'.[880]

The Romans mimic such self-sacrifice in their culture of self-restraint. However, their self-restraint is not motivated by love for God, but by the love for victory and glory and fear of defeat and humiliation.[881] Famously, Augustine reckons that such mimicking can only make the Romans 'less vile'.[882] But 'less vileness' is not a stable position. Over time, Rome's vileness is destined to increase and intensify, as it is drawn towards the Earthly City. That is because the basis of Rome is fratricidal injustice, and its *modus operandi* taking rather than giving, sacrificing others rather than oneself, greed rather than generosity. Enmity is therefore ingrained into the heart of Rome, which in turn yields a variety of religious, social, and moral ills, these 'horrible and detestable evils' that Augustine claimed to ultimately cause Rome's demise.[883]

The image of true politics, in the *saeculum*, as this kind of sacrificial pilgrimage is intriguing, for it mirrors interestingly Augustine's image of the prelapsarian political community as a flock ruled by sheepherders — which, although shattered, still applies in the postlapsarian condition.[884] The sheepherders, like the monastics, rule by witnessing to the destination we are heading towards, and serving the people on the way, that is, by communicating the grace of God. The people, in turn, can participate in this ruling to lesser and greater degrees by communicating, by way of

[880] See also *en Ps.* 39.6.
[881] *ciu*. 14.10; 15.20.
[882] *ciu*. 5.13.
[883] *ciu*. 2.6.
[884] *ciu.* 19.15; 4.15. Specifically, this pilgrimage is precisely the notion that is evoked first by Israel (*e.g.* Abel was a shepherded, and similarly Moses and David, who ruled Israel according to the paradigm of shepherding) and then the Church (*e.g.* Jesus Christ as the archetypical sheepherder and the pope and bishops as 'sheepherders' communicating the shepherding of Christ, symbolised in the fact that their crozier was shaped as a shepherd's hook).

imitation, this rulership to their respective spheres of authority. This authority, according to Augustine, is centred in and around the household.[885] Thus, we can imagine the Church as an alternative *kosmos* which inaugurates the world to come, and the heavenly cities as local, particular manifestations — as microcosms — of that order in the form of political communities (and the households, in turn, as microcosms of the political community).[886]

We therefore find in *City of God* the three features which are characteristic of, if not unique to, politics-as-monasticism. Firstly, that the friendship bond of true political community is sacrificial. Secondly, the charge that earthly politics is not sacrificial in the Christian sense, and *for that reason* cannot represent true politics; it can only restrain sin to advance the conditions for true politics.[887] Thirdly, although rejecting the possibility for true earthly politics, Augustine affirms the possibility and necessity of true heavenly politics in the *saeculum*, that is, of heavenly cities alongside earthly cities that participate in and thus inaugurate the Heavenly City. And Augustine's paradigm of these true political communities is the monastery.

This puts us in a position to see the contours of important implications for our understanding of Augustine's political theory. I will speak to one implication of particular importance for the present inquiry: the relation between heavenly and earthly cities. This is a relation of use (*uti*).[888] According to Augustine, in the *saeculum*, the

[885] *ciu.* 19.14; 13. See also Peter J. Burnell, 'The Status of Politics in St. Augustine's City of God', *History of Political Thought* 13, no. 1 (1992): 21.
[886] This interpretation can be grounded in *ciu*. 19.13, where Augustine distinguishes between three cosmological levels or realms: the domestic realm, the civic realm, and the cosmological realm. Each realm is associated with a specific kind of society. Familial societies or households represent in the domestic realm, political communities or cities the civic realm, and — as suggested by 19.17 — the celestial society or Church the cosmological realm. In the *saeculum*, the celestial society is a whole (although only as the pilgrim part of Heavenly City) whereas the familial and political societies are simultaneously wholes and parts. They are wholes in that each society has its own integrity and harmony, its own order and perfection, which manifests in a unique kind of peace and concord. But the societies are simultaneously parts of the whole that is the Church.
[887] *ep*. 153.16; *ciu.* 19.16.
[888] My understanding of 'use' (*uti*) concurs with Stewart-Kroeker: 'the use-enjoyment (*uti-frui*) distinction is the principle that orders love, not an instrumentalizing dichotomy', *Pilgrimage as Moral and Aesthetic Formation in Augustine's Thought*, 227. See also 216ff. For a Biblical example, see Jer. 29:4-7. The Edenic language in the passage is striking: the people of God are to make gardens,

heavenly cities can make 'use' of the earthly peace — there can therefore be a 'harmony' between the cities with respect to earthly peace.[889] At its best, the earthly city is a remedy for our postlapsarian condition. The earthly city can never achieve an order of love, but it can restrain the order of domination, and thus safeguard spaces in which heavenly cities can be created and sustained. The heavenly cities can therefore use the earthly city to restrain the power of the Earthly City.

To understand this relation of use from the perspective of the heavenly cities, it is helpful to consider property as a case study, since friendship, according to the proverb, consists in sharing property, and this is something that perhaps can be achieved by the use of the earthly city's instruments. According to Paul Weithman, Augustine does not regard the division of property as natural.[890] Weithman points to *ep*. 153, where Augustine states that those who make bad use of their property, or acquire it unjustly, possess it unjustly. This suggests that 'those who hold property unjustly would be deprived of it under a just system of property law'.[891] But then, in the same letter, Augustine goes on to *defend* the private property of the unjust such that 'those using their [property] badly becomes less injurious' than they otherwise would have been.[892]

Weithman argues that their disordered attachment to property might be so dominant, that they would steal from others or illegally retain property in order to keep it. The laws protect the private property of the unjust, then, in order to prevent them from obstructing the faithful 'by their evil deeds'.[893] Weithman concludes that, in the *saeculum*, disordered loves explains a paradoxical feature of private property:

eat its fruits, and multiply — pursuing *shalom* — not only in the bosom of their oppressor, Babylon, but even on its behalf.

[889] *ciu.* 19.17.

[890] Paul Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge University Press, 2006). For support of this view: Herbert Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (Columbia University Press, 1963), 104-105.

[891] Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', 239.

[892] *ep*. 153.

[893] *ep*. 153.

the laws must 'protect the claims of those who should not own' private property.[894] On this understanding, private property is a representative case for political authority or rulership in Augustine: 'it providentially works to the benefit of all by allowing us to live together more peacefully than we otherwise could'.[895]

We are now in a position to offer an alternative view to that of Whiteman. For Augustine, property is possessed justly if it is shared according to the proverb that friends share everything communally. But such sharing, such gift and sacrifice, is not possible by way of coercion. Thus, the earthly city should protect private property even though such property *ought* to be shared communally, not as a positive right to use property as one's life, but because correct usage of property requires voluntariness. The end of politics, that is, and here specifically the end of property, can only be achieved willingly. Thus, earthly politics can be used to safeguard a space that makes it conducive to the creation and sustenance of heavenly cities.

Here we sense a tension. On the one hand, the earthly city is a means for the sake of promoting the ends of the heavenly city, but on the other, the heavenly city must use the apparatus of the earthly city as an instrument in ways that do not compromise its divine nature, which involves resistance against instrumentalising the citizens of the earthly city — in fact, the heavenly cities must sacrificially serve the citizens of earthly cities. The heavenly cities cannot, therefore, resort to domination and can only prudently use coercion to protect citizens against other citizens' domination.[896] For the heavenly cities are to witnesses and serve by exercising true politics and providing the divine element which is integral to true politics, and which the earthly city needs in order to be completed, but cannot attain by its own powers.

We should therefore take the proper use of the earthly city to aim for bringing forth the 'natural' goodness or justice of people, which can be found among Christians

[894] Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', 239.
[895] Ibid.
[896] Williams, *On Augustine*, esp. 122-123.

and non-Christians alike.[897] Presumably, the mark of this kind of natural goodness or justice is that it remains open to completion of perfection by supernatural grace, or put differently, as long as it does not lead away from friendship with God. Concrete implications will vary from culture to culture, regime to regime.[898] But despite these variations, goodness and justice can never be brought forth by domination; to recognise and pursue the good is a perfection that pertains to the order of love and manifests itself in friendship. And we must *willingly* submit to that order; it cannot be forced upon anyone who resists it.

Thus, there is on the one hand realism about earthly politics, yet simultaneously idealism about heavenly politics, not only in the eschaton, but also, and crucially, in the *saeculum*. This idealism is not passive; we have to act in order to realise our divinely ordained political nature. We do so by recognising that we need to be part of three societies in order to be perfected: the household or monastery which is the microcosm of a heavenly city, which is a microcosm of the Church. Put differently, the heavenly cities consist of households pursuing a monastic way of life — following, whenever possible, the lead of particular monasteries on the road to perfection within the universal, cosmological order of the Church.

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The eight Platonic premises about the nature of politics, and its connection to friendship, feature in their own way in Augustine, that is, in ways which both develop and subvert Plato and Aristotle. Crucially, contemplation concerns the Christian God and is thus bound up with actions like conversion, repentance, prayer, and

[897] *ciu.* 2.29.
[898] Interesting cases here are Augustine's 'just' persecution (*ep*. 93) and the legality of prostitution (*ord.* 2.4), which Aquinas developed (*ST* II-II q. 10, a. 11; q. 96, a. 2). Augustine regards just persecution as proper love of those persecuted and the legality of prostitution a necessary measure to avoid unleashing of uncontrolled lust. However, we might want to prohibit these evils in our societies.

worship. Similarly, true friendship can only be found within God. Human friendships therefore have to be situated in God in order to be true. Moreover, Augustine synthesises Plato and Aristotle in interesting ways: deification does not conflict with human nature but rather perfects it. We cannot, however, achieve such deification by our own efforts; we must receive it as the gift of grace that is friendship with God. This conviction changes everything pertaining to the argument about friendship and politics, for by implication, genuine politics in the *saeculum* is itself only possible by grace.

To summarise: neither Socrates' deified unity nor Aristotle's natural diversity seems to be able to resolve politics' problem of friendship. Augustine, however, is able to provide a theological resolution. It is *earthly* politics that are unable to secure its own precondition and achieve its own end, that is, friendship. For earthly politics is a distorted variant of heavenly politics. And the ideal centre of heavenly cities are the monasteries, which is the paradigm case of true friendship. Augustine therefore offers us the possibility for reimagining true politics monastically, spiritually — but still as concrete, embodied communities — alongside the earthly city and within an alternative *kosmos*: namely the Church.

PART III

CHAPTER 6

Prolegomena to a Revolutionary Augustinianism

MacIntyre's revolutionary Aristotelianism is supposed to make us able to 'envisage radically and systematically different types of social institutions and social relationships, institutions and relationships aimed at the achievement of the common good'.[899] And this kind of revolutionary Aristotelianism will only materialise when enough people 'are not only able to imagine such alternatives, but are prepared to participate in realising them'.[900]

As we shall see, critics have pointed out that MacIntyre does not, in fact, offer any such adequate political imagination. And without it, people will not be able to discuss MacIntyrean alternatives to the present social and political order. Moreover, it is also important to note that insofar as this revolutionary Aristotelianism is as secular as any other philosophy, it will not be able to account for the kind of hope that MacIntyre requires of any adequate account of human life, and without which people are unlikely to find themselves prepared to realise revolutionary alternatives, even if they could imagine them.[901] My proposal is that these failures can be corrected by shifting the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic synthesis of politics from

[899] MacIntyre, 'Where We Were, Where We Are, Where We Need to Be', 319-320.
[900] Ibid.
[901] Ibid, 333-334.

Aristotle to Augustine. In this chapter I attempt this: I offer the prolegomena to a revolutionary *Augustinianism*.

I begin by drawing on Part I and II to put forward a developed account of MacIntyrean civic friendship (§ 6.1). Then I consider three achievements of this account of civic friendship. Firstly, it makes it possible to bolster the conclusion of MacIntyre's argument that the liberal nation-state is incapable of creating and sustaining civic friendship (§ 6.2). Secondly, it provides a very special kind of grounding of the liberal nation-state: one that is critical of both liberalism and the nation-state (§ 6.3). Thirdly, the account resolves the aforementioned problem in MacIntyre's political philosophy: the absence of an adequate political imagination, by which the revolution is reduced to passive theory (§ 6.4). Then, finally, to enlivenment this new political imagination, I turn to history and consider that which I take to be a paradigmatic case of revolutionary Augustinism: the Beguines (§ 6.5).

6.1 Politics, justice, friendship — some MacIntyrean theses

I have presented a framework comprising eight Thomistic principles.[902] Within this framework, I shall now revise and systematise MacIntyre's different claims about friendship, and specifically civic friendship.[903] I do so in terms of eight MacIntyrean theses — which I put forward by drawing on and synthesising insights discovered in Part II. In doing so, I seek to offer an account of the essential and primary relation of political community *qua* political in MacIntyre's political philosophy. It is important to stress that these theses constitute the skeleton of genuine political community in the abstract. The way by which this skeleton is fleshed out in particular political communities will vary with respect to time and place, and specifically different complexes of tradition-sociology-cosmology. In §§ 6.4 and 6.5, I begin flesh-

[902] See Appendix 2.
[903] See § 1.5, conclusion.

ing out genuine political communities specifically for modernity and under the condition of the liberal nation-state. But before we can begin such detailing and colouring, we must sketch the outline, and thus we turn to the theses.[904]

> *Thesis I*: The genus 'friendship' is a relation whose form is a shared recognition and pursuit of goods and ultimately the good.

Friendship, as a genus, is an Aristotelian virtue friendship. Friendships that are based on and aims for pleasure and advantage are not genuine friendships. Yet genuine friendship can, should, and typically do generate pleasure and advantage. Genuine friendship manifests itself in three acts or effects — benevolence, to will the friend's good and not their evil; beneficence, doing good deeds for the friend, and avoiding harming them; and concord, a unity of wills and choices. The good that friends pursue is a good *for them* and pertains to *their* happiness. This happiness can be natural or imperfect, but only if the pursuit of such happiness leads in the direction of, or at the very least remains open to, supernatural or perfect happiness. Friendship as a genus can be differentiated with respect to the kind of goods that are recognised and pursued. Two species of friendship are indispensable for happiness: domestic friendship and civic friendship. Depending on the circumstances, flourishing also involve friendships in, for instance, the neighbourhood, football club, research group, *etcetera*.

> *Thesis II*: The essential and primary relation of political community is a species of friendship, *viz*. civic friendship.

Civic friendship, or friendship in the city, is the bond of political community. To be a citizen just is to participate in civic friendship. Conversely, without civic friendship, there can be neither citizens nor political communities. Thus, the para-

[904] For convenience, these tenets are also provided in Appendix 1.

digm of civic friendship gives us a prism for analysing political communities. However socially complex and powerful, social structures that systematically preclude us from functioning as civic friends, and thus achieve common goods, can only ever be counterfeit political communities. As such, this prism enables us to examine the health of genuine political communities — and, if we discover political ailments, to deliberate about remedies.

Civic friendship manifests in civic benevolence and beneficence, but concord is civic friendship's prominent act or effect. Civic benevolence and beneficence consist in willing our friend's good and not their evil, and to do good for them and avoid harming them *as* fellow citizens. It is important to stress that the good in question is their actual good. Civic benevolence and beneficence is therefore only possible within civic concord: a unity of will and choices with respect to the political community, and the kinds of goods that are integral to such community. The meaning of this requires further specification.

> *Thesis III*: Civic friendship is the shared recognition and pursuit of self-sufficiency and goods integral to self-sufficiency.

Self-sufficiency is the kind of good that completes the happy life: it is a community revolving around a shared order, culture, and way of life within which the members can achieve happiness individually and communally. This community is only possible if its member share in contemplation about the ultimate good *qua* happiness-*cum*-self-sufficiency. Such shared contemplation can express itself in thinking, reading, and conversation about the good life, but also adoration, prayer, and worship. Contemplation is therefore necessary because it makes it possible for a community to recognise and pursue the good together, that is, as friends.

The specific configuration of self-sufficiency can vary with time and place. But it cannot conflict with happiness. Importantly, this means that if a political community is just, it must protect and promote the citizen's freedom and equality. Freedom

and equality are integral to any true conception of the ultimate human good. But just as 'self-sufficiency' is conceptually flexible or plastic — for it is a universal concept that varies with respect to traditions, sociologies, and cosmologies — 'freedom' and 'equality' are correspondingly flexible or plastic. Freedom must be a freedom from certain constraints, but it is to be understood principally in terms of the good it allows us to achieve. Similarly, equality cannot be reduced to its arithmetic meaning but must also capture geometric equality, that is, being different, complementary parts of the same whole; a whole that serves its parts by realising their nature *qua* parts of the whole. Put simply, freedom and equality are concepts which humans have a natural inclination towards, and a corresponding intuitive conception of, but which have to be determined reflexively in relation to, and as it were within, the self-sufficiency of political community.

Similarly, freedom and equality entail important conceptual restraints on the manner by which self-sufficiency can be achieved. If free and equal citizens are to *share* in self-sufficiency as free and equal, which is to say in such a way that it is really good *for them*, the project of achieving this good must be participatory. This means that there must be institutionalised forms of deliberation to which all those members of the community who have proposals, objections and arguments to contribute have access; and those who cannot do so themselves must be represented by proxies. Such participation limits the possible size of political community.

> *Thesis IV:* Civic friendship is normatively prior to justice in the specific sense that imperfect (civic) friendship is a precondition for, and perfect (civic) friendship the end of justice.

As noted, concord is the prominent act or effect of civic friendship. Concord is necessary to agree on what the best way of life is for the political community, and how to maintain and develop it — which is necessary for pursuing the ultimate political good of self-sufficiency. It is this political project that lays the premises for a shared understanding of justice as desert, that is, what is due to whom. The

'due' of radically dependent practical reasoners is determined on the basis of need, and for relatively independent practical reasoners: merit measured in terms of contribution to the common good. Here it is important to differentiate between partial and complete justice. It is complete justice that is paradigmatic of civic friends, for they attempt communally to be fully virtuous. Such citizens are able to recognise and pursue political goods, and, together, self-sufficiency.

Partial justice refers to the instruments available to political institutions, that is 'politics' in its common, contemporary usage — the formative, retributory, and distributive instruments of law and government. Since citizens typically fall short of the ideal of complete justice, we need partial justice to correct some of the most serious failures and avoid the derailment of the political project. Partial justice aims, therefore, at civic friendship, but it can only do so negatively or indirectly, by attempting to prevent its deterioration, and in cases of violations, attempt to restore adequate conditions for the practice of civic friendship. Such prevention is carried out by using laws to foster a shared moral outlook by which we can, as individuals and a political community, navigate this world in which we find ourselves. The restoration consists in punishing wrongdoing as this is defined in reference to the moral outlook, and correct, when appropriate, failures in recognising and valuing virtuous activity that contributes to the common good.

This means that we might sometimes have to dispose of the strictures of partial justice, if doing so serves the end of civic friendship, but never *vice versa*. The point is that human life is completed in and by friendship, which determines the order of any political community: politics or partial justice exists in a community of imperfect friends for the sake of complete justice which in turn exists for the sake of — and is ultimately completed in — the perfection of their friendship. However, the instruments of partial justice are in their very nature coercive, whereas civic friendship is a voluntary relation. Here it is important to construe 'voluntary' correctly, which we can do by comparing civic friendship to family friendship: children are simply given into the familial community, which consists of people of different

gender, age, and capabilities. The child cannot choose which family to be given into. But once the child is given into the family, he or she can voluntarily contribute to the achievement of its good. I fact, if the family is to be truly successful in achieving its good, such voluntary participation is necessary. Similarly, the political community must secure the voluntary participation of its members. Thus wielding the instruments of partial justice is a complex exercise and demands the virtues, especially temperance and humility.

This typically means that we must, as rulers and citizens, refrain from correcting certain injustices in order to give room for voluntariness and the possibility for friendship — possibilities which may or may not be realised. For wielding the instruments of partial justice can also make matters worse: it can become a substitute for civic friendship or even turned into a weapon used against political opponents. Thus, partial justice only remains truly just, that is properly preventive and restorative, insofar as it is construed in relation to complete justice and friendship.

> *Thesis V*: Civic friendship is a network of groups of domestic friends that share, and is formed by, the project of creating and sustaining the life of political community.

There is a deep and strong connection between domestic friendship, and especially friendship in the family or household, and civic friendship. The natural environment for being and becoming human is the household. Humans are brought forth in a family, and the household is the central location for our development until we have become, ideally, independent practical reasoners — upon which it is common to establish households of one's own. Without such new households, the political community will fade away.

At different times and places, the household will look differently. Despite this kind of particularity, certain structures and functions are universal. Firstly, the household

is the beginning of political community, the nursery and school for virtue and specifically friendship, both domestic and civic. This means that it is flourishing households that have the power to bring forth independent practical reasoners that live virtuously in community with friends and thus offer the possibility for free and equal citizens. The political community must therefore protect and promote the household. An important way of doing so is to shield the household against domination, be it the domination of unrestrained economic forces, foreign powers, conspiratory and lawbreaking fellow citizens, or its own political rulers.

Secondly, and conversely, the household is not self-sufficient in and of itself: the happiness which can be achieved in and around the household reaches out, as it were, in the first instance to shared life with other households, and in the second to shared political life in political community — for instance to provide education and jobs and culture. Households and the political community are related by mutual dependency, as parts and whole; this social ontology pertains to human nature itself. Since the household (be it by blood or spirit) is a basic and necessary constituent of political community, the latter will, over time, fall apart if the former disintegrates. Conversely, if the political community unravels, any given household in that political community will be seriously frustrated. But since political community begins with households, the hope for renewal of political community always and everywhere resides in and around the household, not in great policy schemes or the overhauling of political institutions, although these things might be important corollaries.

> *Thesis VI:* An integral virtue of the network of groups of friends is MacIntyrean ‘just generosity’, which requires charity.

A shared overarching conception of the ultimate political good of self-sufficiency, the end which defines the political project, is the basis upon which concord can be achieved in political community. It is this project that unites the wills of the citizens

and makes it possible to find agreement on important issues pertaining to their project. Civic benevolence and beneficence — willing the political good of other citizens, and not their harm, and correspondingly doing good to them or at least avoid harming them — is a condition for achieving the shared good of self-sufficiency and can only be defined within the overarching conception of the good. Moreover, concord does not only manifest itself in unity of wills, but in certain respect also in unity of lived lives, and indeed unity of temporal destinies: we are 'in it' — this political project of ours — together.

The joys and fears of our civic friends should be relevant to us and the way by which we conduct our life. For in a sense, although certainly a limited sense, their life is also ours. Our shared political life compels us to will and do good, to be concerned, and care for our fellow citizens *as* fellow citizens. And due to the aforementioned importance of the household, a principal expression of such civic benevolence and beneficence is making sure that fellow citizens are able to create and sustain flourishing households. Institutionally, we do so by securing conditions that are conducive to life *in* the household. But civic benevolence and beneficence are also active dispositions — they are virtues manifesting in a civic practice of just generosity around or between households: receiving gracefully and giving uncalculatedly, although prudently.

This kind of receiving and giving should be exercised comprehensively in the household, and then extended concentrically, appropriately, through the networks of different kinds of friends, to the political community. In civic friendship, such just generosity expresses itself in the sharing of civic activities — for instance institutionalised deliberation, communal commemorations, or military defence. The sharing of such civic activities is only possible if the citizens are willing to share their wealth with fellow citizens, that is: households that have more than they need to flourish must share with those having less than they need. If we do not share our wealth with fellow citizens — assuming that the wealth in question is not integral

to our happiness, and that sharing can enable our fellow citizens to achieve happiness that would otherwise not be accessible to them — then we undermine our own happiness in two ways. Directly, by failing to act virtuously, and indirectly by harming the political community, without which our own happiness will be frustrated.

The point is not that this kind of sharing ought to eliminate market activity. The point is rather that, undergirding even hypothetical relations of pure utility, of which market relations are a paradigm, there is a deeper and stronger friendship that operates according to the virtue of just generosity.[905] For economic gain is only valuable to the extent that it contributes to the good life. Certainly, markets do make a crucial contribution: to sell the fruits of one's labour and buy others' products and services in markets of just prices pertains to the self-sufficiency of political community, and, *ipso facto*, civic friendship. But if such market or utility relationships are reduced to their economic or utility value, or made primary, then self-sufficiency will be strained rather than bolstered. Just generosity also makes demands on us when there is nothing to be gained. To pursue the good of self-sufficiency is to recognise that we too, either because of poor choices or bad luck or a combination thereof, might need help to get back up on our feet. Thus we should offer this help to our fellow citizens when they need it: my happiness is entangled with that of my fellow citizens.

> *Thesis VII*: The network of group of friends is comprised of, and must acknowledge, various degrees of dependence.

The virtue of just generosity goes hand-in-hand with the understanding that we are, as citizens, parts of a whole. Different parts of the whole serve different functions. That which unites the parts as a whole, is the shared recognition and pursuit of the whole's ultimate good, self-sufficiency. By participating in this relationship, there

[905] MacIntyre's butcher-with-cardiac-arrest scenario (which MacIntyre levels against the inadequacy of rational choice theory) exemplifies this point: even in relations taken to be paradigmatically utilitarian, we are bound by obligations arising from a prior civic friendship. See MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 117.

is *ipso facto* shared ruling — for the whole must be governed *as a whole*. The flourishing of any given part cannot be neglected, therefore, for it is constitutive of the flourishing of the whole. This becomes clearer if we return to freedom and equality, beginning with equality.

Since parts are different, it is important to recognise that equality, from the perspective of political community, is geometrical. Different parts of the whole will be different from one another, and we should therefore expect and value different parts to serve different functions. Despite inequalities in moral and intellectual virtue, which will be found in any political community, the citizens are equalized in and by their civic friendship. This implicates our understanding of privileges and responsibilities and is thus crucial for concord. The importance of geometrical equality is made evident in the application of different maxims of justice to radically dependent and relatively independent practical reasoners: 'desert' is interpreted in light of the person's capabilities and needs.

Our understanding of freedom will also be shaped by this kind of acknowledgement of dependence. Freedom is the absence of domination and coercion as well as the presence of a kind of sovereignty, and specifically the exercise of the virtues and the achievement of the good. It simply is to become the kind of part that we *can* become — which is determined partly by our natural endowment, partly in terms of the choices that we make in life, partly by entirely arbitrary circumstances. But it is only in recognising the networks of dependencies that we can understand who we are, and what kind of purpose we are to serve, that is, to be happy as the kind of person that *we* are. This kind of knowledge of self and one's community is only possible if we belong to bigger and smaller communities in which we attempt to know common goods and strive to achieve it in our own life.

At this point it is time to pause. I have sought to describe the structure of political life when humans function naturally, that is, as they should. But we do not function as we should; in Augustinian parlance, we find ourselves in the *saeculum*. Thus,

although just generosity can be exercised in and by a kind 'natural charity', that charity is distorted, and requires the remedy of supernatural grace. It is only by acknowledging this kind of super-dependence, that is, not only on humans but on God, and specifically the Christian God, that we can hope to flourish individually and communally — for otherwise we are not able to fully understand who and what we are as human beings. Without this full knowledge, humans typically fail even to achieve imperfect happiness; we are rendered unaware of our spiritual failures that in various ways tend to undercut the achievement of imperfect happiness. As humans in the *saeculum*, we suffer not only from weakness of will, but a sinful or evil will which distorts not only ourselves but also our communities. This brings us to the final thesis.

Thesis VIII: Friendship is a gift of grace.

It is important to note this thesis is not simply some Kantian postulate which is needed to resolve MacIntyre's friendship problem *theoretically*, that is, by opening the friendship account to grace. Rather, it transforms our understanding of the other theses and radically changes the way by which we can in fact, as Christians, practice politics and conceive of concepts such as equality, freedom, and justice. For we can only recognise that friendship is a gift of grace if we also recognise that this gift has been *given* to us by God, the archetypical Friend — which makes it possible to correct spiritual failures and move towards that perfect happiness and self-sufficiency which only can be found in God. For our nature, by virtue of its distortion in the *saeculum*, requires supernatural restoration in order to achieve even its natural goods, and in the restoration, we come to long for goods beyond our nature.

This understanding of human nature as fallen, as sinful, yet raised up and indeed deified transforms politics — it provides us with the required theological framework for a Christian political philosophy. For it makes us appreciate that earthly regimes are not truly natural; they are manifestations of distorted nature and thus incapable of realising our political nature *qua* natural. Our ultimate happiness and

self-sufficiency is only found in Jesus Christ, and the Heavenly City of divine friendship. We enter into this City by way of pilgrimage, that is, by travelling through the *saeculum* and its different earthly regimes. It is in this pilgrimage that we can create and sustain genuine political community — for even though the pilgrimage will always and everywhere be underway in the *saeculum*, it is nevertheless a shared recognition and pursuit of God with God among the people of God, and thus the pilgrimage is already arriving at the Heavenly City.

This implies that although we should appreciate the metaphysical distinction between perfect and imperfect happiness, we must be sceptical about its moral and political import in the *saeculum*. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, because of the distortive effect of sin, nature is unable to achieve its own ends in the *saeculum* and thus requires the corrective function of grace to achieve its own ends. Secondly, when grace exerts its corrective function, we come in contact with a certain kind of perfection that we immediately realise is forever beyond our nature's grasp even if that nature were able to achieve its own ends. That is because the corrective function of grace only can be served by Jesus Christ himself. And Jesus Christ is as it were so much greater souled than Aristotle's great-souled man, that in comparison, we come to see Aristotle's great-souled man as rather small-souled. This is a point not about metaphysics, but epistemology: grace does not change the nature it perfects, but we come to see that our understanding of that nature's perfection, here in the *saeculum*, was itself distorted — and must therefore be redeemed. This redemption is only possible if we enter into the Christian *kosmos*, that is, a *kosmos* in which God descends to us so that we can ascend with him.

I return to this *kosmos* in § 6.4. For now, I shall consider an objection against the eight theses: the flexible definitions of central concepts (*e.g.* freedom, equality, justice) render the precise function of these concepts too vague. But this vagueness is a feature, not a bug. Genuine political communities do not come to be in the abstract, but among concrete people in concrete places — it is lived, shared life — and thus we should resist the temptation to, in the abstract, define an overly specific

universal model. I provide further responses in § 6.4, where I offer some reflections on how civic friendship can be created and sustained in modernity, and in § 6.5, where we will take a brief look at a concrete case of civic friendship and the kind of revolutionary Augustinianism that I am proposing. For now, I shall say a little more about the concept of self-sufficiency, which infuses concepts like freedom, equality, and justice with meaning.

Aristotle, as we have seen, gives us a useful starting point to think concretely about self-sufficiency: to achieve self-sufficiency, a political community typically requires functions pertaining to farming, crafts, defence, wealth, worship, and law. But we must resist the temptation to reduce self-sufficiency to a list of necessary conditions; Aristotle's functions describe self-sufficiency for ancient Greek city-states. We should rather think of Aristotle's functions as family resemblances, which help us to reflect on the instantiation of self-sufficiency for different political communities situated in different historical, geographic, and cultural contexts. For self-sufficiency is a teleological concept. The practice of politics consists in discerning and deliberating about what it means for *us* to flourish as a political community — granted our specific needs and resources, histories and narratives, *etcetera* — and how we are to achieve our common end. The monastery is an interesting case in point.

Take the function of defence, which is typically regarded as an essential feature of political communities. Historically, some monasteries avoided the need for defence altogether by seeking out very remote locations. Others built walls and employed lay guards. Others again entered into alliances with feudal lords. These are all different approaches to the issue of defence. To complicate things further: after due process of discernment and deliberation about the achievement of the good, a monastery might even decide to surrender themselves to the protection of God, not out of naïveté, but a conviction that death is no real threat to self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency is, after all, only found in God, and God might call *them*, not necessarily others, to offer themselves up as defenceless sacrifices. The proper approach to self-

sufficiency is therefore not from the 'outside' of the political community, that is from the perspective of analytical abstraction, by isolating conditions for self-sufficiency. That is because self-sufficiency is an internal good of the practice of politics, and politics can only practice be particular communities. This good can therefore only be fully known and achieved from the 'inside' of the political community, by participating in its discernment and deliberation of *its* way of life. For just as happiness can be found via different and incommensurable paths for different individuals, yet ultimately lead them to the same good, so is the case for the achievement of self-sufficiency for different political communities also. In summary, self-sufficiency is a common good, but also the internal good of politics as a practice and can thus only be known and achieved by the practitioners of politics of particular communities.

This brings us to an important point, concerning the alleged self-sufficiency of liberal nation-states. The liberal nation-state are typically extremely powerful and wealthy. This success has made the liberal nation-state's self-sufficiency totalising: in the name of rights and efficiency, politics is used to centralise the naturally dispersed ties of authority and dependency of local, small-scale and participatory communities — transferring such ties among concrete people to an abstract institutional agent. This, however, renders citizens ever-more reliant on the liberal nation-state *qua* regulator of markets and provider of welfare services. This serves to disempower the citizens, rendering them *less* self-sufficient, although more comfortable. I return briefly to this issue in § 7.1. For now, we shall simply state the obvious: the liberal nation-state remains the condition under which *we* must attempt to achieve *our* self-sufficiency. Thus we must apply the revised, systematic MacIntyrean account of civic friendship to this context. I begin by showing that civic friendship is inimical to the liberal nation-state: the MacIntyrean friendship account makes it possible to point out a possible, indeed plausible, epistemological crisis for the liberal nation-state concerning friendship. It is important to do so, for two related rea-

sons. Firstly, according to John Rawls — not only a 'moral philosopher of modernity',[906] but also the preeminent theorist of liberal democracy and thus the liberal nation-state — it is *liberalism* that best promotes civic friendship. Secondly, such assertions might deceive us to accept the liberal nation-state as a genuine, and if not perfect then at least adequate, political community. And this might prevent us from reckoning with the need for alternative, genuine political communities.

6.2 Rawls and a possible epistemological crisis in political liberalism

In Chapter 18 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, MacIntyre develops the idea of epistemological crisis.[907] This is a meta-problem that can arise in any tradition-constituted enquiry. It does so when 'an hitherto unsuspected truth' disrupts 'an hitherto intelligible account'.[908] Put simply, the tradition in question is rendered incapable of solving its own problems and thus fails according to 'its own standards of rational justification'.[909] Such crises can only be resolved by the introduction of new concepts or theory that meet three criteria. Firstly, they must be capable of substantially enriching the tradition, and secondly, offer an explanation as to why the old tradition experienced the crisis, that is, 'of just what it was which rendered the tradition, before it had acquired these new resources, sterile or incoherent or both'.[910] Thirdly, there must be 'fundamental continuity' between the new conceptual and theoretical schemes with the position-defining commitments of the tradition up to the point of crisis.[911]

MacIntyre ends the previous chapter, Chapter 17, by pointing out two problems internal to liberalism. The first is the postulation of citizens as coherent selves that

[906] Ibid, 112.
[907] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 361-367.
[908] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science', The *Monist* 60, no. 4 (1977): 455.
[909] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 364.
[910] Ibid, 362.
[911] Ibid.

can be abstracted from particular traditions while remaining capable of exercising unified agency. This kind of coherent self is necessary for rationally ranking desires and choosing accordingly. But the assertion of the self's autonomy, MacIntyre reckons, fragments social life and thus the self's coherence. In modernity, we find ourselves in multiple spheres — religious, familial, economic, recreational, *etcetera* — each with different and sometimes conflicting norms, and correspondingly compartmentalised convictions. Secondly, there is the rejection of political common goods, such that the political community is rendered a place of negotiation and compromise, of adhering to procedures, not exercising virtues. Thus, citizens cooperate for the sake of advancing individual preferences: 'the common good' collapses into maintenance of an allegedly efficient provider of individual and public goods.

Chapter 18 then defines the aforementioned epistemological crises; we sense therefore that the internal problems of liberalism point to an epistemological crisis of liberalism. However, it is not evident that these internal problems can be recognised *as such* from the perspective of liberalism's own standards of rational justification. For instance, perhaps the alleged fragmentation of the self just is the result of negotiations and compromises that must be carried out by an underlying more-or-less unified core self as it moves between different spheres. If these spheres offer incommensurable goods, then so be it. Moreover, liberal theorists do not accept the claim that the political community ought to provide a common and shared life, especially not if this requires a shared conception of the good. In fact, liberal theorists like Rawls maintain precisely that politics should rid itself of such commitments.

My proposal is that civic friendship puts us in a position to overcome this axiomatic impasse between MacIntyre and liberals, and specifically Rawls. This strategy is made possible by the unique conceptual features of civic friendship. For civic friendship captures MacIntyre's understanding of the kind of relation in and by which common goods are achieved, the essential and primary relation of political community. Rawls could of course not ascribe to this positive construal of civic

friendship. But there is significant overlap between MacIntyre's and Rawls' respective civic friendship concepts if construed minimally and negatively: for both Rawls and MacIntyre, the *absence* of civic friendship expresses itself in instability, and specifically socio-political phenomena like civic strife, conflict, and animosity.[912]

These phenomena, we have noted, now plague liberal nation-states.[913] Thus, we find ourselves in an empirically verifiable political crisis, of possibly existential character, that demands our attention. And the MacIntyrean and Rawlsian theoretical frameworks provide two opposing accounts of the causes underlying this situation. For MacIntyre, the liberal nation-state has made civic friendship impossible by undermining a shared recognition and pursuit of the good. In *A Theory of Justice*, however, Rawls tells us that there would have been less civic friendship without liberalism, for civic friendship is enshrined in liberalism.

> Among individuals with disparate aims and purposes a shared conception of justice establishes the bonds of civic friendship; the general desire for justice limits the pursuit of other ends.[914]

According to Rawls, a shared conception of justice establishes bonds of civic friendship despite different conceptions of the good; indeed, justice is the essential and primary relation for it even shapes our respective conceptions of the good.[915] Civic friendship is therefore 'political' in what came to be the Rawlsian sense of the term, that is, non-metaphysical. Rawlsian civic friendship, like Rawlsian justice, does not depend on shared conceptions of the good; rather, justice is fairness — which roughly corresponds to Aristotelian partial justice — and civic friendship as it were a political epiphenomenon of such partial justice.

[912] This approach is inspired by Schwarzenbach, 'On Civic Friendship', esp. 99.
[913] See footnote 55, § 1.1.
[914] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 5.
[915] See also *e.g.* ibid, 476.

In *Political Liberalism*, which restates *A Theory of Justice*'s idea of justice as fairness, Rawls identifies civic friendship as the 'nature of the political relation' of liberal democracies.[916] However, surprisingly, Rawls does not offer any kind of definition of the term. In fact, 'civic friendship' is only mentioned twice throughout the entire book, and in both cases the term seems to express itself in the ability to transcend different comprehensive doctrines of the good in order to engage in Rawlsian public reasoning.[917] In the final restatement, *Justice as Fairness*, Rawls seems almost indifferent to civic friendship. In fact, the term is only mentioned once: according to Rawls, the principles of justice encourage 'a culture that inhibits the wastes of endless self- and group-interested bargaining and *offers some hope* of realising social concord and civic friendship'.[918]

What are we to do, according to Rawls, if our hopes were in vain? How are we to deal with our present situation, now that civic friendship — measured according to the aforementioned minimal, negative sense — seems to fade away from liberal democracies? This issue is addressed in Part V of *Justice as Fairness*. Here Rawls states that 'justice as fairness is not reasonable in the first place unless it generates its own support in a suitable way by addressing each citizen's reason, as explained within its own framework'.[919] Reasonable theories are not self-defeating, and for political theories, this means *ceteris paribus* self-sufficiency: a just society will not cause the demise of its own order. Similarly, Rawls reckons that a society that is more or less politically liberal will become more politically liberal over time, and

[916] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 447; 465.
[917] Ibid, 447.
[918] John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 126 (my emphasis); *Political Liberalism*, 447; 465. Freedom, according to Rawls, corresponds to the first principle of justice, which establishes the equal right to a fully adequate scheme of basic freedoms compatible with a similar freedom for others. The second principle of justice is twofold. According to the difference principle, social and economic inequalities should reasonably be expected to be to everyone's advantage, and according to the principle of fair equality of opportunity, that these inequalities be attached to positions and offices open to all. Rawls seems to connect civic friendship especially to the difference principle and thus to redistribution. But footnote 55, § 1.1, suggests that the absence of civic friendship is caused by very different things than insufficient distribution. See ibid, 91.
[919] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 186.

thus also more stable.[920] We must inquire: why is this so? What are the main psychological assumptions underlying Rawls' understanding of the generation of political allegiance? Interestingly, in answer this question, Rawls refers to Part III of *A Theory of Justice* and its account of the stabilising force of love and friendship.[921] However, to a significant degree, Rawls had to restate his theory of justice precisely because of the inconsistencies produced by Part III. In it, Rawls offers a liberal vision of the good life, thus rendering politics metaphysical.

In Part III of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls describes liberal democracy and society as such as a 'social union of social unions'.[922] This union is characterised by members which might have been attracted to it by instrumental reasons; the union is 'fused with elements of affection and friendship, and the public knowledge of a common and normally effective sense of justice'.[923] This brings about stability.[924] How? What are the dynamics? The laws of moral psychology.[925] According to Rawls, 'the active sentiments of love and friendship, *and even the sense of justice*, arise from the manifest intention of other persons to act *for our good*'.[926] By recognising this 'manifest intention' about our good, we come to care for the persons in return. Thus a society of love and friendship arises from just reciprocity, that is, reciprocity adhering to justice.

This kind of society governs the moral conduct of its members through principles grounded in benefit. Some benefits are direct and obvious, like being exposed to love and friendship. Other benefits can be indirect and ambiguous, and even incur costs, for instance exercising love and friendship.[927] Yet there is a special normative force affiliated with the indirect, ambiguous kind of benefit: our moral conduct is

[920] Ibid, 195-198.
[921] Ibid, 196. See also *A Theory of Justice*, 435ff.
[922] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 462.
[923] Ibid, 460. See also ibid, 470.
[924] Ibid, 436.
[925] Ibid.
[926] Ibid, 494 (my emphasis). See also ibid, 499-500.
[927] Ibid, 573.

to a significant degree based 'on wanting the approval' of other members.[928] We therefore come to accept moral principles, including the costly ones, through friendship bonds in various social associations and political community at large.

As we accept these principles, we transition, according to Rawls, from a level of particularity to a level of abstraction in which moral conduct — and the sentiments and attitudes concerned with such conduct — no longer is solely or even primarily connected to the wellbeing and approval of individuals and communities, 'but are shaped by a conception of right chosen irrespective of these contingencies'.[929] As I interpreted Rawls, this is a move from friendship in the family to friendship in society, upon which we come to enter the original position, veiled in ignorance about the 'accidental circumstances of our world'.[930] There, in a state of rationality, free and equal — which, for Rawls, is to say autonomous — persons produce the principles of justice. However, although the principles of justice themselves are produced in the so-called rationality of abstraction from particularities, the acceptance of such principles is produced by the particularity of love and friendship, beginning with the family and, assuming that the family in our society is a just institution, ending in liberal democracy.

This account, however, is either tautological or inconsistent. For Rawls must be taken to mean either one of two things. On one interpretation, Rawls says that just reciprocity generates love and friendship *and* that love and friendship generates the principles of justice. But that is tantamount to saying that a derivative of justice produces justice. If so, then political liberalism is incapable of dealing with a situation where instability involves disagreement about justice itself. The alternative interpretation is that love and friendship are not reducible to just reciprocity, such that just reciprocity itself is grounded, somehow, in love and friendship. But that would render the account inconsistent with Rawls' non-metaphysical conception of

[928] Ibid, 475.
[929] Ibid.
[930] Ibid.

justice: the citizens in the original position would be civic friends reasoning together, and their friendship entangled with their aforementioned manifest intention to do good to one another — which is to say that they share a common recognition and pursuit of the good in the original position. Yet this is the very thing that political liberalism denies them by principle. If so, then instability is to be expected by liberalism according to liberalism's own standards of justification: liberalism is unable to secure its own conditions.

We are now in a position to see the contours of an epistemological crisis for political liberalism. Political liberalism proclaims that it must generate support in a suitable way by addressing each citizen's reason in order to itself be reasonable, as explained within its own framework. An important feature of that framework is the grounding of stability in civic friendship, which in turn is grounded in justice as fairness. This is a position-defining feature of political liberalism. But upon probing into that ground we found that justice as fairness, to avoid inconsistency, must *presume* the very stability it is supposed to serve as basis for, and is thus unable to adequately address instability.

More work is needed, of course, to further expound this criticism, so as to demonstrate that civic friendship truly reveals an epistemological crisis for political liberalism and adequately position this criticism in an immense and ever-growing literature on Rawls. I have simply provided a starting point. Going forward, three things must be done. Firstly, one must detail and fill out the exegesis of Rawls that I have now sketched, trailing and analysing civic friendship in its different varieties — and specifically concepts like fraternity, stability, and public reason — from its central position in *A Theory of Justice*, to the periphery in *Political Liberalism*, and then redundancy in *Justice as Fairness*. Secondly, one must engage the secondary literature on these concepts, and especially public reason, which Rawls semes to identify with civic friendship.[931] Thirdly, one must consider alternative liberal accounts,

[931] Rawlsian commentary on civic friendship has mainly focused on the connection to public reason. For a helpful overview and critical analysis of this literature, see Paul Billingham and Anthony

for instance, and perhaps especially, Sybil Schwarzenbach's Rawlsian-Aristotelian and Paul Ludwig's Aristotelian variants.[932] However, since a basic issue connects to the grounding of civic friendship in justice, and these other accounts share this commitment, we can say with some confidence that, *prima facie*, a position-defining feature of not only political liberalism, but liberalism as such, undermines the kind of civic friendship — if construed negatively and minimally — that liberalisms require to secure its own support. When that friendship disintegrates, political liberalism is at a loss as to do anything about it.[933]

6.3 Utilities companies, rivalling traditions, and the goods of conflict

In the foreword to Emile Perreau-Saussine's *Alasdair MacIntyre: An Intellectual Biography*, Pierre Manent points to an enigma. Even if we were to reach the agreement that the liberal nation-state is seriously deficient, we must also 'recognize that the alternatives to liberalism have lost all credibility. Never has a principle organizing human association been more criticized while triumphant, or more triumphant

Taylor, 'Can Civic Friendship Ground Public Reason?', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2024): esp. 32-33. Billingham and Taylor contend that civic friendship cannot normatively ground public reason without introducing a conception of the good which would violate the basic idea of Rawlsian liberalism.

[932] Schwarzenbach's grounds her alternative civic friendship in a kind of Aristotelian feminism according to which the nation-state should provide 'public care', for instance a 'publicly funded community care centres supplemented by a universal civil service'. But this means that Schwarzenbach grounds her alternative account in a comprehensive doctrine about the good which both MacIntyreans and liberals are likely to reject, albeit for different reasons. Similarly, Paul Ludwig also recons that civic friendship must be normatively grounded in fairness. Paul Ludwig, *Rediscovering Political Friendship: Aristotle's Theory and Modern Identity, Community, and Equality* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 191; Sybil A. Schwarzenbach, 'Civic Friendship: A Critique of Recent Care Theory', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2007): 233-255, 253; 'On Civic Friendship', 123-127; *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State* (Columbia University Press, 2009), 174.

[933] Interestingly, to produce the necessary support, Alexandre Lefebvre seeks to revive Part III of *A Theory of Justice* while remaining true to justice as fairness. This produces peculiar results: liberalism is turned into a 'creed' that formulates a 'way of life' which manifests in 'spiritual exercises'. Yet Lefebvre also lauds liberalism for dismissing 'metaphysics' and the prospect of a 'purpose' of life. Tellingly, in one moment, Lefebre says that liberalism 'is the source of my soul', and in the next that there is no soul. See Alexandre Lefebvre, *Liberalism as a Way of Life* (Princeton University Press, 2024), 63; 236; 242.

while discredited'.[934] Over the course of this section and the next, I consider the criticism that MacIntyre does not furnish us with a credible alternative, which I take to be the result of a failure of offering us an adequate political imagination. I make the case that, for MacIntyre, there are indeed no credible alternatives to the liberal nation-state *on the level of nation-state in modernity*. I also endeavour to demonstrate that this conviction is consistent with MacIntyre's call for resistance 'on the level of practice' against the liberal nation-state's 'order' and 'patterns of power'.[935]

According to MacIntyre, the liberal nation-state can be likened to a utilities company. That is, even though the liberal nation-state is unable to provide common goods, it does provide public goods, such as infrastructure, rule of law, and common currency. From the perspective of genuine political community, these goods are genuine insofar as they contribute to genuine politics, that is, insofar as these goods can be used in meaningful ways to create and sustain local, small-scale, and participatory political communities. We must therefore inquire: how, if at all, can the liberal nation-state serve genuine political communities?

One way of answering this question is to consider the final chapter of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. Here, in Chapter 20, MacIntyre says that we must all decide which tradition we will give ourselves to. For shared practical reasoning is only possible from *within* a tradition, wherein certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined through a series of creative, constructive conflicts.

> So theories of justice and practical rationality confront us as aspects of traditions, allegiance to which requires the living out of some more or less systematically embodied form of human life, each with its own specific modes of social relationship, each with its own canons of interpretation and explanation in respect of the behavior of others, each with its own evaluative practices.[936]

[934] Pierre Manent, 'Foreword', in *Alasdair MacIntyre: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Nathan J. Pinkoski (University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), xi.
[935] MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 17.
[936] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 391.

Liberalism attempts to conceal this reality from us, but it does so as a kind of tradition itself. Yet, from the MacIntyrean perspective, liberalism remains, as a tradition or quasi-tradition, seriously flawed, for reasons hinted at in § 1.1 — put simply, it is a universalist tradition that subsumes and eradicates rivalling, particular traditions by way of infiltration and co-option. But according to MacIntyre, we can only reason about happiness and self-sufficiency from the standpoint of a particular tradition. Thus MacIntyre tells us in Chapter 20 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* that we have to deliberate about *which* such tradition to give ourselves to.

However, it could be challenged that while it is true that liberalism undermines traditions, and thus must be resisted, it is simultaneously the case that liberalism makes it possible for different traditions to co-exist in relative peace. That is, liberalism has not only made the kind of deliberation that MacIntyre asks of us in Chapter 20 necessary, but also *possible*. This is the most impressive achievement of the liberal nation-state. It is an achievement that makes liberalism, according to Perreau-Saussine — and Manent seems to concur — desirable from the perspective of MacIntyre's political philosophy.[937] In liberalism, MacIntyre 'discovered the possibility *of not being of his time*,' that is, of escaping modernity by, paradoxically, entering more deeply into it.[938] Put differently, MacIntyre's antiliberalism can only be maintained as a coherent position within liberalism. Liberalism enables us to raise above particular traditions and deliberate more or less freely about which we are to enter into. This freedom to rise above particular traditions seems to be a necessary condition for rationally deliberating about particular traditions so as to choose among them the one we think is best. We are no longer locked up in traditions that we did not choose without any real possibility to consider alternatives.

[937] Perreau-Saussine, *Alasdair MacIntyre: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Nathan J. Pinkoski (University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), 120.
[938] Ibid, 120.

However, Perreau-Saussine fails to appreciate, to reiterate, that liberalism is itself a tradition or quasi-tradition. There is, therefore, no such thing as 'raising above' traditions, looking on particular traditions from a level of neutral abstraction. Rather, liberalism shapes our convictions and intuitions so that we come to evaluate other particular traditions *from* a liberal tradition, and in due course, if we remain effectively compliant to that tradition, shape these particular traditions accordingly. With that said, it remains the case that liberalism does aspire to allow for a plurality of co-existing, rivalling traditions within itself. It does so, for sure, in deceived and deceptive ways. And thus it must be consciously resisted. But it also means that the liberal nation-state, in modernity, is the best alternative available.

There is, in this specific terrain, pitfalls everywhere. On the one side, there is Perreau-Saussine' and Manent's attempt to make MacIntyre a liberal. On the other, there is the attempt to make a postliberal of MacIntyre, which I consider in § 7.3. I shall make the case for a different understanding of MacIntyre. That understanding is based on an implicit yet as I see it very crucial distinction in MacIntyre: the distinction between theory of the *nation-state* and theory of *politics*. I have in § 6.1 offered the skeleton of a MacIntyrean theory of politics — specifically an account of the political relation — which I will flesh further out in §§ 6.4 and 6.5. But because political theorising is also practical, we cannot neglect the conditions under which genuine political communities exist. That brings us to need for a theory of the nation-state.

In the prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre appreciates that we are all 'inhabitants of advanced modernity, bearing its social and cultural marks'. Thus, as MacIntyre goes on to say, he is offering a 'peculiarly modern understanding' of ethics and politics. When we philosophise about politics, we must therefore also, in addition to theorising about alternative genuine political communities — as a derivative but still necessary exercise — theorise about the relation between such genuine political communities and our specific socio-cultural conditions. And invariably, alternative genuine political communities will be situated in nation-states.

Thus, representatives might be required to involve themselves in the nation-state at different levels and to lesser and greater degrees for the sake of protecting and promoting genuine political communities.

We therefore need a theory of nation-states as a corollary to our MacIntyrean theory of politics. As suggested, MacIntyre's theory of the nation-state is that the nation-state is at best a utilities company — specifically, a utilities company serving the needs of genuine political communities. A case in point is MacIntyre's approach to toleration and freedom of speech:

> Whoever is to draw the line between those points of view concerning the human good whose expression is to be tolerated and those points of view whose expression is not to be tolerated, it should not be the agencies of the state. It is very much to be desired that those agencies should provide for the equal protection of all the state's subjects from a wide variety of harms, and that this protection should be characterized so that it preserves an ostensible neutrality on the part of the state. Even although that neutrality is never real, it is an important fiction, and those of us who recognize its importance as well as its fictional character will agree with liberals in upholding a certain range of civil liberties.[939]

Crucially, the enactment of subsidiarity can countervail the liberal nation-state's centrifugal force, which seriously incumbers the opportunity for life on its margins.[940] Subsidiarity is therefore foundational for a MacIntyrean theory of the nation-sate. Furthermore, in a social world comprised of co-existing, rivalling conceptions about the good life for humans, we do well in agreeing on a certain kind of abstinence, that is, of abstaining from using the nation-state to impose our own, perhaps mistaken, conception onto one another. The point is that even if our conception is correct, coercion will not do much good, for the good resist imposition.

[939] MacIntyre, 'Toleration and the goods of conflict', 214.
[940] William T. Cavanaugh, *Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World* (William B. Eerdmans, 2016), esp. chap. 6.

It is important to note that the MacIntyrean rationale of this understanding is not liberal, but Aristotelian: counterfeit politics has to step back in order to give room for genuine politics. Yet this Aristotelian rationale overlaps with that of liberalism; we can therefore agree that the good *should* be recognised and pursued, even though we disagree on what the good is or how it can be achieved. This means that the nation-state should, as far as possible, avoid imposing any one conception of the good upon the people. Put differently, co-existing, rivalling traditions manifesting in different communities ought to respect one another's integrity and authority over themselves.

This does not mean that the traditions should avoid attempting to convert one another. It means that coercion is an illegitimate means of conversion. It also means that the traditions must allow their members to convert to a rivalling tradition, and if not, that other traditions, via the nation-state, might intervene to protect this right. However, conversely, individuals cannot legitimately demand, as a right enforced by the nation-state, that traditions and their communities *change* to accommodate their — often liberal — conception of the good life. Changes must happen according to the *modus operandi* of the traditions *qua* tradition: they must overcome the internal and external conflicts that emerge as they grapple with problems and issues that arise within themselves, as well as in interaction with rivalling traditions.

Put differently, MacIntyre's theory of the nation-state can be taken to conceptualise the nation-state in terms of a 'state of nature' as we find this idea in for instance John Locke's political philosophy. Let us begin with the fact that postlapsarian nature is corrupted by sin. The liberal nation-state can serve as a remedy for sin and can carve out a space in the *saeculum* so as to countervail the foulest manifestations of sinfulness, ensuring that we have the best possible conditions for realising our nature. This space is tantamount to a state of nature that lies somewhere between the prelapsarian and postlapsarian states: it does certainly not amount to a spontaneous Augustinian order of love, but it does restrain the order of domination — albeit by the means of domination — which amounts to the best possible conditions

for genuine politics in the *saeculum*. One might perhaps say that this intermediate state of nature seeks to preserve that which Teresa Bejan calls 'mere civility', that is to say, acceptance of great conflict and disagreement for the sake of earthly peace.[941] This kind of state of nature is no insignificant good, although it is not a common good proper: it can only be achieved by some kind of participation, it is in a sense shared, but it is not the end of communal practices, and does therefore not satisfy the third criterium identified in § 1.1. Providing a state of nature prepares the ground for the creation and sustenance of communities in which common goods can be achieved. Thus, we participate in achieving this kind shared state of nature not for the sake of the state of nature itself; it is a means for achieving our conflicting ends. It is therefore a complex public good, and indeed, an important public good. In an age of immense, dominating powers, the liberal nation-state offers the possibility for preserving spaces, imperfect but relatively peaceful, in which genuine political communities can be created and sustained.[942] In modernity, this will often require that that we uphold liberal rights, reduce the power of our own liberal nation-states, while use the very same nation-state to countervail the forces of global economic markets and technological encroachment of public space.

Thus, as a corollary to MacIntyrean political theory, we need, in modernity, a liberal-like MacIntyrean theory of the nation-state. It is important to get the relation between these two modes of theorising right. Granted, firstly, the nature of genuine political communities, and secondly, the fact that we find ourselves in a modernity dominated by nation-states, a liberal-like nation-state is better than the alternatives

[941] Teresa M. Bejan, *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration* (Harvard University Press, 2017), esp. 'Conclusion: The Virtue of Mere Civility', and 'Epilogue: Free Speech Fundamentalism'. See also Joshua Horden's 'tense communion', which provides an interesting way of conceptualising this kind of project. Tense communion is found among people who, 'subscribing to multiple eschatological visions or none, live together in a way whereby common, created social loyalties and obligations are discerned without occluding eschatological ones'. See Joshua Hordern, 'Loyalty, Conscience and Tense Communion: Jonathan Edwards Meets Martha Nussbaum', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2014): 181. See Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness amid Moral Diversity* (Ashgate, 2006), chap. 4 and 5.

[942] Put differently, *pace* Patrick Riordan, it is not inconsistent to say that the liberal nation-state can serve the common good *without* providing or having, itself, a common good. See Patrick Riordan, *Human Dignity and Liberal Politics: Catholic Possibilities for the Common Food* (Georgetown University Press, 2023), 10.

on the level of nation-state in modernity. Thus, for this reason, we should not attempt to overthrow the liberal nation-state. Yet we should simultaneously resist and reject liberalism as a theory of politics. This brings us back to MacIntyre's revolutionary resistance, which concerns first and foremost practice, not institutions. Only as people begin to practice politics as a 'grassroots activity' can the institutions of the liberal nation-state be accommodated accordingly so as to preserve and support these practices.[943] Thus we turn to such revolutionary practices.

6.4 Towards an adequate political imagination for modernity

According to MacIntyre, we find ourselves in the ruins of civilisation. Creating and sustaining genuine political communities demands, therefore, 'a transformative political imagination, one that opens up opportunities for people to do the kinds of things that they hitherto had not believed that they were capable of doing'.[944] In this section, I proceed with the work which was initiated in the previous section by doing two things. Firstly, I present the criticism that MacIntyre's political philosophy requires an adequate political imagination yet lacks this very thing. Then, secondly, I demonstrate that Augustine is able to furnish MacIntyre's political philosophy with precisely the kind of political imagination that is needed. In so doing, we will be able to see that shifting the emphasis to Augustine does not only narrowly resolve theological tensions connected to MacIntyre's account of civic friendship, but also broader issues in MacIntyre's political philosophy.

The realisation of political nature is only possible in genuine political communities. We should therefore expect that humans, even amidst the moral and political ruins of modernity, come together in various ways to establish friendships and strive for common goods albeit fumblingly and even misguidedly. For instance, MacIntyre tells us that we find the beginnings of Aristotelian political communities on the

[943] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 281.
[944] MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 17.

margins of contemporary society, resisting the dominance of the liberal nation-state.[945] We see them 'where trade union organizers and community organizers assist low paid workers to speak and argue in their own voices, where cooperatives function and sometimes flourish in noncooperative environments, where parents debate the schooling that their children so badly need and initiate educational change, where immigrants struggle to remake their lives'.[946] MacIntyre also points for instance to working groups in the favelas of Brazil. The favelas consist of people excluded from the economic growth of the cities, and the 'working groups have campaigned for and achieved major improvements in sanitation and the disposal of sewage, in street lighting and safety, and in the provision of education and health care'.[947]

There are, however, problems with these examples. Recalling the distinction between public and common goods from § 1.1, it is not evident that these are examples of *common* goods. For common goods can only be enjoyed by individuals *in* communities *as* members of those communities. Or to use MacIntyre against MacIntyre: these are examples of projects that encompass *parts* of our life, but according to MacIntyre, genuine political community needs to be a project that encompasses 'the whole of life'.[948] MacIntyre does, however, offer a further example which seems to satisfy this criterion: certain coastal villages in Denmark.[949] These villages were based on small cooperative fishing businesses in which the fishing was a practice that enabled the achievement of common goods, such as the goods internal to fishing itself, as well as fair distribution of the modest wealth it produced, sustaining a local political community comprising schools, other businesses, and a parish. When the EU decided to privatise fishing quotas — a bureaucratic arrangement to increase economic efficiency which favoured big companies — the families of one such

[945] MacIntyre, 'Replies', 220. See also MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 391-392.
[946] Ibid.
[947] Ibid, 181.
[948] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 156.
[949] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 176-183.

village decided to pool workforce and resources and take up loans jointly to buy quotas and bigger boats in order to go on with their way of life.

To my knowledge, this is the best image of genuine political community in modernity that MacIntyre has to offer. But this kind of village is virtually inaccessible for other people than those already participating in it and does therefore not provide a reliable basis for an adequate political imagination. For the combination of necessity and possibility — social, cultural, and economic — from which such villages arose and developed exists no longer.[950] Furthermore, this kind of village proved to be inherently dependent on the mercy and benevolence of the liberal nation-state, and thus not really self-sufficient. For on MacIntyre's account, the survival of the village required, in the end, intervention of the liberal nation-state as the local bank that lent the families financial capital to buy boats and quotas went bankrupt in the 2008 financial crisis. Without the intervention of the liberal nation-state, the fishing village would have evaporated. The fishing village is therefore not only inaccessible for most of us, but also, it seems, dependent on the special support of the liberal nation-state. MacIntyre's best image is therefore not a very good one. It is a relic of the past, reminding us about the fact that genuine political community, although necessary for flourishing, seems to be impossible to achieve in modernity and under liberalism.

In 'The Indispensability of Political Theory', MacIntyre says that political theory ought to provide us with 'maps which make it possible to move about in the political landscape with some hope of implementing one's intentions'.[951] These maps might be 'grossly inaccurate', as first drafts of maps typically are; our positioning in the political landscape might begin with a 'series of denials'.[952] But the series of denials cannot be the end of it, for it is unlikely that they will enable us to move successfully

[950] This is also the case for the famous hand-loom weavers in Lancashire and Yorkshire at the end of the eighteenth century. See Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Theses on Feuerbach: A Road Not Taken', in *Artifacts, Representations, and Social Practice* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 23.
[951] MacIntyre, 'The Indispensability of Political Theory', 33.
[952] Ibid, 32.

forward. If we are to actualise our political potential, the maps must make it possible for us to find alternative political communities — to move about in the political landscape with some hope of implementing our intentions. For it is only intelligibly possible, in the long run, to 'resist' the liberal nation-state if we protect and promote some kind of alternative to the liberal nation-state.[953]

The absence of a political imagination has produced a corresponding complex of serious criticisms of MacIntyre's political philosophy. It can be summarised thus: MacIntyre's political communities are subtly but profoundly dependent on the liberal nation-state.[954] Thomas Hibbs questions the extent to which it makes sense to call MacIntyre's examples of political communities 'political'.[955] Are not MacIntyre's political communities rather *pre*-political, pertaining to civic society? Similarly, Thomas Osbourne charges that MacIntyre's political community cannot be truly *political* because it is not capable of 'directive and coercive functions', of force and violence, and thus not of ordering sinful people in a sinful world.[956] Both Hibbs and Osbourne are of the opinion that, although the liberal nation-state is imperfect and even impoverished, it would be imprudent to reject it in the way MacIntyre does.[957] This criticism is also found in Mark Murphy: to function well, Murphy reckons, MacIntyre's political communities depend on a nation-state-like structure, a 'quasi-state' — for instance to secure peace, build high-ways, and set up

[953] See *e.g.* MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 262-263; 254-255; 'A Partial Response to my Critics', 302-303; Borradori, 'Nietzsche or Aristotle? MacIntyre', 151.
[954] In addition to the charges I consider, see also the contributions of Philip Pettit, Stephen Mulhall, and David Miller in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Polity, 1994). Pettitt says that MacIntyre has 'not done much by way of specifying the Aristotelian sort of society and politics' that provide us with an 'alternative to liberalism' ('Liberal/Communitarianism: MacIntyre's Mesmeric Dichotomy', 84) and Mulhall, similarly, that MacIntyre has not given us reasons to reject a, if not *the* pillar of liberalism, *i.e.* 'Rawls' distinction between political and comprehensive conceptions of the good', presumably at least partly because no alternative is offered ('Liberalism, Morality, and Rationality: MacIntyre, Rawls and Cavell', 222-223). But Miller is the most candid critic: 'MacIntyre's critics have pointed out that his general account of the decline of morality tells us virtually nothing about how we might hope to revive it under modern conditions' ('Virtues, Practices and Justice', 262).
[955] Thomas Hibbs, 'MacIntyre, Aquinas, and Politics', *The Review of Politics* 66, no. 3 (2004): 372.
[956] Thomas Osbourne, 'MacIntyre, Thomism and the Contemporary Common Good', *Analyse & Kritik* 30 (2008): 89.
[957] Hibbs, 'MacIntyre, Aquinas, and Politics', 376ff; Osbourne, 'MacIntyre, Thomism and the Contemporary Common Good', 89.

electric grids.[958] Similar charges are levelled at MacIntyre from different kinds of liberal theorists. Daniel Edward Young has made the case that MacIntyre's political philosophy justifies a political community that amounts to a liberal nation-state.[959] John Grey even reckons that the failure in proposing viable alternatives to the liberal nation-state defines MacIntyre's legacy.[960]

However, having developed MacIntyre's friendship account, we now find ourselves in a position to respond to these objections. To reiterate: the nation-state should be rejected *qua* political community. And we should do so because even though the nation-state has the power — politically rather than metaphysically speaking — to coerce it is not able to *justify* such coercion: it has power but not authority. Coercion can only be justified as means to the end of happiness and self-sufficiency, that is in, reference to genuine politics of local, small-scale and participatory political communities. And for MacIntyre, the nation-state remains a utilities company that, at its best, serves such communities. Unlike genuine political communities, then, the nation-state is a possible instrument for, but certainly not an integral component of flourishing. And for that reason, it is crucial to resist the power of the nation-state, when it attempts to go beyond its proper function,[961] as it typically does, by presenting 'itself as the guardian of our values and from time to time invites us to die for it'.[962] Such masquerading 'is always an ideological disguise for sinister realities', which may or may not be intended and articulated.[963] Put simply, the liberal nation-state does not have the authority to make such claims on us. Yet the problem of MacIntyre's absent political imagination remains: what do alternative, genuine political communities look like in modernity? And how can they be created and sustained?

[958] Mark Murphy, 'MacIntyre's Political Philosophy', 171ff.
[959] Daniel Edward Young, 'A Dead End in Alasdair MacIntyre's Political Thought? Reconsidering Social Institutions, Pluralism, and the Liberal Tradition', *Journal of Religion, Culture and Democracy* (2022), 12.
[960] John Gray, 'Why I Am Not a Post-Liberal', in *The New Statesman*, Oct. 18, 2025.
[961] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 262-263. See also 254-255.
[962] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 132.
[963] Ibid.

In modernity, Augustine seems uniquely suited to enliven this imagination, for Augustine found himself, much like us, amidst rivalling traditions and under a dominating empire. Two related aspects of Augustine's politics stands out. Firstly, the distinction between instrumentalising the earthly city or nation-state on the one hand, that is, its institutions, and on the other hand: instrumenting the people in the nation-state. The former is legitimate, not the latter. This distinction seems necessary if MacIntyre's revolution is to avoid degenerating into viciousness. Secondly, there is a striking correspondence between Augustinian dispositions and the kind of political imagination that is needed in modernity. MacIntyre calls for a very special kind of revolution — one that is at once uncompromising and unrelenting, yet also, and crucially, *sacrificial*. This preparedness to suffer sacrifice is necessary for resisting, on the one hand, the liberal nation-state, and on the other, the fallacious temptation to use the nation-state's power 'for good'.

> Attempts to reform the [large-scale] political systems of modernity from within are always transformed into collaborations with them. Attempts to overthrow them always degenerate into terrorism or quasi terrorism. What is not thus barren is the politics involved in constructing and sustaining small-scale local communities, at the level of the family, the neighborhood, the workplace, the parish, the school, or clinic, communities within which the needs of the hungry and the homeless can be met'.[964]

In Chapter 5, we observed that this kind of sacrificial disposition is integral to Agustine's account of the *civitatis Dei* and Christian communities in the *saeculum*. Moreover, I made the case that the model of Augustine's political communities is the monastery, which brings us back again to the Benedictine 'hope' we find in

[964] Borradori, 'Nietzsche or Aristotle? MacIntyre', 151.

After Virtue's finale. This hope is radical, even revolutionary, and apparently monastic in kind.[965] And more than anything else, it consisted in a willingness to sacrificially offer up all possessions, all attachments, to follow the way of Christ, wherever it takes us. Put differently, our hope is that we will not follow in the footsteps of the rich young man, but that we will be actively open to grace and respond to Christ's calling to something higher, something richer, even if, in the eyes of the world, this way of life looks lowly and poor. For as MacIntyre writes, 'cultivation of the virtues always may and often does hinder the achievement of those external goods which are the mark of worldly success'.[966]

As noted, in the prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre says that we are 'still' waiting for this new Benedict. But MacIntyre also suggests that we cannot simply sit in our studies and, 'Oxford armchair style', wait.[967] How are we to realise our political nature in our time? According to Kelvin Knight, MacIntyre suggests three strategies: avoid collaboration with the nation-state, struggle to act virtuously and for the sake of the common good, and create and sustain local, small-scale, and participatory political communities.[968] But these strategies are underdetermined. What are we to make of them? How can they be executed in our societies?

Genuine political communities can only arise from living, actual traditions; tradition is the necessary context of practical reason. In modernity, we find traditions in 'religious and educational communities'.[969] MacIntyre has devoted attention and efforts to think and write about the future of the university, and specifically the Thomistic or Catholic university. This work is important, especially for those of us that, for shorter or longer stretches of our life, find ourselves caught up in university institutions. But as an approach for establishing traditions that in turn will give rise to political communities, this can only be a corollary. Firstly, because institutions

[965] See also MacIntyre, 'Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights', 109-110.
[966] Ibid.
[967] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, xvii.
[968] Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy*, 179-180, 186.
[969] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 392.

must be fitted to existing practices, and not practices to existing (or hypothetical) institutions. Secondly, even small schools and universities are big and costly institutions, and, depending upon one's country, not even necessarily legal to establish privately. Thirdly, although education is necessary for flourishing, and thus political communities, the same cannot be said of schools or universities, however valuable and useful they may be. Thus, for these different reasons, schools and universities are typically not a viable option at the margins of society.[970]

Moreover, where they in fact are available, it is not guaranteed that they will be able to provide its pupils and students with the kind substantial moral and indeed spiritual education and formation that is demanded in modernity.[971] Such education and formation can, however, be found in religious communities, either directly, or indirectly, as this is mediated in and by family and household.[972] Andrius Bielskis suggests precisely that a MacIntyrean politics 'located within a local Christian *Ekklesia* enables us to revive the classical conception of the political which […] saw its primary task in directing its citizens towards the good and to which the cultivation of virtues was essential'.[973] I shall elaborate on that suggestion. Let me however immediately add that in thus emphasising the Church, I am not deemphasising family and household — for just as Aristotle's wise aristocrats ought to give thanks to their mothers for their wisdom, as we saw in Chapter 4, so should MacIntyre's independent practical reasoners give thanks to their 'ordinary good mothers'.[974] Rather, in emphasising the Church, I attempt to locate the household and thus the political community in the kind of *kosmos* within which flourishing is truly possible in modernity. For according to MacIntyre, 'it is not merely the *polis* but

[970] But see MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 15-16.
[971] See James Bernard Murphy, 'The Teacher as the Forlorn Hope of Modernity: MacIntyre on Education and Schooling', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 264, no. 2 (2013): 183-199.
[972] A number of the contributions in the edited volume *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre* (ed. Mark Nation, Brad J. Kallenberg and Nancey C. Murphy, University of Notre Dame Press, 2003) explore the application of MacIntyrean analysis to religious and specifically Christian communities.
[973] Andrius Bielskis, *Towards a Post-Modern Understanding of the Political: From Genealogy to Hermeneutics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 160. See also 133-162.
[974] See MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, chap. 5. See also Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy*, 185-186.

the *kosmos* itself, the very order of things, which provides the context within which justice and practical rationality are related'.[975] And Augustine has claimed that the Church offers such an alternative order of things — based on natural friendship perfected in divine friendship — within which families can come together to create and sustain genuine political communities. To substantiate this claim, I shall point out some important features pertaining to the Church as *kosmos* that makes it uniquely hospitable to MacIntyrean political communities.

In a social and cultural situation characterised by pluralism and individualism, the Church makes it possible for us to enter into a shared recognition and pursuit of the ultimate human good by offering us an order of things and an account of human happiness that is not only teleological; salvation history even takes a narrative structure within which each person has a role to play. Moreover, this conception of the human good is purposefully congruent with natural law, and according to MacIntyre, natural law is the only basis of rules and order that is normatively authoritative.[976] For it is by adhering to the basic precepts of natural law that we come 'to trust each other and to listen to each other as rational agents, rather than as agents of money or of power'.[977] And MacIntyre accuses the liberal nation-state of having exchanged this normative basis with one that is entirely arbitrary: itself.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the moral and political life presupposes a sociology, a social basis which embodies its concepts in the real social world. And members of the Church can only participate in its *kosmos*, its universal order, by way of particular congregations. This is reflected, for instance, in the obligation to celebrate Mass weekly, making the Mass not only a conceptual, but also a physical centre in

[975] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 101-102.
[976] 'MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 14.
[977] Andrius Bielskis, *Towards a Post-Modern Understanding of the Political: From Genealogy to Hermeneutics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005),160. See also ibid, 133-162.

and from which people can find friends with whom they share a substantial agreement about their common end.[978] Moreover, and crucially, the Mass is so by virtue of being a spiritual centre that makes available the means for achieving deep, living unity about the shared common end. These means are the sacraments, which ought to compel us to imitate Christ — spiritually, morally, politically — by way of spiritual disciplines. And to engage is such disciplines is to partake in the pilgrimage by which we can ascend to the God that descended to us, such that we can find ourselves in God as unified, coherent selves *qua* limbs on the mystical body of Christ.

Thus, the Church offers not an order of things in the abstract, but a concrete shared world of shared life in which genuine politics can be exercised, and uniquely so in modernity and under liberalism. The Church therefore makes possible an alternative political imagination in modernity, to borrow William T. Cavanaugh's term, a 'theopolitical' imagination.[979] Here the importance of openness to grace for MacIntyre's political philosophy is made evident: the Church is a supernatural gift of grace that makes politics uniquely possible in modernity and under liberalism.[980] It must be stressed, however, that the Church's gift is precisely that: a *possibility*. The gift can only be received by *actualising* this possibility, that is by practicing ethics and politics in the kind of sociology that can be found in the Church, which is to say a sociology infused by an alternative, teleological and specifically theological cosmology.

[978] See Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Moral Philosophy: What Next', in *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre Notre (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 8-9.
[979] Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination*, esp. 46-52.
[980] This understanding is mirrored by the Church: bishop Erik Varden, for instance, proposes that humans 'will only be able to realise their complete end, find freedom and happiness, in a *polis* open to the heavens, permeated by grace'. Thus, what 'is needed is a new sense of the very notion of a *polis*', made possible by the Church. And bishop Varden suggests that this *polis* is monastic in kind. See Erik Varden, 'The Monastery as a SCHOLA DEI', Beyond the Impasse: Theological Perspectives on DEI, The Aquinas Institute, October 26, 2024, 1:03:40-1:03:45; *Å finne sammen: Politiske innspill* (St. Olav Forlag, 2023), 12 (translations from the Norwegian are mine).

Put differently, the Church provides us with the space and tools for creating and sustaining political communities, but citizenship remains a functional concept. It is we who must, by the grace of God, carry out the work of actualising our potential. MacIntyre suggests that this will be unglamorous work at the margins. From the perspective of the world, this kind of life might not be attractive. But from the perspective of the Church, these communities participate in the inauguration of perfection and completion itself: the self-sufficiency of the Heavenly City. Moreover, the Church, as a political gift of grace, does not only resolve problems concerning modernity and liberalism, but as suggested in Chapter 5, perennial issues concerning the actualisation of our political nature in the *saeculum*.

6.5 Exercising theopolitical imagination: the Beguines as case study

For Aristotle and Augustine, the family is the genesis of political community. Households come together to meet needs that no singular household is able to meet on its own. And as they do so — typically over the course of generations — they gradually and naturally, teleologically, reach a kind of self-sufficiency that is adapted to their historical, geographic, and cultural context. According to Aristotle, the households are transformed into a political community by virtue of pursuing their shared recognition of the good life. I have argued that the Church uniquely equips us to do so in modernity. But at this point, we need, as MacIntyre would say, 'not only more arguments, but also more narratives'.[981]

In Chapter 5, we explored the possibilities for heavenly cities in the *saeculum* from and Augustinian perspective: households that 'follow' a monastery so as to, in their shared recognition and pursuit of the good, achieve self-sufficiency. This, some might say, is an unrealistic ideal: it is a political community of our prayers so to say. That may very well be the case, but if so, God hears such prayers, for there are

[981] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 242.

numerous concrete examples of such political communities in the history of Europe across a number of different countries — *e.g.* Mont-Saint-Michel in France, Ripoll in Spain, Meteora in Greece, Maulbronn in Germany, Saint-Gallen in Switzerland, Bobbio in Italy, Glendalough in Ireland, and the list goes on. This ideal form is made possible where monastics and laity come together in joint spiritual, moral, and political enterprise. This, in turn, is only possible if, firstly, monasteries conceive of their purpose as not only spiritual and moral, but also political, and invite lay households of faith to enter into political community with them; and secondly, some in the laity accept that invitation — that is, if both communities are actively open for grace in their own, complementary ways.

Although not impossible, this ideal is undoubtably a tall order, especially in a situation where monasteries, for centuries, were supressed by various rulers and regimes. In modernity, therefore, monasteries are rare things to come by. What then are alternatives that are more readily available in modernity, that is, examples of as it were mixed regimes? How can we adapt the ideal form to our situation in a way that avoids distortion, yet enables us to move towards the ideal until we are — if we are — graced with monastic rulers? The historic example of the Beguines does not only enable us to exercise the kind of imagination that is needed to answer these kinds of questions, but it also provides, I believe, a paradigm case of MacIntyrean civic friendship in modernity and under liberalism, that is, of revolutionary Augustinianism.

The Beguines, and later also the Beghards, where respectively female and male members of a lay religious order that operated from the twelfth to sixteenth century Europe, and especially in Belgium and the Netherlands.[982] It was a revival movement that emerged dispersedly with a few women here and there coming together to imitate Jesus' life according to a *vita apostolica* adapted to their circumstances. Straight from the outset the women grew rapidly in numbers. They began to buy

[982] My description of the Beguines relies on Walter Simons's account in *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

houses and neighbouring buildings, as a community but typically supported by patrons, so as to live devout lives together, obeying certain regulations under the guidance of a 'mistress' (*magistra*) or prioress. These constellations were called 'beguinages' or 'convents'. In places like Paris and Ghent, where the number of Beguines ran into the hundreds and even thousands, we even find 'court' beguinages.

> Courts consisted of several dwellings for beguines arranged around a central chapel or church used by them for their religious ceremonies; they included houses for individual beguines living alone or with one or more companions and servants, each with its own garden, larger residences (also called 'convents') for communal living under the rule of a mistress, and numerous service buildings, like a brewery, a bakery, or even a small farm; the entire complex was governed by a single superior, the grand mistress.[983]

Some of these courts would build walls and amount to a 'city within the city'.[984] Here, the Beguines 'celebrated the ideals of voluntary poverty, material asceticism', albeit not total abolishment of private property, as well as the exercise of 'simplicity, and a more profound and introspective religiosity, all of which were favoured by seclusion'.[985] The Beguines simultaneously emphasised 'the need for charity toward the weak and the sick, and advocated a greater attention to pastoral care in the world'.[986] The Beguines were also involved in manual labour — as nurses, farmers, maidens, weavers, tailors, merchants, *etcetera*. This was not only a way of serving the world and being a witness to it; it was a necessary means to meet the financial needs of the convent or court.

[983] Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, 51. See also Tanya Stabler Miller's description of the court beguinages in Paris, in *The Beguines of Medieval Paris: Gender, Patronage, and Spiritual Authority* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), esp. 37-41; 54-58.
[984] Ibid, 55.
[985] Ibid.
[986] Ibid.

This novel institution, arising from certain spirit infused practices, thus met at once material, social, and spiritual needs.[987] At this time in European history, a vast number of women outside the nobility were unable to enter monasteries, partly because of low status, and partly because of poor finances in the monasteries. If not married, the women moved to the city to seek out work opportunities, and the convents and courts enabled the women to do so: it provided safe dwelling for women that had or simply wanted to sustain themselves by different trades. Moreover, the convents and courts provided otherwise isolated women with a social network, coupled with personal independence — and, most importantly, a way to practice devout religious life and give and receive spiritual education and formation. This was a life characterised by devotion to the Eucharist, the cult of saints and pilgrimages, as well as spiritual exercises like prayer and fasting.[988] In addition to these general features, there were additional local regulations, which in each case sought to order the Beguines to a very specific Christian way of life: a coenobitic-like and ascetic-like perfection for the Christian life among the laity.

The example of the Beguines demonstrate many things at once. Firstly, something entirely foreign from the perspective of modernity: spiritual-moral-political friendships that are not only intentional but also made stable by temporal vows. Secondly, that genuine political communities, these heavenly cities within or alongside earthly cities, are in fact achievable in the context of urban life — and can emerge at the humble margins of secular society. Indeed, they can even grow to become influential movements covering multiple countries over multiple centuries. Thirdly, the beguinages were flexible things, some big others small, with different kinds of rules, adapted to local circumstances. They were achievable wherever there was desire for and will to live in some kind of coenobitic asceticism, typically occasioned by economic, social, and spiritual need, for the sake of divine purposes. Put differently, there was among the Beguines a shared recognition and pursuit of the good, of God and holy life within the Church — but there was no one-size-fit-all.

[987] Ibid, 109ff.
[988] Ibid, 74; 82; 142.

Fourthly, the beguinages and court beguinages lived symbiotically with the people of the city, serving its outcasts and witnessing to the people. Although the Beguines resisted the earthly city in certain ways by secluding itself from it, the Beguines also made instrumental use of the earthly city for the sake of their own beguinages: it was a place to meet economic needs and care for people. Fifthly, we get an understanding of the manner by which economic and social needs can be ordered spiritually in a lay community, towards a certain kind of spiritual-moral-political perfection.

My point is not that we should attempt to breathe life into the beguinages; they met particular needs of a particular age. Ours is a different age with different, although in some respects overlapping, needs. But we do well in admiring the Beguines and the life they were able to live. We should ask: did they leave behind anything of lasting value, other than their example? After their reform subsequent to papal condemnation, the beguinages tended to adopt the Third Orders of St. Francis — which marked the beginning of the Third Orders in a variety of different religious orders. In short, the Third Orders enable laypeople to participate in the rule and spirituality of religious order *as* laypeople. This is a neglected and peripheral space in the Church, but particularly interesting, for it enables us to train our political imagination and experiment with common ways of life that involve coenobitic-like and ascetic-like components.

Hauerwas exemplifies the kind of experimentation I have in mind by proposing the possibility for a Benedictine vow of stability among laypeople: if you decide to become a member of the parish, Hauerwas suggests, you cannot 'decide when and where you will move. If your company wants to send you to a new town, you first need to ask the church whether it's a good idea'.[989] It is tempting to simply dismiss this kind of proposal. However, on reflection, I am not sure that the reasons we might give to justify that dismissal are very compelling. For the flux of modernity

[989] Peter Mommsen, 'Why Community Is Dangerous: An Interview with Stanley Hauerwas', in *Plough*, March 4, 2016.

seems to be a central obstacle against the creation and sustenance of genuine political communities. As MacIntyre tells us, each of us 'has to choose both with whom we wish to be morally bound and by what ends, rules, and virtues we wish to be guided', indeed, these 'two choices are inextricably linked'.[990] As we have seen, MacIntyre also tells us that we are only able to enter onto such committed, communal ways of life for the sake of the good if we are inspired to dare doing things that we hitherto had not believed that we were capable of doing. And Christian faith, hope, and charity can infuse us with that inspiration precisely.

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In this Chapter, I have revised and systematised MacIntyre's claims about friendship; I have provided a MacIntyrean account of civic friendship in terms of eight MacIntyrean theses. This account boasts three achievements: it points to a possible epistemological crisis for liberalism; it offers a conditional grounding of the liberal nation-state that is critical of both liberalism and the nation-state; and it resolves a central problem for MacIntyre's political philosophy, namely the absence of an adequate political imagination. In the next section I anticipate and respond to some important objections.

[990] MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 268.

CHAPTER 7

Objections, responses, conclusions

Chapter 6 presented a prolegomenon to a revolutionary Augustinianism by developing a MacIntyrean account of civic friendship. In this final chapter, I briefly respond to criticisms against and appropriations of MacIntyre's political philosophy that in different ways implicate my proposed revolutionary Augustinianism (§§ 7.1-3). In doing so, I intend to dialectically elaborate and detail my proposal *vis-à-vis* relevant alternative positions in the literature. Then, finally, I summarise (§ 7.4) and conclude the argument of this thesis (§ 7.5).

7.1 Quasi-state, domination, self-sufficiency

I would like to return to Murphy's quasi-state, which I take to be one of the most interesting objections against MacIntyre's political philosophy. Now that we have furnished MacIntyre with the resources for an adequate political imagination, we can briefly focus in on and address this particular objection in more detail — and in this way summarise some important points about self-sufficiency.

According to the Murphy's objection, local, small-scale, and participatory 'political' communities do not have the kind of competence that we expect from political communities *qua* political. They do especially not have the power to punish, coerce,

and defend. Thus, according to Murphy, insofar as MacIntyre's political communities are *political*, MacIntyre's political communities will naturally seek to provide a structure akin to a minimalist version of the liberal nation-state, that is, a quasi-state. We are now in a position to see that, although *prima facie* convincing, this objection fails one especially two grounds. Firstly, a quasi-state is not *necessary* for genuine political communities. Although beneficial, goods like electricity grids, sewage systems, and legal tender are neither integral to self-sufficiency nor, in fact, contingent on a quasi-state. With that said, upholding the rule of law, and especially the maintenance of peace, seems to be contenders for a necessary political good that only a quasi-state can provide. In an age of immense and powerful nation-states, defence alliances on the same scale as nation-states are typically needed. Put simply, the existence of other nation-states compels political communities to become nation-states themselves.

The implications for our understanding of self-sufficiency are however ambiguous. My native country, Norway, is a relatively small nation-state, not least in comparison to our biggest neighbour: Russia. And Norway is only able to defend itself against Russia as a member of NATO. Indeed, if the ability to defend oneself against enemies independent of such defence alliances is a requirement for self-sufficiency, then only nuclear powers qualify as self-sufficient in the modern age (in fact, not even they do, since they can themselves can also be annihilated by other nuclear powers). If, conversely, this is not a requirement, then we can also imagine local, small-scale participatory communities entering into a series of defence alliances — from the regional, to the national, to the international level. There is no need to claim that any such hypothetical defence alliances must amount to *political communities*, just as none would claim that NATO is a political community.

Secondly, and as noted, although the nation-state has accumulated the power to punish and coerce people, as well as calling them to arms to wage war against other nation-states, the nation-state cannot properly *justify* the exercise of such power. Only genuine political communities can do so. For it is these communities that

make it possible to achieve flourishing — and punishment and coercion can only be justified in reference to flourishing. Put differently, we might say that genuine political communities can delegate the function of coercion and punishment to the nation-state, and if so, then the nation-state can only exercise this function in service of genuine political communities. And to the extent that the quasi-state remains a *quasi*-state and is not granted status as a genuine political community — that is, if we conceive of it in terms of a utilities company or a defence alliance or a combination thereof — then the quasi-state objection does not challenge the coherence of local, small-scale and participatory political communities.

Here it might be helpful to reiterate some claims about self-sufficiency. From the perspective of revolutionary Augustinianism, we should be sceptical about the assumption that coercion and punishment are *essential* to political communities. Coercion and punishment are only, at best, appropriate tools for handling sin and domination.[991] But the actualisation of our political potential does not *require* that we wield them.

7.2 Against Christian liberalisms: Stout (and Riordan)

In *Democracy and Tradition*, Jeffery Stout critiques a 'troublesome feature' of MacIntyre's political philosophy: the 'tendency to undermine identification with liberal democracy'.[992] To exemplify this feature, Stout cites MacIntyre's remark that modern politics is civil war with other means. Stout makes several arguments to support this critique, among which two are especially important for our present purposes. Firstly, that MacIntyre's criticism of liberal democracy is characterised

[991] Moreover, the way by which the city-state or nation-state wield those tools are not the only possible way. The monastic court is a case in point. If a member at some point chooses to reject the monastic order to which they willingly submitted, then he or she has already placed him or herself 'outside' the community — and the community only realises their decision by excommunication. In this way, discipline can be exercised and justice maintained without resorting to coercion and punishment.
[992] Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 118.

by an undue and even harmful pessimism, and secondly that 'liberalism' is too vague in MacIntyre's criticism of modernity — it is the name of everything that MacIntyre dislikes about ethics and politics in modernity.

To undergird the second argument, Stout offers two alternative conceptualisations of 'liberalism'. The first is an attempt to tailor political institutions to the facts of moral pluralism (and this conceptualisation seems to be endorsed by for instance Patrick Riordan).[993] The second alternative, advanced by Stout, is to avoid the term 'liberalism' in its entirety. There is no unified 'liberal project', according to Stout. Rather, we have 'liberal society', which is too complex a social configuration to be explained as the result of a single project. We can therefore only criticise specific features of liberal society. Sweeping characteristics of liberalism are *ipso facto* distortive. For that very reason, Stout suggests that 'liberalism', in MacIntyre, blocks the path to productive inquiry about politics in modernity.

Stout's objections fail, however, on multiple grounds. Take, to begin with, Stout's alternative conceptualisations of 'liberalism'. As to the first alternative, a crucial question is where the moral pluralism originates from, and whether it is good. MacIntyre tells us that moral pluralism did not come out of nowhere. It was not the result of some inevitable historic progress either. It originated in medieval theological debates and specifically the emergence of new metaphysical positions that, in due course, progressing through Protestant theology, culminated in the Enlightenment project.[994] This project manifested itself in specific ideas expressed by specific philosophers, such as John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. Thus, on MacIntyre's understanding, Stout's liberalism can be said to not only be caused by moral pluralism but also be a cause of such moral pluralism. Needless to say, MacIntyre does not think of this kind of pluralism as a good thing.

[993] Riordan, *Human Dignity and Liberal Politics*, 12.
[994] See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chap. 5.

That brings us to Stout's second alternative conceptualisation. MacIntyre does indeed pick out several features of liberal society, such as — to mentioned features crucial to this inquiry — the atomisation of citizens and the corresponding fragmentation of our moral and political life, the abstraction of reason from tradition and its communities, the absence of an overall conception of the good, and the normative priority of justice to friendship. Thus, both of Stout's alternative conceptualisations are already operative in MacIntyre. We should also be critical of Stout's attempt to exchange 'liberalism' *qua* some kind of unified project with 'liberal society' *qua* some kind of complex social configuration that lacks any kind of real unity or coherence. For this exchange seems to foreclose the possibility for systematic criticism of the principles that order liberal societies, that is, the kind of principles that make such societies *liberal* as opposed to something else. And that is hazardous, for it puts the liberal nation-state beyond the reach of serious critical scrutiny.

I want to make a further point: vagueness in definitions does not necessarily imply imprecision. In § 6.2, I sought to demonstrate that MacIntyre's criticism of liberalism, vaguely defined, can be developed and specified by addressing concrete liberal political theories in the academy. But there is a danger with the kind of narrow focus that is encouraged if not demanded by the academy: there seems to be quite a number of devoted Rawlsians in the academy, but not too many outside it. The liberal theories of the academy do not necessarily correspond one-to-one with the liberal 'theory' that we find in our society, that is, liberal 'culture,' although the two are connected.[995] Here, liberal 'culture' refers to socially embedded systems of thought and action featuring certain kinds of standards of practical reasoning and evaluation. These systems are the moral maps by which plain people and elites alike use to navigate life in modernity. MacIntyreans are predominantly interested in *this* kind of moral theory, that is moral theory in the broader, looser sense. The academy

[995] See MacIntyre, 'An Interview for Cogito', 271.

is a place in which we find condensed and specific expressions of such moral theories, like Rawlsian political liberalism. Thus, for MacIntyreans, it is paramount to alternate between the fine-grained theories of academics and the course-grained theories of plain people.

This approach has made MacIntyre a controversial figure in the academy. It seems that a condition for being persuaded by MacIntyre is to more or less accept MacIntyre's broader, course-grained account of modernity — and specifically the possibility that MacIntyre's generalisations and simplifications *enhance* our understanding of the age in which we find ourselves by capturing and condensing its spirit. This sounds tautological, and to some extent it is, for we find here a variant of Meno's paradox. To look for and see the kind of issues that MacIntyre points out in modernity demands that we already have, in some respect, found these very things in our encounters with modernity. It is always possible that we might come to see things differently, that reality, somehow, kicks back against the convictions that we thought captured reality but turned out to be our impositions upon it. This brings us to the purported undue and harmful pessimism undergirding MacIntyre's political philosophy; we find ourselves in a privileged historical position to evaluate this charge.

Take, to begin with, the kind of optimism that Rawls express in *A Theory of Justice*: 'in times of social doubt and loss of faith in long established values, there is a tendency to fall back on the virtues of integrity: truthfulness and sincerity, lucidity and commitment, or, as some say, authenticity'.[996] This optimism probably seemed reasonable at the time when Rawls expressed it, in 1971, a decade before MacIntyre wrote *After Virtue* in 1981. But it is difficult, looking on current affairs, to not be perplexed by Rawls' sheer *naïveté*. We would be forgiven if we find ourselves wanting to as it were jump back into Rawls' study, telling him that he has no idea what is in store. It is remarkable that MacIntyre, it seems, *did* have an idea about

[996] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 455.

what was in store. Stout, writing in 2004, had the benefit of more than two decades of history. Yet, strikingly, it is the Rawlsian optimism that informs Stout's criticism that now seems dated, while MacIntyre's pessimism, if anything, seems ever-more justified, if not 'prophetic'.[997]

7.3 Against Christian postliberalisms: Dreher and Deneen

In *The Benedict Option*, Rod Dreher makes the case for a 'strategic withdrawal' from society,[998] the very thing that Stout (and, again, for instance Riordan)[999] warns against. According to Dreher, Christianity has been defeated in the culture war, and especially so on moral issues. As a consequence, Christians now face soft kinds of persecution that are getting harder and harder. Dreher appeals to MacIntyre in order to make his case: we are heading into a continuously darker age, and we do not know when we will see dawn. Dreher then picks up on the finale in *After Virtue* and presents us with the option of following Benedict into the wilderness, that is the fringes of society in modernity. Christians should retreat and regroup so as to protect and preserve Christian modes of living and thinking — by intentionally coming together and building schools, businesses, and religious communities, that is parallel societies with alternative cultures.

On the surface, there are important similarities between the Benedict option and my proposed revolutionary Augustinianism. At its best, the Benedict option contributes to discussions about alternative routes to the mainstream, putting us in a position to speak about what it might mean to resist the liberal nation-state, and how sacrificing lesser goods in resisting the liberal nation-state might enable us to achieve higher goods: namely robust and integrated religious communities that share a common recognition and pursuit of the good. Yet, according to MacIntyre, proponents of the

[997] Pinches, 'Theological Overtones in After Virtue', 201.
[998] Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (Sentinel, 2017), 2.
[999] Riordan, *Human Dignity and Liberal Politics*, 12.

Benedict option 'apparently read nothing but that one sentence' which concludes *After Virtue*.[1000] MacIntyre then explains that that the Benedictine monastery represents no strategic withdrawal, to the contrary — like Augustine, Benedict 'quite inadvertently created a new set of social forms' by engaging novelly with the dominant social order of the day.[1001] Specifically, the Benedictines began to practice a new way of life and establish new institutions to support that way of life.

> [O]ne thing about this monastic order was that they had to survive to make their living, so they had to be farmers. So, we have monks who are farmers. Now the interesting thing about monks is they don't breed. They can't reproduce themselves. If you simply had monks going out into the wilderness and farming there soon wouldn't be. So there had to be non-monks around. And this is what always happened. Benedictine communities existed in a set of villages, often very close to one of them. Then it had a crucial symbiotic relationship with them. First of all, they were all farmers, so they exchanged these goods. Secondly it is from the sons of these villagers that novices were found. And the monks therefore had a keen interest in the education of the community. So over time the monastery became the place that supplied schooling and liturgy. The villages provided lay-recruits and so on. What was built up was a local community which was largely independent of the feudal order, not entirely but very much so. So this is not a withdrawal from society into isolation, this is actually the creation of a new set of social institutions which then proceed to evolve, a very interesting set of social institutions too. Later on, when you get collisions with the feudal order in all sorts of way, that becomes interesting too.[1002]

This puts us in a position to see precisely where Dreher's Benedict option goes wrong. The Benedict option is seemingly presented to us as a necessary evil: Christians have to retreat, it seems, in order to regroup — in the first instance to protect

[1000] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Common Goods, Frequent Evils', Keynote lecture delivered at The Common Good as a Common Project, de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, University of Notre Dame, March 26-28, 2017, 1:08:17-19.
[1001] Ibid, 1:08:41-43.
[1002] Ibid, 1:08:47-1:10:47.

a Christian way of life, and perhaps with time, win back culture and then even the nation-state itself.[1003] Thus, Dreher effectively weaponises robust and integrated religious communities for the sake of waging culture war. Christian ways of life are turned into instruments for saving Western, 'Christian' civilisation, which is allegedly guarded by so-called 'Christian' nation-states.[1004] The Benedict option is therefore inherently entangled in modern politics as civil war, as culture war, and worse, inadvertently turns Christianity into a means for achieve the end of nation-state power.

But waging this kind of war corrupt us, according to MacIntyre, and thus we cannot truly 'win'. In fact, they cannot be properly won, since the other side cannot be forced to accept one's own view on culture. Moreover, such wars draw our attention and efforts away from possibilities for and responsibilities in local, small-scale, and participatory political communities. Thus, for MacIntyre, the Benedictine route is not a necessary evil, a 'strategic withdrawal' for wining back the nation-state. In fact, it is not even a detour — it is a path to the good life. It is so because it leaves behind the counterfeit politics of the nation-state in order to create and sustain genuine politics for its own sake. Put differently, local, small-scale, and participatory political community is not second best; it is the only kind of genuine political community there is. Thus, on the MacIntyrean account, there is no plan of returning to the politics of the liberal nation-state other than as ambassadors for genuine political communities.[1005]

[1003] See also David W. Congdon, 'What Has New Haven to Do with Hungary? On Theological and Political Postliberalism', *The Journal of Religion* 105, no. 4 (2025): 424-425.
[1004] John Daniel Davidson, developing Dreher's Benedict option into a 'Boniface option', proposes for instance that Christian civilisation materialises in the documents of the American Founding Fathers. Thus, for Davidson, and this is peculiar for Christians outside of America, there is no Christian civilisation without the Second Amendment. See John Daniel Davidson, *Pagan America: The Decline of Christianity and the Dark Age to Come* (Regnery Publishing Inc., 2024), 43-44.
[1005] Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove's 'new' monasticism is an interesting contrast — for it goes after MacIntyre's Benedict precisely by avoiding culture wars: the 'new' monasticism is a contemplative and communal way of life among laypeople, oriented around hospitality and care for the poor. However, new monasticism also seeks to replaces old or traditional monasticism, and in doing so, undermines the model of genuine political communities according to my proposed revolutionary Augustinianism. Rutba House, ed., *Schools for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Cascade Book, 2005), xii-xiii.

But is this approach meaningful in a situation where nation-states are totalising in their scope and power, especial in an age of global economics and systemic technologisation? That is, can we afford to shift attention and efforts away from national politics to local, small-scale, and participatory political communities? Or, put differently, should we deprive people of the good of a Christian civilisation — which in turn must be guarded by a Christian nation-state?[1006] This takes us to the postliberalism of Deneen: local, small-scale, and participatory communities require a Christian nation-state, and specifically a *postliberal* nation-state.[1007]

It is important to note that postliberals see the 'left' and the 'right' as really just different expressions of one and the same project, namely the Enlightenment project: one side emphasises such things as sexual liberation and welfare services, and the other for instance the liberalisation and globalisation of economic markets — which each in their own way serves to alienate us from local, small-scale, and participatory communities. This observation, so central to Patrick Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed*, can be said to be MacIntyrean: both flanks progressively and complimentarily undermine crucial components of genuine political communities. According to the postliberals, we must therefore use the nation-state to resist the Enlightenment project that unites the left and the right, even if MacIntyre warns us against doing so.[1008]

[1006] Notably, Paul Kingsnorth is critical to the assumption that 'Christian' civilisation can be widely accessible: happiness is difficult to achieve, and Jesus Christ himself says that the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it. However, from the MacIntyrean perspective, we should also critical be to Kingsnorth's inability to properly distinguish 'civilisation' from 'modern politics', which makes him unsensitive to the prospect of *genuine* politics as the basis of true, good civilisation that is also accessible although demanding. See Paul Kingsnorth, 'Against Christian Civilization', *First Things*, December 12, 2025.
[1007] In 'MacIntyre and Political Philosophy', Caleb Bernacchio and Kelvin Knight offer a criticism of Adrian Vermulen's integralism that is very much compatible with the kind of criticism that I here make against Dreher and especially Deneen.
[1008] See Nathan Pinkoski, 'Postliberalism's Reluctant Godfather', in *Compact Magazine*, May 23, 2025.

Deneen's aforementioned *Why Liberalism Failed*, together with its sequel *Regime Change: Towards a Postliberal Future*, represent perhaps the most influential statement of contemporary postliberalism.[1009] Across partisan divides and national borders, the project that unites postliberals seems to be that Christianity, as a cultural and societal good, should be made widely accessible to people, and defended and mediated by the institutions of the nation-state. In *Regime Change*, Deneen proposes to do so by installing a new moral elite in America that can fashion policy and specifically the institutions of the nation-state according to some kind of Christianity.[1010]

Deneen wants to make this happen by using the power of the nation-state: we need 'the application of Machiavellian means to achieve Aristotelian ends — the use of powerful political resistance by the populace against the natural advantages of the elite'.[1011] However, Deneen fails to properly recognise that it is practices and virtues that give rise to just institutions; just institutions cannot manufacture good culture or good people. Three points can be added. Firstly, insofar as good culture is a common good, it can only be achieved if the members participate in it, which conflicts with the purported Machiavellian means. Secondly, Deneen does not tell us what it takes to make good people, which is required for the instalment of the new proposed moral elite, nor from where it should be taken, or alternatively how it is to be formed. A further MacIntyrean criticism is that Machiavellian means, in their very nature, undermine and distort Aristotelian ends. We cannot deploy unjust or bad means to achieve 'good' ends without becoming bad in the process ourselves. For political activity, like all activities, is an integrated complex of means-*cum*-ends.

[1009] It is important to note that Deneen is only incidentally or strategically, as opposed to ideologically, on the 'right'. For Deneen's postliberalism is in the spirit of Jean Daniélou's *Prayer as a Political Problem*, and whereas Deneen is on the American right, Daniélou belonged to the French left. In Britain, this partisan blurriness is captured by terms such as 'red tory' and 'blue labour'.
[1010] Patrick Deneen, *Regime Change: Towards a Postliberal Future* (Forum, 2023), chaps. 6-7.
[1011] Ibid, 167; 49.

Thus, Deneen's moral elite is compromised and corrupted in its very making. Similar to Dreher's Benedict option, 'morality' and 'Christianity' itself are turned into instruments for and thus co-opted by the nation-state — and thus distorted into something possibly immoral and anti-Christian. Put differently, the moral elites that Deneen postulates would resist the temptation to use Machiavellian means to overhaul society; it would rather seek to create and sustain local, small-scale, and participatory political communities in which they and we can flourish and thus realise our political nature — and that kind of end, ultimately of flourishing, cannot be achieved by Machiavellian means. From the MacIntyrean perspective, Deneen is not realising that the problem is not simply liberal institutions, but that plain people over time have accepted liberalism, because of the political institutions. To focus on the liberal institutions is therefore to distract from the difficult, frustrating work that is required from us.

7.4 Summary of argument(s)

The liberal nation-state is a counterfeit political community because it is incapable of creating and sustaining civic friendship. I introduced the present project by presenting this friendship problem and inquiring: what is *MacIntyre's* account of civic friendship? How, if at all, can friendship be the essential and primary relation of political community in modernity and under liberalism? I examined the development of this friendship account, beginning with *After Virtue*, via *Dependent Rational Animals*, and then to 'Is Friendship Possible?'. Upon doing so, we found that friendship also posed a theological problem for MacIntyre's political philosophy: it seems to both require and foreclose openness to grace and supernatural perfection. I thus set out to further develop MacIntyre's civic friendship account. In so doing, I have sought to fill two overlapping lacunas: one in MacIntyrean scholarship (*i.e.* examining and developing MacIntyre's account of civic friendship) and the other

in the political theology literature (*i.e.* offering a Christian account of civic friendship). To that end, I proposed to shift the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic synthesis of politics from Aristotle to Augustine.

To frame my resynthesis, I laid out eight Thomistic principles, enshrined in the proverb that friends share everything communally. This proverb captures the core of an argument about the nature of politics and friendship that runs from Plato through Aristotle to Augustine. I shall now attempt to briefly summarise some main features of the positions we discovered upon exploring that argument, their connection with one another, and the manner by which my proposed revolutionary Augustinianism seeks to develop their argumentation further in the context of modernity.

In Plato's *Republic*, we found politics to be a mode of metaphysics and theology and *vice versa*. Motived by the desire to befriend wisdom, the philosophers ascend towards oneness with the One — or God — that is beyond and beneath the world of being. However, to approach the One is also to appreciate that the One is not only found outside the world, but also within it, for the One only exists in the many. Thus, at some point, ascending requires the wise to descend again. It is impossible to befriend the One while disregarding the many in which the One actually exists, and specifically our fellow citizens — with whom we are parts of a self-sufficient whole that mirrors the One: political community — such that contemplating ultimately leads the wise into politics.

Conversely, since politics is ordered to self-sufficiency, and self-sufficiency consists in befriending the One, politics is completed in, and thus essentially concerned with, divine befriending. And Kallipolis can only be ordered to divine befriending by rulers that are themselves ordered to divine friendship, namely the guardians. Just as the soul's divine element, reason, must demiurgically order desire and spiritedness to wholeness and thus self-sufficiency in and by friendship, Kallipolis' guardian class must demiurgically order the auxiliary and producer classes to self-

sufficiency in and by friendship. To achieve that, Socrates proposes to demiurgically institute a variant of coenobitic asceticism among the guardians: a common household ordered by rigorous rules for the sake of moral and intellectual perfection. On this understanding, the guardians rule by communicating friendship with the One to the souls of Kallipolis, as well as leading those souls safely towards friendship with the One by way of communal ascent.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle retains the gist of this argument but also points out serious issues with it. Friendship cannot, *qua* friendship, be instituted among the guardians by imposing coenobitic asceticism upon them — for friendship is a certain kind of human relation that, in its very essence, resists coercion or imposition. Friendship is to *share* life, it is a gift that must be freely given, not a goal that can be achieved by way of forced redistribution. In fact, if we nevertheless were to attempt to impose friendship on the city, then we render the city incapable of friendship, and thus ultimately bring about its demise. That is because the possibility for free giving is undermined and even eradicated by forced redistribution, while it is only the free gift that can create and sustain friendship. Yet, forced redistribution is regarded as necessary measure for Plato's Socrates: the kind of giving that is required is not human but divine — friendship is deification — which produced the Platonic aporia. Incomplete friendship is a necessary precondition for politics, and the completion of such friendship its ultimate end, yet friendship is also, and simultaneously, forever beyond the reach of politics, rendering politics inherently incapable of securing its own condition or achieving its own end. Kallipolis is therefore inherently incapable of self-sufficiency.

Aristotle similarly maintains that friendship is the precondition for and ultimate end of politics. But Aristotle conceptualises this end differently, and, correspondingly, applies different means for moving the city towards its end. Firstly, according to Aristotle, friendship is a *natural* relation among humans. Indeed, it is the very basic relation of human nature, and it comes in different variations: as a genus, friendship is a shard recognition and pursuit of goods and ultimately the good itself. Friendship

species are differentiated with respect to the kinds of goods that are recognised and pursued in common. Sharing everything is only natural among friends in and around the household. In the city, *some* things are shared: a shared recognition and pursuit of the life of the city, and specifically the good of self-sufficiency. A necessary component of such self-sufficiency is the presence of myriads of different friendship species, including familial friendship, which in turn is only feasible if the guardian class is laicised as aristocracy.

This aristocracy is itself brought forth by families. Here, in their household, citizens are initiated — through education, habituation, and practice — into a shared recognition and pursuit of the common goods of the household. They do so by giving their different functions to the household and receiving the functions of other family members. Friendship in the family therefore prepares the members to participate in other species of friendship also. But the pinnacle of friendship, complete friendship, is only found among the wise. That is because the wise *qua* wise share not only virtuous activity, but specifically contemplation. This good is superior to all other goods: it is the good itself. However, friendship among the wise still occurs in and around the household, for it involves the sharing of thought and talk, cultivation and exercise of virtue, as well as one's property, life, and very self. And this is only possible in and around the household. Thus, although laicised, the aristocratic life remains in some important respects not only ascetical, for it involves ethical discipline, but also coenobitic.

Aristotle's political theory consists of two basic, mutually dependent communities: household and city — part and whole; limb and body politic. The tissue that unites the former with the latter is a myriad of friendship groups, that is, overlapping networks of receiving and giving among people that we are more or less attached to. The city is not only necessary because it produces and distributes a diversity of goods necessary for living, but in securing these lower goods it also enables the achievement of higher goods: a leisurely life of contemplation with friends in and around the household *with* people from other households. Crucially, to share in the

city's self-sufficient life is to share its constitution, its laws and norms, which is to share a common way of life. This is only possible among civic friends. And importantly, *pace* Plato's Socrates, it is the household rather than the city that is the source of civic friendship for Aristotle. The city's means for achieving its own end, and secure its own condition, is therefore to protect and promote the household's domestic integrity and give political shape to the friendship that flows from the household and into the city.

Here, however, the Platonic friendship aporia reemerges as an Aristotelian paradox. Politics is an architectonic ordering of the city to completion; friendship is a condition for and the end of such completion; but the more politics attempts to order the city to friendship, the less likely it is to be completed in friendship. There seems, therefore, to be an inherent tension between politics as an architectonic, technical discipline and that which this discipline attempts to achieve: completion in self-sufficiency. Put differently, politics cannot achieve its own end and secure its own condition directly. It can only do so indirectly, by stepping back, although not so far back that anarchy is loosed upon the citizens. Politics can therefore only contribute by preparing its citizens to receive friendship; it cannot *give* such friendship to the city. Put differently, self-sufficiency must be gifted to the city from something or someone beyond its walls — and thus the city cannot *itself* be self-sufficient. Put differently yet again, not only the best city, but all cities approximating self-sufficiency are cities of our prayers.

Here we come to see that the Platonic aporia and Aristotelian paradox are ancient variants of a problem that, from the MacIntyrean perspective, troubles modern politics also: there seems to be an inherent conflict between the means of politics, and its condition and end. This is a tragic predicament, because it entails that we are incapable of realising our own nature. However, in Augustine, we discovered the possibility for resolving this problem by reconceptualising friendship and politics, as well as self-sufficiency, in light of the eschaton.

Firstly, Augustine reconceptualises the distinction between genuine and counterfeit politics in terms of heavenly versus earthly politics. The Heavenly City 'gifts' us the redemption and perfection of happiness and self-sufficiency in the *saeculum*; cities in the *saeculum* can only receive these gifts to the degree that they participate in the politics of the Heavenly City. Secondly, and relatedly, the distinction between genuine and counterfeit friendship — which for Plato is based on the One, and Aristotle the good — is reconceptualised in terms of Christ as the One, as the true, ultimate giver of goods. True politics must therefore lead us, directly or indirectly, towards unity with Christ. This eschatological light makes it possible for us to see that it because of sin that earthly politics is inherently unable to achieve the ultimate end of politics and secure its own condition, *viz*. friendship. To be realistic about earthly politics is therefore to be pessimistic about it.

But it does not follow that we must be pessimistic about politics as such, even in the *saeculum*. From the perspective of the world, heavenly politics will appear weak and insipid, for it refuses to use the instruments of domination. The heavenly cities take the Platonic shape of a journey, of a pilgrimage, towards the Heavenly City. Like the guardian class, the monks and nuns of Augustine's monasteries communicate God to us by offering the sacraments. For Augustine's monks are also parish priests. The monastics lead this pilgrimage by example, that is, by offering up their lives to God. However, unlike the guardians, the monastics do not attempt to impose this journey on its citizens. In fact, it would be impossible: for people do not only suffer from ignorance or weakness, but also, and fundamentally, an evil will. The evilness of this will consists in its refusal of friendship with God. No soul can be redeemed or converted by force; it must receive the gift of friendship by opening up to grace.

Augustine thus reconceptualises the complex of theology-anthropology-ethics-politics. Firstly, in Jesus Christ, the One descends to us because we are inherently incapable of ascending to the One. In doing so, the One is revealed to us as the archetypical Friend, not only in the abstract, but also as a concrete person. Jesus Christ

comes to us and leads the pilgrimage, and he continually communicates to us the grace for following him through the sacraments. Secondly, in this revelatory descent, and specifically the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, the One raises up fallen nature — collapsing the nature-divine dichotomy. Nature is perfected, not eradicated, by the grace of deification. We come to find happiness neither in fleeing from our nature, nor refusing divine transformation. Rather, it is by offering our human self as a gift in return to the One's gift of self, in entering the divine friendship which we are invited into, that our nature is perfected. Put differently, Augustine's eschatology is eudaimonic, thus implicating politics, not only in the eschaton, but also in the *saeculum*. Thirdly, the notion of fallenness enables us to distinguish between two rivalling eschatological forces in the *saeculum* — or cosmological orders — that is of friendship (unity, reconciliation, obedience, *etcetera*) on the one hand, domination (fragmentation, punishment, coercion, *etcetera*) on the other.

Augustine thus reveals to us that the political friendship problem is also theological, and that it can therefore only be resolved by involving theology. It is postlapsarian politics that is aporetic and paradoxical, corrupted by sin, not prelapsarian or 'translapsarian' politics. Just as the condition and end of prelapsarian politics was natural friendship with God, postlapsarian politics can be redeemed by eschatological transformation in and by supernatural friendship with God. Augustine enables us therefore not only to account for ancient and modern variants of the friendship problem but also to point to a remedy — a remedy that lies forever beyond the reach of earthly politics and is only bestowed upon us by grace: participation in the politics of the Heavenly City. This participation consists in the moral and intellectual transformation of imitating Christ. For Augustine, this transformation is at once a spiritual, moral, and political exercise, and the monastery is the centre of order and perfection by which friendship with God is communicated. We can therefore participate in the Heavenly City through the pilgrimage of heavenly cities. This pilgrimage towards perfection and divine friendship is always and everywhere underway — but, crucially, it is the monastics that lead the way. And to follow them is to go against the ways of the world.

Having explored this argument about the nature of politics in terms of friendship as it extends from Plato's Socrates to Aristotle, and then Augustine, I returned to develop the MacIntyrean account of civic friendship. My aim was to open MacIntyre's account, and political philosophy more generally, to grace by shifting the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic political synthesis from Aristotle to Augustine. To that end, I drew on the exploration of the aforementioned argument about the nature of politics to put forward eight MacIntyrean theses. These theses serve as the skeleton of MacIntyrean political communities and are thus mere bones that need fleshing out, which is not possible in abstract, universal theory. The bones must be fleshed out among concrete people in concrete places.

With that said: in modernity and under liberalism, the Church stands out as the ideal location for creating and sustaining genuine political communities. It is so by virtue of offering sociologies that are infused by a theological cosmology. The Church provides us with the space and tools for creating and sustaining political communities. Here the importance of openness to grace is made evident: the Church is a supernatural gift of grace that makes politics uniquely possible in modernity and under liberalism. That gift is given as a possibility. We can only receive it by actualising this possibility, that is, by entering into the space the Church makes available for us and use its tools ourselves to share the life well lived, to build our political communities — that is, to create and sustain civic friendship.

7.5 Conclusions — and beginnings

To render something intelligible, MacIntyre tells us — say for instance a human life — 'just is to identify its place, function, and relationship within the overall order of things'.[1012] On MacIntyre's reading, Aquinas takes that order of things to

[1012] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Truth as a good: a reflection on *Fides et Ratio*', 206.

be a *kosmos* ordered by God, namely the Christian God. 'Every human being, on this view, has by nature a desire for that happiness which is achieved only in union to God'.[1013] MacIntyre seems to concur. But Kelvin Knight comments that 'as yet, at least, this metaphysical commitment has not altered his account of ethics, politics, or practices'.[1014]

I think this verdict is mistaken with respect to moral philosophy, as demonstrated in § 1.5. But I have also suggested that there is a lot of truth to it with respect to MacIntyre's political philosophy granted some adjustment: the metaphysical commitment has not *sufficiently* altered MacIntyre's account of politics. In this thesis, I have therefore attempted to theologically develop MacIntyre's account of politics, and specifically civic friendship. I have shifted the emphasis of MacIntyre's Thomistic synthesis of politics from Aristotle to Augustine in order to ensure that it remains effectively open to grace. I have attempted to show, firstly, that this is possible from within MacIntyre's political philosophy, and secondly, that in doing so, we can resolve other serious problems in MacIntyre's political philosophy, and specifically the absence of an adequate political imagination.

In thus developing MacIntyre's account of civic friendship, I have sought to contribute not only to MacIntyre scholarship, but also the political theology literature. More work awaits, I think, in holding MacIntyre together with political theology, and specifically modern political Thomism. Certainly, 'political theology' means different things to different people, but on one understanding, it designates a discipline in the modern academy in which political philosophy can remain open to grace by remaining close to theology. Put simply, this kind of political theology makes it possible to engage in genuinely *Christian* political philosophy in modernity and under liberalism — and thus to develop MacIntyre's political philosophy further.

[1013] Ibid, 212.
[1014] Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy*, 217.

Doing so, however, is risky business. For, having completed our analyses, MacIntyre does not allow us to lean back in our Oxford armchairs, satisfied with our own efforts.[1015] Rather, we are pushed out into the ruins from which we came, to live the kind of shared life that reason points towards, if not require from us, but that only faith, hope, and charity makes it possible to give ourself to, not to say achieve. In other words, our efforts have only just begun. If we thus decide to pull up our sleeves and begin the work we know we have to do in order to flourish — even though this work is mundane and tiresome and often probably will involve disappointments — we will be told, MacIntyre warns us, that our efforts are in vain, that the kind of communities 'you are trying to create and sustain are simply not possible, that you are unrealistic, a Utopian'.[1016] And it is important to respond, MacIntyre instructs us: 'Yes, that is exactly what we are'.[1017]

[1015] 'No theoretical critique by itself will provide what we need, no matter how insightful, right-minded, or scholarly', says MacIntyre, yet theorising remains an important task. 'As MacIntyre has always argued', Knight observes, 'theories are themselves part of the social life which they attempt to describe'. See Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy*, 174; MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 14.
[1016] MacIntyre, 'How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary', 16.
[1017] Ibid.

APPENDICES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

Eight Thomistic Principles

(1) The political community is *per se* self-sufficient.

(2) By virtue of being self-sufficient, the political community makes it possible for humans to achieve happiness.

(3) Happiness is achieved in the sharing of common goods pertaining to our nature as domestic and political animals.

(4) The sharing of common goods requires virtues, and specifically virtues pertaining to friendship.

(5) By our own natural capacities, humans can only acquire natural virtues, which only makes it possible to achieve natural or imperfect happiness (and a corresponding self-sufficiency) — and such natural or imperfect happiness is only possible if it remains open to supernatural perfection.

(6) Charity is the form of all the virtues and thus perfects happiness and self-sufficiency.

(7) Charity is a kind of friendship among God and humans.

(8) Charity is a supernatural gift of grace.

Eight Platonic Premises

(1) Genuine (or true or real) politics must be differentiated from counterfeit (or phantom or *ersatz*) politics.

(2) Politics, if genuine, is concerned with completing human nature.

(3) Human nature is completed in self-sufficiency.

(4) Self-sufficiency consists in friendship with the One.

(5) Friendship with the One can only be achieved through ascending to the One by way of intellectual contemplation and moral development.

(6) To ascend to the One, it is necessary to befriend the many in which the One exists, and specifically one's fellow citizens — for the political community mirrors the One.

(7) Befriending fellow citizens consists in participating in a good, just, and pious city that ascends *communally* towards the One via study, virtue, and ritual.

(8) Participating in a good, just, and pious city is only possible insofar as the citizens share life as one under the same law.

Eight MacIntyrean Theses

(1) The genus 'friendship' is a relation whose form is a shared recognition and pursuit of goods and ultimately the good.

(2) The essential and primary relation of political community is a species of friendship, *viz*. civic friendship.

(3) Civic friendship is the shared recognition and pursuit of self-sufficiency and goods integral to self-sufficiency.

(4) Civic friendship is normatively prior to justice in the specific sense that imperfect (civic) friendship is a precondition for, and perfect (civic) friendship the end of justice.

(5) Civic friendship is a network of groups of domestic friends that share, and is formed by, the project of creating and sustaining the life of political community.

(6) An integral virtue of the network of groups of friends is just generosity, which requires charity.

(7) The network of group of friends is comprised of, and must acknowledge, various degrees of interdependence.

(8) Friendship is a gift of grace.

Figure 1. A Twentieth Century Schema of Political Theology, and a Thomist Alternative.

	OLD POLITICAL THEOLOGY	NEW POLITICAL THEOLOGY	MODERN POLITICAL THOMISM
intellectual tradition	Quasi-Aristotelian	Augustinian	Aristotelian-Augustinian
principal agent	Sovereign	Individual citizens	Individual-in-community
essential act	Deciding the exception	Judging, critical witness	Sharing the life well lived, mutual ruling
function of politics	Protecting way of life against enemies	Restraining sin	Completeness and self-sufficiency
constitutive principle	Power, dominance, violence	Freedom, equality, rights	Natural law, virtues, common goods
political relation	Closed friendship	Open friendship	Open-yet-closed friendship

Here, Schmitt's schema of nineteenth century ideologies (see *The Concept of the Political*, 76) is applied to the paradigmatic cases of political theology in the twentieth century, using Moltmann's taxonomy. Concretely, the schema compares the idiosyncratic theoretical constructions of Old and New Political Theology in terms of a set of theoretical parameters, and presents a Thomist alternative mapped unto these parameters.

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Sources, Abbreviations, Translations

I use the translations listed in the table below. In the case of adaptations, I either reference the alternative translation, or provide Hebrew, Greek, or Latin transliterations — typically having made use of online resources like Persus Digital Library and The Latin Library. If the authorship of an abbreviated title is ambiguous, I provide the author's name (abbreviated with the first five letters, *e.g.* 'Apule.' for 'Apuleius'). Full details can be found in the bibliography below. I have used New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE) for Biblical citations.

Abbr.	Title	Translation
Apuleius		
Flor.	*Florida*	H. E. Butler 1909
Aquinas		
De reg.	*On Kingship*	G. B. Phelan 1949
De virtut.	*Disputed Questions on The Virtues*	E. M. Atkins 2005
Eth.	*Commentary on Aristotle's* NE	C. I. Litzinger 1993
Pol.	*Commentary on Aristotle's* Pol.	R. J. Reagan 2007
ST	*Summa Theologica*	Engl. Dominican Province 2009
Augustine		
b. coniug	*On the Good of Marriage*	C. T. Wilcox 1982
b. uita.	*On the Happy Life*	M. P. Foley 2021
trin.	*On the Trinity*	S. McKenna 1963
c. Acad.	*Against the Academics*	M. P. Foley 2019
conf.	*Confessions*	V. J. Bourke 1953
ciu.	*The City of God*	R. W. Dyson 1998
en. in Ps.	*Exposition of the Psalms*	J. E. Tweed 1888
ep.	*Letters*	W. Parsons 1951-55
ep. Io. tr.	*Tractates on the 1st Letter of John*	J. Gibb 1888
Jo. ev. tr.	*Sermons on the Gospel of John*	H. Browne 1888
ord.	*On Order*	M. P. Foley 2021
ord. mon.	*Regulations for a Monastery*	G. Lawless 1990
op. mon.	*On the Work of Monks*	H. Browne 1887

Aristotle		
EE	*Eudemian Ethics*	C. D. C. Reeve 2021
M.	*Metaphysics*	C. D. C. Reeve 2016
NE.	*Nicomachean Ethics*	C. D. C. Reeve 2023
Pol.	*Politics*	C. D. C. Reeve 2017
Cicero		
Amic.	*On Friendship*	W. A. Falconer 2014
Dom.	*On His House*	C. D. Yonge 1890
Leg.	*On Laws*	J. E. G. Zetzel 2017
Nat. D.	*On the Nature of the Gods*	P. G. Walsh 1997
Off.	*On Obligations*	P. G. Walsh 2016
Rep.	*On the Republic*	C. W. Keyes 2014
Diogenes Laertius		
8.	*Lives of Eminent Phil.*, Book 8	S. White 2020
Iamblichus		
VP	*Life of Pythagoras*	J. M. Dillon, J. P. Hershbell 1991
Plato		
Cl.	*Clitophon*	R. Waterfield 2005
Gorg.	*Gorgias*	R. Waterfield 2019
Leg.	*Laws*	T. Griffith 2016
Lys.	*Lysis*	R. Waterfield 2005
L.7	*Letter* 7	A. Helfer 2023
Men.	*Menos*	R. Waterfield 2005
Phdr.	*Phaedrus*	R. Waterfield 2002
Rep.	*Republic*	T. Griffith 2000
Symp.	*Symposium*	R. Waterfield 2019
Tht.	*Theaetetus*	J. McDowell 2014
Tim.	*Timaeus*	A. Gregory 2019
Porphyry		
VPlot	*Life of Plotinus*	L. Gerson 2017
VPyth	*Life of Pythagoras*	K. S. Guthrie 1987
Possidius		
VA	*Life of Augustine*	H. Theberath 1919

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