



# Reasons for Political Friendship

Cansu Hepçağlayan<sup>1</sup> 

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## Abstract

Scholarly curiosity about political friendship (the relationship of mutual care among political fellows) is increasing as liberal democracies around the world face radical polarization. Yet one worry persists: can political friendship really exist in contemporary democracies? The objective of this paper is to answer this question in the affirmative. To this end, I investigate whether members of modern polities have *reasons* to form friendly bonds with one another. The paper has four parts. The first establishes a fundamental desideratum that any consideration must satisfy to count as a reason for political fellows to partake in political friendship. The second evaluates and rejects a line of argument that presents bonds of mutual *identification* and *belonging* among political fellows as reasons for political friendship. The third evaluates and rejects a line of argument due to Paul Ludwig that presents the *shared utility* of political community as a reason for political fellows to engage in friendly practices with one another. Finally, I introduce my own novel argument—the “argument from membership”—for why political fellows have a reason to care for one another. I argue that *membership* in a functioning political community is indispensably valuable for any individual in virtue of playing a constitutive role in the individual’s attainment of their final ends. I hold that, as constituent parts of the same political community, political fellows have a reason to value one another and, accordingly, to care for one another’s well-being.

**Keywords** Political friendship · Civic friendship · Political community · Identification · Membership · Utility

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✉ Cansu Hepçağlayan  
cansuhep@bu.edu

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, Boston University, Massachusetts, USA

## 1 Introduction

As a reaction to alarming political polarization and civic enmity in the contemporary democracies, the notion of political friendship has recently been receiving unprecedented attention.<sup>1</sup> The emerging scholarship on political friendship has so far focused on two main tasks. The first one is to offer a coherent conception of political friendship by proposing a model of friendship that distinguishes it from the so-called “contemporary-affective” (Smith 2011: 1–15) model. This effort is a response to the critics who dismiss political friendship as an incoherent notion by claiming that the relations among political fellows necessarily lack the qualities that are essential to friendship, such as the bonds of intimacy, emotional connection, consent, or intrinsic value (Wellman 2001; Hope 2013; Jeske 2008). Smith (2019), for instance, offers a convincing solution to this worry by proposing three different models of friendship that can accommodate a distinctively ‘political’ type of friendship. And Hayden (2015) and Slomp (2021) suggest that a triadic model of friendship, on which the parties of friendship not only care for one another but also for the world ‘in-between’ that brought them together, better accommodates political friendship than the orthodox dyadic model.<sup>2</sup>

The second task with which the budding political friendship literature has preoccupied itself is to demonstrate the social and moral value of political friendship. Scholars have argued that friendly bonds among political fellows are indispensably valuable for a healthy political community, and some have accused modern liberalism of dissolving these bonds of friendship (see, for instance, MacIntyre 1981: 156). Schwarzenbach (2009) has given Aristotelian political friendship a feminist twist by defining it as ‘ethical reproductive *praxis*’ (activity) that is necessary for genuine justice. More recently, political friendship has received support even from some liberal thinkers. Georgieva (2015), for example, has presented political friendship as the solution to motivational problems of Rawlsian justice, and Talisse (2019) has argued that civic friendship can be a solution to the alarming political polarization and civic enmity in contemporary democracies.

There is, however, a third task of central importance to the topic of political friendship, one which has received exceedingly little attention in the contemporary literature on political friendship, and that is attempting to show that a type of friendship really *can* exist among political fellows of contemporary democratic states. This is a different task than the previous two, because even if it can be successfully shown that political friendship is a coherent notion, and that this notion refers to a relationship that is politically valuable, this does not guarantee that such a relationship can be realized in contemporary democratic polities. It is this third task that I attempt to undertake in this paper. The project is motivated by Healy’s (2011) worry that political friendship cannot really exist but is a mere “political metaphor” which is “unable to fulfill the function for which it was originally designed in Ancient Greece” (229). In her view, political friendship, as a type of friendship, would require a degree of intimacy among political fellows that can’t realistically be achieved in today’s large-scale cosmopolitan states. Scholars who have developed contemporary accounts of

<sup>1</sup> See Devere et al. (2010) for a comprehensive review of the scholarship on friendship as a political concept. Book-length treatises that pay attention to political friendship in the last twenty years include Allen (2004), Schwarzenbach (2009), Lister (2013) Digeser (2017), Ludwig (2020), Talisse (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Hayden (2015) says “...political friendship in a complete sense also requires befriending the world, namely, cherishing the presence of world as “in-between” and giving it, together with others, the same unflinching interest, concern, goodwill, respect and care for its own sake as we would any friend worthy of the name” (p. 16). I will discuss this view further in the fifth section.

political friendship, most notably Schwarzenbach and Ludwig, claim that a version of political friendship does exist in liberal democracies (Ludwig 2020: 13;15, Schwarzenbach 1996: 99), but they fail to provide a compelling explanation for why friendly relations can persist among members of modern states—or so I will argue. I take the concern about the practical possibility of political friendship seriously, given that all discussion on the value of political friendship is practically worthless if the bonds of political friendship cannot in fact be maintained among members of modern states.

The main objective of this paper is to motivate the idea that the conditions of the realization of political friendship exist in contemporary democratic communities. To this end, I investigate whether political fellows have readily available *reasons* to form friendly bonds with each other. Assuming that most persons are responsive to reasons, showing that political fellows have reasons to partake in political friendship amounts to a demonstration of the possibility of political friendship.

The paper proceeds in four sections. §2 briefly unpacks the account of political friendship I adopt throughout and establishes a fundamental desideratum that any consideration must satisfy to count as a reason for political fellows to partake in political friendship. §3 evaluates a line of argument that presents bonds of mutual identification and belonging among political fellows as reasons for political friendship, and it concludes that this “argument from identity” doesn’t provide a reason for political friendship that meets the pre-established desideratum. §4 examines whether the shared utility that political fellows derive from political community is a reason for them to engage in friendly practices with each other. I pay particular attention to Ludwig’s attempt to present activities of civic participation as sources of friendly feeling between political fellows, and I argue that while Ludwig’s “argument from utility” provides a sophisticated understanding of the origin of friendly sentiments in utility friendships, it still is insufficient to satisfy the desideratum. §5 introduces my own novel argument—the “argument from membership”—for why political fellows have a reason to care for one another. I argue that membership in a minimally just political community is indispensably valuable for any individual in virtue of its instrumental function in the individual’s attainment of their final ends. I hold that, as constituent parts of the same political community, political fellows have a reason to value one another and, accordingly, to care for one another’s well-being.

## 2 Desideratum

The account of political friendship I’m adopting is Aristotelian. In this it is in line with most of the emerging work on political friendship (Schwarzenbach 1996 and 2009; Leontsini 2013; Hayden 2015; Ludwig 2020). Alternative accounts of political friendship have been proposed, like Emerson’s (Scorza 2004), Kant’s and Marx’s (Brudney 2013), and Smith’s (Mallory 2017).

Aristotelian political friendship [henceforth just “political friendship”], like other types of Aristotelian friendship, must satisfy two conditions to count as such: (a) the parties must have mutual care and concern for each other’s well-being, i.e., they wish-well and do-well for one another for one another’s sake, and both parties must be aware of this mutual well-wishing [the *care condition*], (b) the relationship targets a shared good, which appears to be the cause of the mutual well-wishing [the *shared good condition*] (NE 1156a1-5).

The Aristotelian term for friendship, *philia*, has the verb *phileō* for its root, which means to love. *Philia* for Aristotle, accordingly, involves some form of affection between parties. Friends like each other. Yet mutual liking is only the beginning of friendship. For a full-fledged friendship, the affection and the mutual well-wishing must be accompanied by activities that reflect these positive emotions and intentions. In this sense, political friendship (*politikē philia*), as a form a *philia*, is a practice that has mutual liking as its proper sentiment.

A political friend is a person who takes basic interest in the well-being her political fellows and performs acts, when needed, to protect or increase her political fellows' well-being. The questions about the degree to which political friends wish-well or do-well is beyond the scope of this paper. Meanwhile, it is safe to assume that political friendship requires at least a minimal degree of well-wishing for the fellow political member *for the fellow political member's own sake*, and some corresponding acts. Friendly relations among political fellows are thereby distinguished from merely transactional relations, since, in my account, while the latter might include some well-wishing among the parties in order to protect the shared benefit, it doesn't involve wishing-well for the other party's own sake. This issue will be discussed more thoroughly in Section IV.

Aristotle contrasts political friendship with faction (*NE* 1155a25). Unlike faction, which includes wishing-well and doing-well for *some* of one's political fellows and not others, political friendship is all-encompassing. This aspect of political friendship is strongly emphasized within the political friendship literature, since the social goods that are taken to be achieved via political friendship, such as social unity and political stability, depend on wide-spread and inclusive, as opposed to partial and exclusive, care practices among political fellows. Accordingly, if there is political friendship in a polity, at least in its paradigmatic form, then a form of friendship should hold among *all* political fellows.

My task in this paper to investigate whether there is a reason for political fellows to engage in friendly practices as described. This reason, if it exists, should be a reason *for all political fellows to minimally wish-well and, when needed, do-well to each other without discrimination.*<sup>3</sup> Call this "the desideratum."

### 3 The Argument from Identity

This section investigates whether the bonds of belonging and identification constitute a reason for political friendship that meets the desideratum. Linking the bonds of belonging and identification to a caring disposition among political fellows requires two basic ideas: (a) identification is a reason for care, and (b) one identifies with one's political fellows.

There is a long and venerable tradition behind the idea that one loves one's own. A friend is another self (*NE* 1170b6), Aristotle says, suggesting that what we love in another is the part that is akin to us. In the *Lysis*, Socrates concludes, after many attempts to define friendship, that we only love our own (*to oikeion*; 221e). The central idea behind these claims is

<sup>3</sup> This reason can be overridden by other reasons, of course. Say, if any of one's political fellows actively harms one, then it is only reasonable for one not to wish-well or do-well for this harmful person. Or one might care to a greater degree for some members of their polity over the others, like their family members and friends.

that identifying with other individuals, considering them as an extension of ourselves motivate us to love, and accordingly care for, them.

Sandel (1982), along with other communitarian thinkers, emphasizes the causal impact of our social attachments in the formation of our identity. The social attachments we have inevitably factor into the development of our sense of self, as a person with these or those values, aims, and commitments. Ultimately, these *constitutive attachments* become fundamental to how we understand ourselves, with respect both to how we identify and want to be recognized as persons and to our values and commitments.

Constitutive attachments and group identity, one might think, can be useful in explaining the motivation behind friendly practices among members of identity groups. Given that identity groups are constituted by people who identify with each other on the basis of a shared property, this identification can be a reason for them to wish-well and do-well to each other.<sup>4</sup> After all, people with whom we identify are special people for us: they are, in a sense, extensions of our own self. It's possible for people who identify with each other to value one another in virtue of this this identification, and, correspondingly, to engage in friendly practices of wishing-well and doing well.

This type of reasoning, although not always explicit or formulated in exactly the same terms, has been commonly used by political philosophers to explain the motivation behind the non-transactional relations among compatriots. Taylor, for instance, uses identification in describing patriotism: "Patriotism is a common identification with a historical community founded on certain values", he maintains, "the essential condition of a free (non-despotic) regime is that citizens have deeper patriotic identification" (Taylor 1989: 170; 178). Yael Tamir defines national membership, which involves practices of responsibility and solidarity among fellow nationals, with respect to identification: national membership "involves a readiness to adopt national culture as well as to exhibit a sense of identification with, and responsibility toward, other members of the same national group" (Tamir 1993: 27). Joseph Raz maintains that acquiring the disposition to recognize and act according to special responsibilities towards fellow compatriots is "likely to be the product of a gradual process as lengthy as the process of acquiring a sense of belonging to a community and identifying with it" (Raz 1986: 98).

The critical question of this section is whether we can use a similar pattern of reasoning to show that political fellows have a reason to engage in friendly practices with each other. The following argument is an attempt to present identity relations as a reason for political friendship:

- (11) If group members share a common identity, then they have a reason to engage in friendly practices with one another in virtue of their shared identity.
- (12) Political fellows share a common identity.
- (13) Therefore, political fellows have a reason to engage in friendly practices.

The argument suggests that identifying with one's polity and with other members of one's polity constitutes a reason for the political members to engage in non-transactional activities that are in the interest either of their group in general or of their political fellows in particu-

<sup>4</sup> The argument here is limited to voluntary personal identification. People who are ascribed to a certain identity but doesn't identify with it probably do not wish-well or do-well to the other members of this identity group.

lar. I don't intend to object to this core idea. Nonetheless, in the rest of this section I will argue that identification cannot be the proper reason for political friendship.

Let's first assess the plausibility of I2. Do members of modern states share a common identity? They all share the property of being a member of their country. So, there is at least one membership relation they all have in common. And for many, being a member of country X, e.g., being American, can be an identity-carving relation: it is apt to be a part of how one defines who one is. However, there are conceivably many others who do not consider their membership in a polity to be identity-carving. They might think that they have incidental bonds with the country of which they are a member and don't take it to be a defining mark of who they are. After all, sharing a property with other members of a group of people doesn't mean that one necessarily shares a common identity with them. Being tall, for instance, at least in many cases, doesn't make tall people identify with other tall people. Likewise, political fellows who share the property of being a member of country X with one another don't have to identify with one another. In fact, we would expect this tendency of not considering one's country as identity-carving to increase in the future in proportion with the increasing globalism that allows people to be members of multiple countries. Thus, it seems like the second premise, which states that political fellows share a common identity, doesn't hold universally.

Even though some people do not consider their political membership as a part of who they are, there certainly are others who consider it as such. One might claim that identity can be a reason for those who identify with their polity to engage in political friendship. Nationality can be additional property that political members have in common, especially for members of nation states, and to the extent that they identify with their nation, they might consider their national identity as a reason to partake in political friendship. Although I do not deny that identification with one's polity and/or nation can constitute a reason for political fellows to mutually wish-well and do-well for one another's sake, it cannot be the reason that we are seeking. This is because it fails to meet our pre-established desideratum.

The reason we are seeking *should motivate all political fellows to minimally wish-well and, when needed, do-well to each other without discrimination*. Identification doesn't motivate *all* political members to engage in friendly practices with their political fellows; it motivates only those who identify with their polity. Further, if some political fellows identify with one another in virtue of their shared nationality, then this identification can only motivate them to engage in friendly practices with their fellow nationals rather than the broader political community. This would violate the no-discrimination clause of the desideratum. Finally, assuming that no state is formed entirely by persons of same nationality, identification on the basis of nationality can in fact be harmful for wide-spread political friendship since people who are excluded from the friendly practices among fellow nationals might be demotivated to partake in wide-spread political friendship.

In conclusion, the argument from identity fails to demonstrate that there is a reason for political friendship that meets the desideratum. In the next section, I will evaluate the argument from utility.

## 4 The Argument from Utility

It is commonly acknowledged that for Aristotle political friendship is a type of utility friendship (Cooper 1977, 1987; Schwarzenbach 1996, 2009; Kalimtzis 2000; Leonstini 2013; Ludwig 2020). In this section, I will first explain why political friendship constitutes a version of utility friendship in the Aristotelian sense. I will then argue that the fact that political friendship is a utility friendship doesn't straightforwardly entail that shared utility is a sufficient reason for parties to wish-well and do-well for the other's sake. To this end, I will evaluate Ludwig's (2020) attempt to present the lovability of utility as a reason for friendly practices among political fellows. I will conclude that the utility argument fails to generate a reason for political friendship that meets the desideratum.

Aristotelian political friendship, which is a relationship that holds exclusively between citizens of a city (*polis*), is a type of utility friendship. The friendship between citizens "is constituted in the fullest degree on the principle of *utility*", Aristotle holds, because "the individual's lack of *self-sufficiency* makes these unions permanent" (*EE* 1242a7; my emphasis). This idea is misconstrued, however, if one takes the mentioned utility simply as utility provided by the commercial interactions among citizens. Aristotle's understanding of civic affection is deeply intertwined with his social ontological commitments. Aristotle holds that what a human individual is, her corresponding functions and capacities, cannot be properly understood without a reference to the political community. The reason for this is that the capacities whose activation is necessary to a flourishing human life require individuals to belong to a political community.

Aristotle has good reasons to think this. Humans are born with political capacities: they are able to cooperate with other individuals to attain a *common good*. They can conceptualize individual and common advantages and just and unjust forms of cooperation. Further, language makes humans political in "a greater measure" than other animals who can form cooperative relations, because it enables them to indicate "the advantageous and the harmful" and "the just and the unjust" (*Pol.* 1253a15-16) to a more advanced degree than mere vocal or bodily language, which other animals use for cooperation. This ability to be directed upon a shared good, to participate in the collective practices of attaining it, and to be able to conceptualize and communicate the fair and expedient rules of these practices appear to be characteristically human. The impetus for collective activity "is present in all men by nature" (1253a30); and this capacity gets fully activated in a partnership which is "virtually self-sufficient": the city. Citizenship appears to be the most advanced exercise of one's political capacities because the political union of free citizens of the city is virtually self-sufficient and sustainable.

Further, Aristotle holds, humans have ethical capacities that can only be fully activated when one belongs to a political community. "It is the special property of man in distinction of other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things makes ... a city-state" (1253a15-18). The political community makes the learning, habituation, and exercise of virtues possible for individuals: the values that we might possibly have and the ethical ideals we might pursue are dependent on our belonging to a political community that creates and practices these values and ideals.

Moreover, the social roles that an individual can possibly have and the ends that an individual can pursue for herself, such as being a shoemaker, a poet, a soldier, or a philosopher,

require a political community that institutes and thereby recognizes these roles. Such communal recognition and institution are necessary for these ends to be presented to the individual as genuine possibilities that she might realize for herself. We might think that individuals can make a shoe or write a poem by themselves, but being a *shoemaker* or a *poet*, qua social roles, are only possible when there is a political community that adopts these roles.

For all these reasons, Aristotle thinks that the *individual* is dependent on *political community*. Thus, when Aristotle says that political friendship is “constituted in the fullest degree on the principle of *utility*”, because “the individual’s lack of *self-sufficiency* makes these unions permanent”, the utility he refers to is utility in the deepest sense: the irreplaceable instrumental function of political community for the individual to live a genuinely human life. Since this utility is the good that is shared by citizens, political friendship can be considered a specific, a far more basic, type of friendship of utility.

Therefore, the relationship between political members, in the Aristotelian framework, satisfies the *shared good condition* of friendship. But this is not enough for the relationship between political members to count as friendship proper. If a form of friendship exists among political members, even if this friendship is a type of utility friendship, it also has to satisfy the *care condition*, i.e., the parties must wish-well and do-well for one another for one another’s sake. One might think that if a relationship satisfies the *shared good condition*, there must be at least a minimal degree of mutual well-wishing that stems from one’s own interest, because if one party is no longer capable of participating in the relationship due to the problems in their life, the other party will be precluded from the goods that the relationship brings. If my roommate is incapable of paying her rent, I will also get in trouble, so I wish well for them in their business. This effort to present the *care condition* as a logical consequence of the conjunction of the *shared good condition* with another premise about the desirability of self-interest fails. For one thing, there is no guarantee that what brings one party greater interest in a relationship is the other party’s well-being. In exploitative relationships, the misery of one party actually advantages the other one, like in some employer-employee relationships and abusive romantic relationships. Further, even if in some relationships one’s own immediate self-interest may incentivize them to wish-well to the other party, the extent of this well-wishing would be limited by one’s self interest and would continue only if the expected interest sustains. If I care about my roommate only for the sake of maintaining the apartment that we share, then I wouldn’t care if she breaks her leg. If I were sure that her family will cover her rent, I would no longer need to care about her success in business. So, *the shared good condition* doesn’t always imply *the care condition*, and when it does, it only does so partially and temporarily.

We have good reasons to think that this immediately self-interested, partial, and temporary well-wishing doesn’t fulfill the *care condition* (Schwarzenbach 2009). Cooper (1987) makes a convincing case that Aristotelian friendships, at least the non-ideal forms, are “a complex and subtle mixture of self-seeking and unself-interested well-wishing and well-doing” (626). The tension Cooper tries to resolve is caused by two seemingly in-tension statements Aristotle makes on the same page: “we ought to wish our friend well for his own sake” (*NE* 1155b31), and “friends whose affection is based on utility do not love each other in themselves, but insofar as some benefit accrues to them from each other” (1156a12). These two sentences become inconsistent only if one equivocates between “wishing someone well for their own sake” and “loving someone in themselves”. Friendships of utility are grounded in some mutual benefit, not in the character of the parties. This is to say, if I am



utility-friends with my local grocery shop owner, Joe, my friendship with Joe is grounded on the transactional relations that benefit both of us. Joe and I didn't become friends because we like each other's characters. If Joe retires and his granddaughter takes his place, Joe and I probably won't continue to be friends, since the good that ties us together will disappear. Here is the twist, though: just because I became friends with Joe in order to maintain a personal advantage, it doesn't mean that I can't wish him well for his own sake. If Joe asks me to help his granddaughter with her Ph.D. application, I may gladly do so in order to make him happy without calculating an advantage in return. And I'm sure if one day I ask him to help me carry a piece of furniture upstairs, he wouldn't hesitate to give me a hand, and this probably wouldn't be because he thinks helping me would make me buy more apples from him. Caring on the grounds of utility doesn't mean caring in order to get utility.

Given that wishing-well and doing-well for a fellow friends cannot be reduced to self-seeking reasons, how can the utility of political community be a reason for political fellows to engage in friendly practices? Ludwig responds to this question with an appeal to the concept of activity. Drawing on the Kantian idea that "whoever practices doing good comes to love the one he has benefited", Ludwig argues that engaging in useful activities tend to make benefactors like beneficiaries:

[B]y investing part of themselves in others, benefactors create a stake in others which they feel they own. In this way, doing good to others creates oneness, and expanded identity inclusive of others. Becoming active with, or on behalf of, others is at once a way making ourselves useful and a way of using others to attain a bigger self, a blend that brings classical friendship withing hailing distance of a more modern, altruistic ideal.<sup>5</sup>

By engaging in useful activities that benefit both parties, Ludwig holds, people might cultivate feelings of attachment and belonging to the people whom they benefit and are benefitted from. The assumption, which is almost the same assumption we presented in the argument from identity in the last section, is that feelings of attachment and belonging will translate into well-wishing and well-doing for the other party, and hence give parties a reason to engage in friendly practices with their benefactors.

However, this version of the argument from utility, the argument from utility with an identitarian twist, if I may so call it, is not only vulnerable to the objections that are presented in the previous section, but also expands the range of identification problematically. Performing activities in which we use and make ourselves useful to some doesn't seem to be in itself a reason for identifying with those people. Suppose a hairdresser, Jane, gives me a pretty good haircut and I tip her in exchange. We thus have both performed acts that benefit each other. Yet this transaction doesn't in itself seem to be a reason for me to identify with Jane, to consider her as one of "my people". If I get multiple haircuts from Jane, and if during these haircuts we get to know each other and have a pleasant conversation, perhaps we start to enjoy each other's company and to like each other. If that happens, I might start to consider Jane as one of "my people", in Ludwig's terms, a part of my larger self. But when this identification happens, it is hardly in virtue of the utility we provided for each other. It's completely comprehensible that we might have the same transactional relations with multiple people over time and not develop any sense of identification with them. What

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig 2020, p. 73.

makes Jane in this case one of “my people” is that we developed a human connection over time *while* performing activities that are useful to both of us. The fact that the transactional activities provided the environment for us to get know each other better doesn’t mean that we developed a sense of identification, in a very weak sense of the term, in virtue of these transactional activities.

How does any of these translate into the relationship between political fellows? “Civic friendship is a natural outgrowth of civic participation” (127), Ludwig holds. Unfortunately, it isn’t clear what Ludwig means by ‘civic participation’. I will take the phrase to refer to a wide range of practices aimed at maintaining and one’s political community and its institutions, including participating in the democratic election of its public representatives, holding public offices, organizing public events, occupying roles in civic organizations, volunteering for public service, donating money and goods for political fellows who are in need, attending peaceful democratic protests, engaging in public debates, etc. Ludwig holds that when one invests oneself in such practices of civic participation, one will develop feelings of belonging and identification with one’s political community:

Anything we work hard for feels like ours. Cutting off anyone or anything in which we have invested our energies—Aristotle would say our life—feels like a little suicide, an amputation. Economists who think unemotionally about these things, warn us against pursuing ‘sunk costs.’ Never throw good money after bad. The whole premise of civic friendship may be said to be an irrational love of sunk costs.<sup>6</sup>

Although he maintains that civic friendship is a friendship of utility, when it comes to the reasons of care among political fellows Ludwig is no longer talking about the value of the utility that we receive. He instead focuses on the value of the utility that we provide: the psychological impact of investing our time and energy in practices of civic participation. As we become more invested in our community, he holds, we will identify more with our political community. When we identify with our political community, we have a reason to partake in political friendship (the argument from identity). His argument can be formulated as:

- (U1) Engaging in the activities of beneficence makes the benefactor identify with the beneficiary.
- (U2) Civic participation is an activity of beneficence towards one’s political community.
- (U3) Therefore, engaging in activities of civic participation makes the participant identify with one’s political community.
- (U4) A person who identifies with one’s political community has a reason to engage in friendly practices with one’s political fellows.
- (U5) Therefore, political fellows who engage in activities of civic participation come to have a reason to engage in friendly practices.

This reason clearly doesn’t meet the desideratum. Not everyone gets involved in practices of public participation, whether because of lack of interest or lack of time and resources. Grounding care for one’s political fellows in the engagement in activities of public participation excludes those who don’t perform these activities from partaking in political friendship. This violates the “from all to all” aspect of the desideratum.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Second, some activities of civic participation, such as volunteering for public service, donating money and goods to political fellows who are in need, attending peaceful democratic protests, etc., are practices of political friendship, i.e., they are performed as a result of extant political friendship relations among political fellows. It's hard to see why anyone would participate in these activities if they haven't already wished-well for their political fellows and haven't been motivated to perform acts that are in their political fellows' interests. Thus, it seems to me that the effort to ground political friendship in civic participation faces another crucial challenge: how can we explain the motivation behind some activities of civic participation without building political friendship into the account of what motivates participation in the first place?

Third, Ludwig's account doesn't provide a clear explanation for how identifying with one's country via practices of civic participation generates love for one's political fellows (U4). Ludwig's account of how engagement generates affection is clearer in the case of personal relationships: the more I invest in my relationship with Jane the hairdresser, the likelier it becomes that I consider her as one of "my people". As we saw above, this is, at least partially, because I have spent time with Jane and have gotten to know her. But in this respect personal relations are importantly disanalogous with civic participation, since we ever only interact with some subset of our political fellows, and in some cases, like voting, we don't need to get in touch with any of them. Even granting that the energy we invest in acts of civic participation in most cases motivates us to identify with our polity in an abstract sense, it is hard to see how this identification translates into care for particular political fellows. Political friendship, after all, is a relationship between political fellows, not a relationship between the individual and the abstract idea of a state. Although I do not deny that there is a relationship between valuing one's country and valuing one's political fellows, the nature of this relationship must be explicated. Otherwise, it is hard to see why identification with one's polity in an abstract sense can motivate individuals to engage in friendly practices with their political fellows. Making this relationship explicit will be one of the tasks of the next section.

In sum, Ludwig's argument from utility doesn't generate a reason for political friendship that meets the desideratum. Nevertheless, it still provides an important insight into the psychology of belonging and identification. I deny neither that acts of benevolence can generate a feeling of identification of the benefactor toward the beneficiary, nor that feelings of belonging and identification can generate affection. Ludwig's argument from utility can provide a cogent explanation for the generation of friendly feelings in personal utility friendships. However, the argument fails, for the aforementioned reasons, to supply a reason for an all-encompassing account of political friendship.

## 5 The Argument from Membership

This section argues that the value of political membership gives political fellows a reason to wish-well and do-well for one another *qua* parts of their political community. In the previous section, I argued that for Aristotle the political community plays an indispensable instrumental role in enabling any individual to live a genuinely human life. Even if one reserves doubt about the particular details of the Aristotelian argument in the previous section, I argue that it is virtually uncontroversial that membership in a political community

has indispensable instrumental value for all of the members of that communities, in virtue of providing them access to the types of material, social, and political resources that are necessary for them to pursue a good life. However, before we start, it is important to clarify my usage of ‘political community’ by distinguishing it from more amorphous notions such as ‘society’ and more specific ideas such as ‘state’. This step is especially important given that in the last thirty years ‘political community’ is defined in various incompatible ways which make it hard to have a unified conception of the term.<sup>7</sup>

What I aim to achieve by an appeal to the idea of ‘political community’ is to grasp a sense of political association that is distinguished from, on the one hand, (a) the specific idea of the ‘state’, whose definition does not necessarily involve a reference to the horizontal relations between the individual constituents of a political association, and on the other, (b) the broad idea of ‘society’, which is not necessarily defined with respect to the *political* relations among its constituents. Accordingly, I take the political community to be an organized *social group* whose members jointly and consistently contribute to the maintenance of the *political* institutions in which they individually and collectively do or can take interest.<sup>8</sup> In democratic polities, which we focus on this paper, the political institutions include the three main branches of democratic governance, i.e., the legislative, executive, and the judicial institutions, and all other public institutions that are funded by the ‘people’ in a given political association, such as institutions of public transportation, public education, and public healthcare.

This understanding of political community is thin and, at least *prima facie*, compatible with the liberal conception of political association, because it does not presuppose a shared set of beliefs, values, or identities among the constituents of the political community. It is also appropriately inclusive because it does not define political membership with respect to citizenship entitlement, but with respect to a continuous contribution to the political institutions. Permanent residents and non-naturalized immigrants in a country are all members of that country’s political community, on this account, since by participating in the civic life they inevitably contribute to and take interest in political institutions of that community.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Rawls, for instance, reserves the term political community for homogenous societies in which citizens endorse a particular moral, religious, or philosophical doctrine and therefore have a shared worldview (1993: 40–43). Political community, defined as such, is incompatible with liberal values: “Liberalism rejects political society as community because, among other things, it leads to systematic denial of basic liberties and may allow the oppressive use of the government’s monopoly of (legal) force” (Rawls 1993: 146n). However, notice that Rawls’ understanding of political community is very specific and narrow, and it has been criticized by Kakuthas (1996) for this reason: “[w]hile collections of individuals must share something to be recognized as communities, they do not need to share as much as a “comprehensive doctrine”” (89). Kakuthas defines ‘political community’ as a “an association of individuals who share an understanding of what is public and what is private within that association” (85). Accordingly, what makes an association a community is the fact that its members have shared understanding of the matters of public concern. More recently, Lister (2013) has suggested that political community is a social group whose members are jointly committed to the public reason (131).

<sup>8</sup> This definition of political community is instance of what Plant (1990) called “partial communities” (13), i.e., groups related by shared interests, as opposed to by shared localities or a direct concern for the common good.

<sup>9</sup> In the second chapter of *The Spheres of Justice*, Walzer (1983) advocates for a similarly inclusive conception of political membership by drawing on the Athenian ‘metics’ in Ancient Greece, i.e., non-citizen immigrants who lack political recognition but nonetheless participate to the Athenian economics significantly. Walzer draws an analogy between the Athenian metics and contemporary guest workers. He argues the people who make the communal life possible deserve membership rights in that community.

Political members take interest in the political institutions because the services provided by the political institutions constitute the necessary infrastructure for the production, maintenance, and distribution of material, social, and political goods that are necessary for a flourishing human life. Many social groups and institutions, such as shops, firms, private institutions of education, healthcare, and entertainment, religious and intellectual communities, local communities, NGOs, and charity organizations, all rely on the laws, regulations, and services that are maintained by political institutions to continue their practices. From roads to law making, from planning of public spaces to traffic regulation, from democratic elections to public water and sewage systems, the services enabled by the larger political community provide infrastructure necessary for individuals to exercise their intellectual, social, and political capacities, which in turn are necessary for those individuals to pursue a good life. In this sense, political community, and by extension political membership, make a more fundamental and necessary contribution to the individual's attainment of their final ends than do many other instrumental goods.

One might wonder why I have used the term 'political community' instead of 'political society' if there is no strong unifying feature typically associated with the idea of a community, such as a shared set of beliefs and/or values, linking political members? I believe that the political members' shared interest in and joint contribution to the political institutions are sufficiently unifying features to make that group a community. The interest is *shared* in the sense that political institutions not only provide the necessary infrastructure for individuals to pursue their own interests but also enable them to contribute to the collective interest of their political community as a whole through public decision making. The contribution is *joint* in the sense that the political institutions could not be maintained if everyone, individually tried to participate in the political institutions rather than as a structured group. The maintenance of the political institutions is a necessarily collective and structured effort. Accordingly, a political community is an organized social group, i.e., it is not a mere mereological sum of its parts of which it consists—but its parts stand in certain relations with each other *qua* parts of the political community.

The next step is to establish the proper relationship between the political community and its members. I hold that the members of a political community are its *proper parts*, as are other objects relevant for its location and functioning, such as geographic regions, institutions, and so on. One might doubt, however, that the members of a political community are really parts of that community. For instance, in his criticism of MacIntyre, Simon Hope suggests that the state should be conceptualized as an institutional structure that exists independently of the individuals who constitute it (Hope 2013: 40). But I maintain that while the institutions that compose any governing body simply count among the proper parts of the wider whole which we call the political community, their mereological sum is not identical with the community. Hope may be right in claiming that institutions are individuated by the kind of function which they fulfill instead of the individuals they temporarily consist of, but the same idea doesn't apply to political communities understood as social groups. The idea that social groups have their constituents as proper parts is widely acknowledged in the social ontology literature.<sup>10</sup>

Given that the political community is fundamentally and indispensably valuable for its members, and given that it has its members as proper parts, the claim that political members have reasons to engage in political friendship can be established via the following argument:

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Gilbert (1989) and Fine (2020).

- (M1) The political community, as a social group, is fundamentally and indispensably valuable for all its members.
- (M2) All members of a political community are proper parts of this political community.
- (M3) If a social group is valuable for any individual, then the proper parts of this social group are also valuable for this individual.
- (M4) Therefore, political members have a reason to value their political fellows.
- (M5) A person who has a reason to value another individual has a reason to minimally wish-well and, when needed, do well for this individual.
- (M6) Therefore, members of a political community have a reason to involve in friendly practices, as defined, with their political fellows.

This argument, which I call the *argument from membership*, suggests that the value of political membership should constitute a sufficient reason for political members to partake in political friendship. The reason to wish-well and do-well for one's political fellows is grounded in the indispensable value of the political institutions that political fellows jointly maintain.

I will briefly defend some premises from possible objections. One might reject the transitivity of value as described in (M3). In this view, the fact that X is valuable for me doesn't necessitate that the constituent parts of X are valuable for me. For instance, one might claim, water is valuable for one, but hydrogen is not. I think this objection rests on an equivocation between "X is valuable for Y" and "Y ascribes value to X". It's possible that Y fails to ascribe value to hydrogen when Y ascribes value to water, either because Y doesn't know hydrogen is a constituent of water, or Y doesn't really think about constituent parts of water. But given that hydrogen is a constituent part of water, and given that water is valuable for Y, hydrogen must be valuable for Y, no matter Y acknowledges it or not.

One might think (M4) doesn't follow from (M1), (M2), and (M3), because the fact that something is "valuable" doesn't mean that any agent has a reason to "value" that thing. I might think that opera is valuable for this and that reason, but this judgment in and of itself doesn't seem to give *me* a reason to actively value opera. Correspondingly, one might hold, the fact that fellow political members are valuable for one doesn't give one a reason to value them. The problem with objection is that it wrongly identifies "being valuable" with "being valuable for one". The fact opera is valuable according to some objective criteria might not give me a reason to value opera, but the fact that opera is valuable *for me* certainly gives me a reason to value opera, which is precisely the reason that it is valuable for me. So, if one's political fellows are valuable for one, one has a reason to value them.

My argument from membership is in line with Hayden's (2015) triadic conception of friendship. Hayden has argued that the dyadic understanding of political friendship, which is conceived as a "positive intersubjective experience of relation-to-self and relation-to-other," (2) is incomplete because it ignores the relations of interest, concern, and care for the common world in between the parties. His account, similarly to my own, draws on the importance of the utility of political community for an Aristotelian conception of political friendship, and Hayden criticizes the theorist of political friendship for ignoring this fact.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "Despite the notion that, according to Aristotle, friends have something "in common," and the stress he places on maintaining the norms, laws, and institutions making up a political community as integral to the utility of political friendship, theorists of political friendship have paid the phenomenon of a *common world* little if any attention" (Hayden 2015: 7).

He rightly points out that in political friendship, the mutual care among involved parties is not grounded in the value of the parties in themselves, but in the utility that they create by participating in a mutually beneficial relationship. Thus political friendship necessarily includes a “third dimension” of shared utility that is mutually cherished by the involved parties because any relation of political friendship depends for its very existence on the involved parties’ recognition of this mutually cherished utility. Hayden’s account and my own, however, differ in our characterization of this third dimension. Hayden adopts a broad characterization of this necessary third dimension as the *world* in between political members: “we can understand a world, in political terms, as a precondition for the interpersonal recognition including friendship” (11). Yet this characterization does not specify which features of the world-in-between would need to be recognized by political fellows to give rise to political friendship. My argument from membership works with a more nuanced understanding of this third dimension whose value needs to be recognized by the political friends: on my account, this third dimension is the political community, understood as an organized *social group* whose members jointly and consistently contribute to the maintenance of the *political* institutions in which they individually and collectively do or can take interest. The recognition of the utility of the political community for all of its members constitutes reason enough for political fellows to care for one another *qua* parts of the political community.

My account has several advantages over its rivals. First and foremost, the proposed reason for political friendship satisfies the desideratum: it gives a reason to all political fellows to minimally wish-well and, when needed, do-well to all of their political fellows without discrimination. Second, it doesn’t require reference to any other intermediary psychological explanations, like feelings of identification and belonging. In this sense, the reason I propose is more apt for contemporary polities, in which all-encompassing feelings of identification and belonging become increasingly rare. Besides this, the feelings of identification and belonging can be too unstable and unreliable to provide a robust ground for political friendship, whereas the value of political membership, in comparison, is lasting. Third, my account introduces political friendship as a *basic* relation among political members, where a ‘basic relation’ is a relation the obtaining of which is directly explained by the structure of the polity and does not explanatorily depend on any particular polity’s incidental characteristics. Accordingly, the relations of political friendship partially constitute an account of the structure of the polity insofar as they characterize the relations its members stand in with each other *qua* parts of the polity.

A potential challenge to the membership argument is that it is epistemically too demanding. Someone might have a reason to value something and yet fail to value it simply because of an epistemic failure to notice the reason. So, this objection goes, the fact that political members have a reason to value their political fellows doesn’t guarantee that they in fact value them. And since political fellows have a reason to partake in political friendship only if they value one another, it follows that if they fail to value to one another then they don’t have a reason to partake in political friendship. The argument from membership thus comes with a *cognitive* requirement: it establishes that political members have a reason to partake in political friendship only if they *acknowledge* both the value of their political community and the value of their political fellows *qua* the polity’s constituent parts. The previous accounts that we have discussed aren’t susceptible to this problem, since they ground the motivation for friendly practices in the feelings of belonging and identification, not in a value judgment.

I nonetheless suggest that the argument from membership, despite the cognitive requirement attached to it, still provides a plausible ground for political friendship. This is because the evaluative achievement in question, i.e., recognizing the value of one's political community and its constituent parts, is not a particularly difficult one. The advantages of our collective union with our political fellows are, for the most part, apparent to us. Life without the material, social, and political resources provided by the political community, life in a so called "state of nature", is practically inconceivable for most of us. Further, we still, to this day, regrettably witness the devastating consequences suffered by the members of dissolved political communities, such as the members of polities that undergo faction and civil war. It is easy to notice that the members of these dissolved communities are left with little to no chance of pursuing good lives unless they seek membership in another political community, by pursuing residence or citizenship in another country, for instance, or participating in the process of building a new political community, etc. Both options are very difficult to pursue for most people and, in most cases, require years to achieve the intended outcome. This readily available information about the difficulties faced by the members of dissolved political communities provides powerful *prima facie* evidence into the value of membership in a healthy political community. This being so, it is hard to maintain that the membership argument is epistemically too demanding.

In conclusion, the membership argument shows that the value of political membership provides a reason for political members to partake in political friendship. I thus suggest, *contra* Ludwig, that political friendship isn't an "irrational love of sunk costs": it is a rational love of what is valuable.

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