

University of Lynchburg

Digital Showcase @ University of Lynchburg

Undergraduate Theses and Capstone Projects

Spring 5-2020

A Search for Aristotelian Political Friendship in Thomas Jefferson's Ideal American Regime

Christopher Hiatt O'Connor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalshowcase.lynchburg.edu/utcp>



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

A Search for Aristotelian Political Friendship
in Thomas Jefferson's Ideal American Regime

Christopher Hiatt O'Connor

Senior Honors Thesis

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the graduation requirements
of the Westover Honors College**

Westover Honors College

May, 2020

Timothy Meinke, PhD

Nicolas Frank, PhD

Elizabeth Savage, PhD

Abstract

In this project, I elucidate the presence of Aristotelian political friendship within Thomas Jefferson's ideal American regime. The project considers the aspects of Aristotle's political thought that are relevant to political friendship, and draws parallels to Jefferson's political philosophy through: (1) the organization of the regime and its citizens (the constitution and construction of the regime, the class demographics of its citizens, etc.); and (2) the philosophical principles that inform the aim(s) and end (telē) of the regime.

Despite notable differences between their political philosophies--such as Jefferson's inclusion of Christian moral philosophy in his thought--I conclude that Jefferson's attempts to harmonize the salient aims of modern liberalism and classical republicanism is what creates the space for Aristotelian political friendship in Jefferson's conceptual regime.

Introduction

There is a predominant view that Aristotelian political thought has been made moot by the evolutions of the Moderns, such as Hobbes and Locke. Classical republicanism held that the primary aim of the regime ought to be the cultivation of a virtuous citizenry, through political participation within a mutually understood common aim, which allowed each citizen to live well. This has been altered by modern liberalism's understanding of a more limited regime: a government ought to be designed only to protect each individual's natural rights and liberties, with political participation and cooperation set aside for this protection of the individual and the pursuit of their own interests. The implications of this change of aims, are far reaching and pervasive: have we moved beyond the ancients; is there nothing else left to learn from them? To leave these questions and others like it unanswered would be greatly harmful to our understanding of our current political context(s) and construction(s), and of our nature as human beings. Where could one go, then, to look well and take stock of this, while also answering our primary question?

The American Revolution is a microcosm of political philosophy unlike any other. In it, we may observe the philosophical roots (both classical and modern) that motivated it, and thus see with clarity the prudent approaches of its founding statesmen in creating a well-founded regime. Thomas Jefferson is, among his contemporaries, the closest to what one may call a political philosopher. His public and private writings demonstrate that he had long ruminated on the nature of man and politics: what makes a *good* regime; what constitutes a *good* life; what *ought* to be the aim of the government? Jefferson believed in a unique republicanism, one that can be called his own. Much like classical republicanism, Jeffersonian republicanism saw its citizens as willing and able to self-govern. This is made possible by their capacity for virtue, mutual self-respect of each others' rights, and a love of liberty - all of which are grasped through political cooperation and self-governance. These citizens would necessarily share an understanding of their common wants and common aims, allowing each to deliberate well about what is best for both themselves and what is shared.

These essential ideas appear to have strong parallels to Aristotelian political thought. A notable difference comes with Aristotle holding political friendship (*politikē philia*), specifically, as a central feature of what makes a good regime. It, in short, is generative to harmony and like-mindedness (*homonoia*) among citizens, and thus helps to sustain the peaceful self-governance of the regime. Political friendship, in tandem with a virtuous citizenry with well-aimed civic practices, makes possible the self-governance -- and the living well -- of citizens

It can be difficult to discern parallels between Aristotle and Jefferson, within the latter's political and philosophical thought. Some argue that, on a larger scale, friendship among citizens was not even indirectly present as a goal of the Founding, for "no theorist of the modern period explicitly argued that furthering *philia* is a primary function of the state" (Schwarzenbach 1996,

108). Others agree that Jefferson's political and ethical thought is firmly attributable to Locke, Hume, Sydney, and other Modern thinkers (Appleby 1976; Erkkila 2007). Did Jefferson, being a Modern thinker, not see value in the cultivation and use of friendship among citizens? On the contrary, I argue that Jeffersonian political thought, and its focus on social cooperation and cultivation, invites strong parallels between it and Aristotelian political friendship. Nonetheless, there is an absence of scholarship concerning a comparative analysis of the relevant concepts between these men.

I aim to make clear the features in Jefferson's republican political thought and ideal American regime that are analogous to Aristotelian political friendship, and are conducive to it, such as: the virtue of prudence as necessary and conducive to those relationships, and the use of deliberative rhetoric as the public exercise of prudence within a self governing citizenry. When parallels can be found, they will offer scholars and citizens alike a more nuanced understanding of our relationships and obligations to each other in the regime. Also, and perhaps more importantly, finding parallels would help to answer whether or not we can continue to learn from our ancient predecessors.

Literature Review

Political friendship (*politikē philia*) is a multifaceted concept, and Aristotle is scarce providing an explicit explanation of its nature and uses. It must be gleaned from across the *Politics*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Rhetoric*. Also, in order to properly grasp the many

features that contribute to its makeup, we must investigate the political and ethical context(s) and components required for it to come about.

The superior or architectonic *tele* (End) for human beings, towards which all of our actions ought to aim, is Happiness (*NE* 1094a1-3); or, more accurately, flourishing (*eudaimonia*). Essentially, *eudaimonia* can be defined as human action (*praxis*), in accordance with virtue, over a complete life (Balot 2015, 111; Frank 2005, 141). From this it is clear that the pursuit and practice of virtue is a fundamental requisite for the Good Life of *eudaimonia*. All virtues, intellectual or moral, exist in the middle point between the excess and deficiency of "emotion, desire, [and/or] action" (Balot 2015, 112; *NE* 1103a15-12; 1104a12-26). One must habituate virtue so as to live and act within the mean, but also to maintain such virtue throughout their lives (Frank 2005, 141).

The best form of regimes is quite similarly aimed. For Aristotle, the best regimes are so designated because of their *eudaimonic* constitutions (Balot 2015, 105-109; Frank 2005, 141-142), meaning that their ethical and political structures are aimed to provide the best possible space for the cultivation of "those [virtues] of a public and private life" (Balot 2015, 114). In other words, the best regimes are those which are aimed at the cultivation of virtue and the flourishing of its citizens.

A necessary virtue needed to grasp both the best human life and the best regime - and also political friendship - is prudence (*phronēsis*). To be prudent, one must be "skilled in aiming, in accord with [reason], at what is best for a human being in things attainable through action," which is invariably tied to virtue and *eudaimonia* (*NE* 1141b10-17). How would one be able to discern the difference between one's own good(s) and those that are shared in the political community? The knowledge of what is good or bad for ourselves is closely tied to moderation, in

that the latter is "a sort of self knowledge" of both one's own limits and goods, but also of "the limits of his capacity to know what is good for someone else" (Frank 2005, 93-94). It is this self-knowledge of one's own limitation of knowledge, accompanied with a desire to secure one's own good, that comprise the essence of prudence and help to harmonize both private and public interests.

Political friendship, as an amalgam of these features of the regime, can be seen as a set of public relationships, which are moored in mutual self-respect and "an egalitarian attitude based on the knowledge of how to rule and be ruled" (Balot 2015, 112). Likewise, through the virtue of prudence¹, citizens take on "an enlarged outlook that avoids class-based hatreds and encourages a willingness to take the perspective of others" (Balot 2015, 112). Political friendship is thus a virtue of character, possessed individually but focused outwardly. Political friendship, with its egalitarian character and capability to reduce faction (*stasis*) in the regime in service to harmony (*homonoiā*) (Frank 2005, 138), is thus necessary for the well-being of the best regimes. Moreover, it is conducive to a shared understanding of common aims (*koinonīa agathon*), and even to securing justice through the reciprocity (*antipeponthōs*) through a citizenry of similars.² So arises the political place and function of *politikē philia*: a necessary feature for the best regimes to reach towards their eudaimonic *telōs*, while also being a byproduct of such a eudaimonic constitution.

Aristotle understood deliberative rhetoric (*symbolēutikon rhētorikē*) to be a key tool in promoting the private and public exercise of political friendship and its corresponding virtues. Like the temporally odd Aristotelian *tele* (Frank 2005, 141), deliberative rhetoric is used in the

¹ See Frank (2005), 93-95.

² See Balot (2015), Bickford (1997), Danzig (2000), Frank (2005), Schwarzenbach (1996), Scorza (2004), and Yack (2006)

present but with an exclusively futural focus. Just as a prudent person deliberates what is best for themselves, deliberation is the public exercise of determining the best action for the well-being of the community (Bickford 1996; Yack 2006). This necessarily requires a shared understanding of the aims of the regime (Bickford 1996; Ruderman 1997; Schwarzenbach 1997; Yack 2006), much like how the prudent person must have knowledge of the good at which their particular actions aim. This shared understanding comes about from the virtuous and prudent citizenry of the best regimes, eudaimonically constituted, who share in common the laws of their regime and a mutual moral concern for one another (Schwarzenbach 1996, 104).

All of the aforementioned concepts seem almost too good to be true -- they seem to work *too* well, and not take into consideration the disintegrative factors within political life. Of course, Aristotle did recognize such factors. He saw immoderate differences in economic class as the chief obstruction to harmony in the regime, and likewise to political friendship. These competing factions arise from competing claims of justice between classes - rich and poor - which are worsened exponentially by wide gaps between economic classes. A citizenry composed of two disparate classes will become envious and contemptuous of each other, and these factious tensions will inhibit the possibility of virtues, and "create clear cleavages that can undo a polity" (Frank 2005, 148; Bickford 1996; Scorza 2004; Sheldon 1991).

Aristotle's solution to the presence of divisive factions is not to eliminate the individual, or their differences, in service of unity. Instead, he understands political unity as made up of individuals, each with "difference[s] that... [mark] the unique identity of a person" (Frank 2005, 147). In the best regimes, these individuals are brought into a unity by their economic similarity and the taking of others' perspectives. The citizens of the best regimes are set towards harmony and like-mindedness (*homonoia*) by those factors that make up political friendship, beneath a

eudaimonically-aimed constitution (Frank 2005, 144-148). This is why Aristotle emphasizes the necessity of a large middle class (*hoi mesoi*). Being of a similar class, these citizens are uniquely absent of disintegrative class-based factions (Frank 2005, 143-147; *Pol.* 1295b27-34), and are open to the rule of reason. Likewise, due in large part to their similarity to one another, such citizens would look to the common advantage, prior to what is advantageous to the individual (Balot 2015, 114). Because of these factors, the large middle class is more open to those political relationships that sum up to political friendship (the taking of others' perspectives, a mutual moral concern, etc.); and thus also to publicly deliberate political issues (Balot 2015). Of course, there are those who argue that disintegrative factors would not be so easily placated, and that -- no matter the regime -- would prevent the creation of an "undogmatic social unity" (Schwarzenbach 1996, 99; Yack 2006).

There is a predominant focus in the scholarship concerning the applicability of these Aristotelian concepts in the American regime. Many argue that the United States was founded upon the political ideas of modern liberalism, with the regime aimed only to protect each citizens' individual and unalienable rights - to life, liberty, and property, religion, etc. - from infringement by both the government and other individuals (Appleby 1976; Bickford 1996; Erkkila 2007; Schwarzenbach 1996; Smith 1999; Yack 2006). To this point, Schwarzenbach notes that "no theorist of the modern period explicitly argued that furthering *philia* [friendship] is a primary function of the state" (Schwarzenbach 1996, 108), as Aristotle did (*NE* 1155a23-26). Smith argues further that the United States offers only "comfortable self-preservation" (Smith 1999, 634), instead of a classical republican inclination towards a virtuous and politically active citizenry (Sheldon 1991). Furthermore, liberalism's focus on the preservation of the individual takes the primary end of the regime away from those wants and needs held in common by each

citizen, and those political components and relationships that amalgamate to political friendship, which would go beyond mere self-preservation of individual rights and interests (Bickford 1996; Schwarzenbach 1996; Yack 2006; Yarbrough 2006). These impediments to political friendship in the American regime are, again, characterized by their liberal components. Yet, others argue that the ideals of classical republicanism were just as influential to the American founding (Shalhope 1975, 532; Sheldon 1991). Early Americans believed that the Revolution had instituted a regime of admirable novelty, created out of an amalgamation of the best features of the political philosophies of both Ancients and Moderns (Erkkila 2007; Tessitore 2003; Wood 1998).

To read Thomas Jefferson as a political thinker, and not focus exclusively on the actions taken in his personal and political life (Hardt 2007, 43), would best suit the aim of this inquiry - to elucidate the features in Jefferson's political thought and the ideal American regime that are analogous to Aristotelian political friendship. As a political philosopher, Jefferson attempted to construct the ideal American regime "through classical republican ideas drawn from Aristotle, Montesquieu, Harrington, and the nonliberal Scottish... philosophers," while also taking many notes from his lasting rumination on Ancient ethical and political philosophies (Sheldon 1991, 54; Lehmann 1947, 47-49), *and* those of the Moderns (Hardt 2007; Yarbrough 2006). While it is agreed upon that Jefferson's political thought takes influence from both Ancients and Moderns, there exists a debate about which was more pervasive - modern Lockean liberalism, or classical republicanism. Jefferson's political influences were a delicate mixture of the ethical and political ideas of both modern liberalism and classical republicanism (Hardt 2007; Yarbrough 2006; Wood 1998). Yet, it appears that Jefferson's ideal American regime is characteristically more

classical, in its ethical, social, and political structure, than it is liberal (Sheldon 1991; Tessitore 2003).

Jefferson's political thought, and his ideal American regime, was more characteristically classical than Lockean, Sheldon argues, for three reasons. (1) Jefferson held human nature to be "essentially social," which necessitated political communities. These political communities are not liberally protective, but instead aimed to cultivate the best part of their citizens' nature; (2) this deliberate cultivation comes through the citizens' direct social and political participation, which is made possible by the "economic, educational, and political prerequisites of [an] independent democratic citizenry;" and (3) that Jefferson's ethics and politics held a coequal emphasis on the harmony among citizens that could arise from a socially cooperative, democratic, self-governing, citizenry (Sheldon 1991, 54-55; Shalhope 1976). The participatory nature of Jefferson's ideal regime would be conducive to the virtue of those citizens, which he held as a necessary and strengthening feature of the regime (Sheldon 1991; Tessitore 2003; Wood 1998; Yarbrough 2006), for it would help subvert the corrupting forces of luxury and political power (Erkkila 2007; Shalhope 1976).

Of course, Jefferson also recognized a plurality of interests. In an attempt to harmonize the individuals and their interests within the regime, his regime would provide the "economic, educational, and political prerequisites of [an] independent democratic citizenry" (Sheldon 1991, 54). Along with these prerequisites to political friendship, Jefferson held that, "because political power followed property ownership, a virtuous republic must have an economically independent citizenry and general equality... in moderate wealth" (Sheldon 1991, 74). These egalitarian economics would, like Aristotle's large middle class, serve to avoid the class-based hatreds and resulting factions that harm the probability of civic virtues and destabilize the regime itself

(Barlot 2015; Frank 2005; Sheldon 1991, 72-78). An egalitarian education, too, would serve the same purpose. Yet it would also provide a shared public foundation, upon which these self-governing citizens can begin to form public relationships and use their education within their political deliberations. Here, I believe, lies Jefferson's analogous concepts to both political friendship and deliberative rhetoric.

Jefferson's ideas about what the new American republic *ought to be* seem quite similar to Aristotle's eudaimonically constituted regime. With our nature being inherently social, the best regimes are aimed at refining our best faculties through the cultivation of the virtues that are corollary to our nature. While those virtues do differ between Aristotle and Jefferson, with the latter being primarily influenced by Christian and Scottish moral virtues (Tessitore 2003; Shalhope 1991), the general thrust of the aim of the best regimes is the same. It is this that motivates Lehmann to remark that, though the Ancient ethical and political ideas that Jefferson had drawn from "had been... homogenous with their [place and time]..." there was nevertheless "analogy and difference, time and again" (Lehmann 1947, 53).

If such analogies were so frequent, it should be strange for Schwarzenbach to claim that *philia* was never directly mentioned as a "primary function of the state" (Schwarzenbach 1996, 108). Yet, even in Jefferson's ideal American regime, there is no explicit mention of either personal or political friendship. In light of this apparent absence, we must then look to what constitutes Jefferson's political community of social cooperation and self governance. It is there that something analogous to Aristotelian political friendship most likely lies.

The harmony that Jefferson's regime aims to engender is "most conducive to democratic self governance" (Sheldon 1991, 55), but how would it be achieved? This harmony would arise, as it would for Aristotle, from a large and generally equal middle class. Jefferson, like Aristotle,

believed that a regime composed of a large middle class would encourage its citizenry of similars to pursue meaningful and effective social cooperation - which, I will argue, is analogous to "healthy political relationships that approximate [to] civic friendship" (Balot 2015, 113). Further, within and among these political relationships, Jefferson also saw public deliberation as an invaluable tool for the sustainability of his republican government. After all, it is prudent deliberation over the best course of action for the community -- towards the achievement of common wants and aims -- is the essence of a participatory citizenry (Erkkila 2007; Shalhope 1976; Sheldon 1991, 69-70; Schwarzenbach 1996; Yack 2006).

Though there seem to be many prominent parallels between Aristotle's and Jefferson's political thought - which then lead one to draw another between their conceptions of what approximates to political friendship - it is still too early to lay these connections with certainty. We must be careful: both he and Aristotle are enigmatic thinkers, and the topics they examine are greatly complex in themselves. Nevertheless, despite the scholarship not drawing direct parallels, provides strong inclinations towards the likelihood that a Jeffersonian concept analogous to *politikē philia* can be found and defended.

Research Methods

To best attempt to draw these parallels between Aristotle and Thomas Jefferson's analogous concepts of political friendship (*politikē philia*), the virtue of prudence (*phronēsis*), and its public exercise in deliberative rhetoric (*symbolēutikon rhētorikē*), they must be deconstructed and their parts laid out in a logical order. This will allow for the premises of each concept to be elucidated most clearly, and provide the best means to achieve the aim of the thesis.

Throughout the inquiry, I will be using only three of Aristotle's texts - the *Politics*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Rhetoric*. I will include in an appendix each specific book/chapter of those texts used. As for Jefferson, I will likewise include in a second appendix all of the public papers, correspondences, and publications used as primary source material to understand Jefferson's best regime, its components, and its philosophical foundations.

I will move forward by answering various smaller theses concerning the institutional organization of both Aristotle and Jefferson's best regimes, and the philosophical principles that inform the aims of those regimes. Concerning the latter I will show that, on a foundational level for both Aristotle and Jefferson, man is by nature a political animal. There have been plentiful discussions in the literature concerning each thinker's conception of human nature, independently. There has also been some attention to Jefferson's understanding of human nature, and its similarities and differences to the classical understanding (Sheldon 1991; Yarbrough 2006). Yet, there has been no comparison between Jefferson and Aristotle's understanding of human nature for the express purpose of this thesis. In doing so, I will demonstrate that Jefferson's understanding of human nature is more amicable than Aristotle's. This notable difference, coming from the influences of Christian ethics and Scottish moral-sense philosophers (Sheldon 1991; Yarbrough 2006), has important implications for finding something akin to political friendship in Jefferson's ideal regime.

Subsequent to this, I will attempt to demonstrate the fundamental point that for both Aristotle and Jefferson the best human life is one that aims at Happiness. And that each thinker's understanding of Happiness is both similar and different in important ways. For Jefferson, Happiness is not defined as explicitly as it is for Aristotle in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is the differences within the two conceptions of Happiness - both achieved through the

cultivation of virtues that arise through our nature (which, again, is both similar and different) - that will help to demonstrate the unique combination of both classical and modern liberal influences in Jefferson's political thought. Aristotle and Jefferson likewise agree that political society arises naturally out of our political nature as human beings. And, like the best form of human life, the best regime is one that is aimed towards the Happiness of its citizens. It is important to note that, in order to grasp this shared aim of the best regimes, both thinkers held that virtue (as necessary for Happiness) would be largely cultivated through participation in political society. By highlighting this similarity between the two, I will show that political participation within the best regimes is fundamentally important to political friendship and the potential of an analogous feature.

Though there are similarities between Jefferson and Aristotle concerning the securing of Happiness by the cultivation of virtue through participation in political society, there is a notable difference in Jefferson's thought that allows the individual to pursue their own interests and aims -- within the bounds of their social and political obligations. This freedom of individuals, existing within the boundaries of obligations to the regime, is yet another example of Jefferson's alterations of the classical ideas that he so strongly took influence from. Another important alteration between Aristotle and Jefferson is the content of those virtues most conducive to the best human life, with Jefferson being strongly influenced by Christian ethics and Scottish moral sense philosophers. Importantly, I will attempt to demonstrate that the virtues which Jefferson held as paramount do not make impossible the existence of political friendship in his best regime. Rather, they strengthen it.

Once these components and their conductivity to political friendship are shown, we can comfortably move to examine Jefferson's best American regime. In this, I will look to show that

it is likewise made of unique components that are similar to, but also different from, the Greek polis, such as: an egalitarian, self-governing citizenry who are economically independent in a large middle class, educated for competent political and social participation, and cultivate their virtue (corresponding to their amicable nature) through such participation. Once this is laid out, I can argue that within and from these components, there is a feature akin to Aristotelian political friendship. Despite these classical similarities in Jefferson's best regime, the citizens of it are likewise suited to be the best protectors of their own individual and inalienable rights, thereby achieving a liberal aim of the regime through more classical means. It is this point of difference, among others mentioned before, that will also help to demonstrate the innate tension within Jefferson's political thought between classical republican and modern liberal aims.

Furthermore, those components conducive to political friendship in Aristotle's best regimes are also conducive to harmony within the citizenry. For Jefferson, too (with the notable modern addition of the liberal protection of *natural* rights, within a citizenry of individuals who are *naturally* amicable and benevolent), the best regime likewise seeks to achieve stability through the classical means of the cultivation of virtue, through political participation, within a citizenry of similars. This would place within the citizenry the attitudes, capabilities, and ethical and intellectual foundations that are conducive to harmony. With this, I will attempt to show that, for Jefferson and Aristotle both, political friendship can be found nearby to those things that are conducive to harmony (*homonoia*) - or, like-mindedness - in the best regimes.

Section I - *Foundations for Political Friendship*

All of Aristotle's philosophy works within a teleological frame, and thus it is from this frame that all of his political ideas are guided. For Aristotle, each thing that exists by nature has

an end towards which it moves. In a state of always becoming, those things with *tele* are always moving in and from the present towards their final purpose and/or best form. Since "the city belongs among the things that exist by nature, and... man is by nature a political animal" (*Pol.* 1253a1-2), each of these thus moves toward some good (*Pol.* 1252a1-3; *NE* 1094a1-3).

It is our nature and ends as individuals that informs the nature of the political community itself. The political community is made up of individuals, and unity within it arises from those who "differ in kind." And, in a notable heightening of the individual's importance, Aristotle argues that "what is *less* a unity is *more* choiceworthy" [emphasis mine] (*Pol.* 1261a30, b13-15). If the End of human beings informs that of the community, then what is that End? Aristotle held it to be happiness or flourishing (*eudaimonia*), which he saw accessible only by "activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and if there are several... then in accord with the best and most complete one... [over] a complete life" (*NE* 1098a16-19). The virtues - or, character traits - with which our souls must act in accordance, are twofold in their type. There are intellectual virtues and moral virtues, the former gotten through teaching and guidance, and the latter through habituation.

What aspects of the best regimes, then, help to cultivate or engender *politikē philia* between citizens? When speaking of regimes, Aristotle means both the governing body (*politeuma*), and the offices or laws of authority (*kyrios*). "What has authority in the city (*polis*) is everywhere the governing body, and the governing body *is* the regime" (*Pol.* 1278b10-13). Further, the constitution (*politeia*³) of any regime is not just its laws, but also its customs, values, and practices (Frank 2005). The most authoritative regime - made of the governing body and the

³ Aristotle uses *Politeia* interchangeably, and sometimes unclearly, when discussing the following: constitutions, the rule of the many in the common interest, and the best practicable regime (all of which are called *Politeia*, and sometimes translated as Polity) throughout the *Politics*. For clarity, see Lord's 2013 translation.

laws of authority - is that which aims for its citizens living well and finely, while ruling "with a view to the common advantage" (*Pol.* 1278b16-26; 1279a29-30). Importantly, Aristotle also believes that the best regime ought to be made up of "equal and similar persons to the extent possible," which is most practically accomplished through a large middle class (*Pol.* 1295b26-27). Such regimes are eudaimonically constituted, and it is within them that political friendship - along with virtue, prudence, right rule, stability, and justice - are easiest to grasp.

Aristotle opens *Politics* IV.11 by making it clear that he wants to examine the features of the best regime "which it is possible for most to share in, and... of which most cities can partake" (*Pol.* 1295a29-30). Thus, despite Aristotle spending significant portions of *Politics* discussing both the Ideal Regime (*euchomenoi* or True Aristocracy)⁴ and the Polity (*politeia* or Mixed Regime)⁵, I will analyze only their shared and relevant features, and not examine the specific constructions of each. In this way I follow Aristotle, for he states that those two regimes are so ambiguously similar in their aim(s) and features that "we may speak of both as one" (*Pol.* 1295a29).

When speaking of the Polity in *Politics* IV.11, and in accord with the Doctrine of the Mean, Aristotle states a larger middle class is most suitable to the best regimes (*Pol.* 1295b3-5). This middle class (*hoi mesoi*), being neither too rich nor too poor, is most suitable to possess the characteristics that accumulate to political friendship. Why is the *hoi mesoi* preferred over the other classes? The very rich are arrogant: their luxuries make them ignorant of being ruled, and their lives of leisure make them unwilling to rule (*Pol.* 1295b15-16). And the very poor are envious: they are accustomed only to being ruled, and thus are contemptuous of their rulers while also desiring both power and property (*Pol.* 1295b30-34). Thus both classes - of extreme excess

⁴ *Politics* VII, VIII

⁵ *Politics* II.12, IV.11

and of extreme deficiency - are unwilling to obey reason: they cannot understand right rule and therefore cannot rule and be ruled in turn. This is caused by the exaggerated distance between their classes, and the circumstances of the classes themselves, which make it nearly impossible for each to prudently expand their perception and consider the good of the other. It is in this way that a regime made up of the excessively rich and poor is the farthest removed "from affection and a political community" (*Pol.* 1295b24), for both are imprudent and incapable of right rule.

The middle class, being made up of similar persons, is without the deficiencies inherent in the extreme. Without ignorance or envy, citizens of the middle class are better for the authoritative regimes in every sense. Citizens of the middle class are similar in property and thus generally equal. This removes the disintegrative factors of extremes and opens the middling class to both ruling and being ruled. Inherent in this openness, and their place in the most authoritative regimes, is the capacity for prudence and virtue (*Pol.* 1295b26-34). An openness to right rule and a closeness to virtue are not the only reasons for the superiority of the *hoi mesoi*. A large middle class is also least inclined to faction (*stasis*), for "factional conflict is everywhere the result of inequality" (*Pol.* 1301b26-27). The envy of the poor towards the rich and the contempt of the rich towards the poor leads inevitably to master-slave relations of ruling, which is the worst of all relationships (*Pol.* 1278b31-37, 1295b18-20). It is the desire to rule in the interest of the ruler, and not the common advantage, that is most detrimental to the longevity and stability of any regime, not to mention the good that ought to be aimed at through right rule (*Pol.* 1278b30-1279a41). This is why Aristotle insists that "it is the greatest good fortune for those who are engaged in politics to have a middling and sufficient property" (*Pol.* 1295b40-1296a1): since the best regime "must necessarily be governed in the best fashion," and the *hoi mesoi* within it "most particularly preserve themselves" (*Pol.* 1295b27-34), they are most capable of and open to

the best way of life "which it is possible for most to share in" (*Pol.* 1295a29-30), which necessarily includes political friendship.

Sec. II - *The Nature and Necessity of Prudence*

Aristotle notes in *Politics* III.9 that "whoever [cares for] good governance... gives careful attention to political virtue and vice" (1280b6-7). With the nature of the most authoritative human good, its corresponding regime, and the proper citizen and class within that regime now identified, what comes next is the identification and explanation of the political virtue(s) that is most conducive to political friendship.

Throughout *Politics*, Aristotle is insistent about the necessity of prudence (*phronēsis*) within the best regimes,⁶ and he offers a detailed account of the nature of that virtue in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. To possess prudence is "simply [to be] skilled in aiming, in accord with [reason], at what is best for a human being in things attainable through action," and how this action can best accord with virtue over a complete life (*NE* 1141b10-17). Thus, the prudent person can best discern their own boundaries of excess and deficiency - they can best determine the mean in which virtue lies, subsequent to their understanding of the good, or *eudaimonia* (*NE* 1138b20-25, 1139b30-31, 1142b29-33). Moreover, prudence is an intellectual virtue that is inseparable from moral virtue, for the deliberation characteristic of prudence is that which helps us aim at and habituate virtue in line with the good (*NE* 1144a7-9, 1145a5-7, 1178a16-19).

Prudence, being "the political art" (*NE* 1141a22), has an incredibly important public role in the best regimes. The practically wise, being excellent deliberators, consider both "what is good and advantageous for [the self]," just as the moderate do, but also "the sorts of things

⁶ For some examples, see the mid-to-late chapters of *Pol.* III, as well as IV.11 and VII.1-3.

conducive to living well in general" (*NE* 1140a25-32). The prudent person's consideration of other things conducive to living well, along with their understanding of their own boundaries, thereby widens their own perspective to accommodate their interests and those of others within the polis.⁷ This, when taken alongside the general equality of the large middle class, promotes enlarged and accommodating outlooks between citizens. This prudent partiality between them is conducive to egalitarian attitudes of mutual respect,⁸ and thus to ruling for the common advantage.

To know one's own boundaries and to consider those of others, and to deliberate with these particulars towards the higher good (*NE* 1142b29-35), is the mark of the prudent. This is important in the coming discussion of the public exercise of prudence through deliberative rhetoric. Further, the essence of prudence is the same as that of right rule. The best regimes "look to the common advantage," in that their citizens rule and are ruled in turn by "having someone look to their good, just as when ruling previously they looked to his" (*Pol.* 1279a5-22). This is made possible through the prudent expansion of individual perceptions, which promotes egalitarian attitudes of mutual respect. These perceptions, attitudes, and grasp of right rule through prudence lends to Aristotle's claim in *Politics* that the middling class of the best regimes "must necessarily be governed in the best fashion," for their mutual respect and ruling in turn - along with their unique avoidance of faction - allow them to "most particularly preserve themselves" (*Pol.* 1295b27-34). It is through all of these factors that they are most capable of the best way of life, "which it is possible for most to share in" (*Pol.* 1295a29-30). Political friendship -- being a combination of attitudes of mutual self-respect and "an egalitarian attitude based on the knowledge of how to rule and be ruled," along with the prudent taking of enlarged outlooks

⁷ See Frank (2005), 92-102, for a nuanced and detailed account of prudence.

⁸ See Balot's definition of political friendship above.

that avoid "class-based hatreds and [encourage] a willingness to take the perspective of others" (Balot 2015, 112) -- is clearly an amalgamation of all of the aforementioned features and relationships of the middling class in the best regimes. It would also follow that, without a citizenry who possesses and exercises prudence, the formation of attitudes and relationships among them that amalgamate into political friendship would be impossible.

When it does emerge, though, political friendship makes possible the praiseworthy features of the best regime, while also coming as a result of them. The stability of relations between citizens who prudently rule in turn, and their inclination to virtue, makes accurate Aristotle's claim that "like-mindedness [*homonoiā*], therefore, appears to be political friendship" (*NE* 1167b2-3, *NE* 1155a23-27). The stability of relationships between citizens, their inclination to both public and private virtue, and their knowledge and capability of right rule is generally what produces harmony or concord (*homonoiā*) between citizens. And this is why Aristotle argues that serious citizens and legislators are "more serious about [political friendship] than justice" (*NE* 1155a24).

Sec. III - *The Prudent Use of Deliberation*

Frequently in his discussion of the citizenry of the best regimes and their prudent capabilities, Aristotle mentions their self-same capacity for deliberation. Deliberative rhetoric (*symboleutikon rhētorikē*) is a political tool to be used among citizens of the best regimes (*Pol.* 1281b31-35) in their determination of what future action(s) they ought to take (*Rhet.* 1358b21-27). These actions are correctly determined within a shared conception of the highest good (*Rhet.* 1360b4-29; *NE* 1142b30-35), as found and maintained through prudent habituation. Deliberation, then, is only performed properly when it is done so prudently (*Rhet.* 1366b19-21),

by one who understands the well-aimed features and practices of their regime (*Rhet.* 1366b19-21). Thus, those with prudence can more easily deliberate with properly, with well-aimed efficacy (*NE* 1140a32, 1142b1-35).

Deliberation - and deliberative rhetoric as the public exercise of prudence - is, in its closeness to prudence, likewise related to the egalitarian and accommodating attitudes that arise in political friendships. Aristotle, after his explanation of the uses of deliberative rhetoric, insists that what matters more than the dialectic itself is the character of those deliberating. Specifically, their "practical intelligence [prudence], virtue, and goodwill" (*Rhet.* 1378a6-9). By goodwill, it would appear that Aristotle is pointing towards the accommodating attitudes, which arise out of a prudent and virtuous citizenry who are egalitarian in their capability and knowledge of right rule. This goodwill that arises out of prudence and virtue is conducive to public deliberation and thus also right rule and its necessary features. Prudence and the goodwill inherent as a result of it would be conducive to right rule, for good citizens of the best regime are praised for their "knowledge of rule over free persons from both points of view" (*Pol.* 1277b15-16). Goodwill thus also appears to be an amalgam of those attitudes and relationships that equate to political friendship. This is supported, among other things, by Aristotle's focus on the concept of equity and compassion among citizens in both legislation and punitive law which arises among prudent deliberators (*Rhet.* 1374a28-b23). These citizens would be able to expand their perceptions beyond themselves, making allowances for "human failings" (*Rhet.* 1364b11) and attempting prudently "to grasp the whole picture" (*Rhet.* 1374b14) in situations concerning the potential punishment of their fellow citizens.

The goodwill and egalitarian attitudes related to prudence would likewise further dissuade inclinations towards faction (*stasis*) among the middling class of right-ruling citizens in

the best regimes. Good citizens, again, understand right rule as coming from widened perspectives and being for the common advantage (*Pol.* 1277b15-16). This, along with the abating of factious inclinations with the large middle class, and citizens' goodwill as coming from prudence and proper deliberation, and their shared conception of the best End, are all combined to be conducive to concord (*homonoia*) in the regime. Since concord among citizens is most desirable to the best regimes, and "like-mindedness [*homonoia*], therefore, appears to be political friendship" (*NE* 1167b2-3, *NE* 1155a23-27), it would appear that political friendship ought to be a primary aim of the best regimes.

All of the aforementioned features of political friendship are important and relevant for the comparison to Jefferson -- especially the understanding of political friendship as both conducive to, and made possible by, a prudent citizenry and their capacity for deliberation among a large, well-aimed middle class. To have these laid out before us as such provides steady and clear moorings from which we can work to compare the relevant features of Thomas Jefferson's political philosophy.

Sec. IV: Jefferson's Philosophical Foundations

Like Aristotle, Jefferson held that we are naturally social beings. Our social nature, importantly, is informed by an innate moral sense. This moral sense, composed of a mutual care and sense of duty towards others (to Francis W. Gilmer, June 7, 1816), is a general but clear departing from the modern liberal understanding of human nature as asocial and adversarial, entering political society artificially by the necessity of a social contract for a mutual assurance of protection.⁹ Likewise, our social nature - and the corresponding moral sense - is inherently

⁹ See Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, 1651; John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, 1689. This departure is continued in Jefferson's belief that society and politics are also of natural roots.

amicable (Sheldon 1991; Yarbrough 2006). What features compose this social, amicable nature and moral sense? This can be understood by viewing the moral sense when it is best cultivated and/or refined. Writing of the moral doctrine of Jesus Christ, Jefferson praises that it "went far beyond... in inculcating universal philanthropy... to all mankind... under the bonds of love, charity, peace, [and] common wants and common aids" (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803). This extended mutual benevolence is also composed of "the feelings of sympathy, of benevolence, of gratitude, of justice, of love, [and] of friendship" (to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786). Jefferson, in his praise of Christ's moral doctrine,¹⁰ saw it to be the most perfect refinement of our naturally social and amicable moral sense, and of our innate benevolent duties to others. Importantly, the morality of Christ does not inform our nature. It is our nature that was refined and spoken to by Christ with "the sublimest of eloquence" (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803).

Our social nature, as it informs our morality, likewise informs the natural advent of society. Jefferson writes that society comes out of a "natural [want] with which man has been created..." and, that human beings were "endowed with faculties and qualities to effect its satisfaction by concurrence of others having that same want..." (to P.S. DuPont de Nemours, April 24, 1816). This desire is not material, but an innate *moral* desire for community that arises from our social nature. Such is why Jefferson held that the liberal understanding of human nature as antisocial, egoistic, and adversarial was a "humiliation..." for "Man was created for social intercourse," and thus also "man must have been created with a sense of justice" (to Francis W. Gilmer, June 7, 1816; to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814).

¹⁰ When discussing Christian morality, Jefferson is explicitly critical of the Church. See his letters to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803, to Peter Carr, September 7, 1814, and to John Adams May 5, 1817. See also Frost and Sikkenga's *History of American Political Thought*, Chapter VII by A. Tessitore; and Sheldon 1991.

Since we are naturally social and notably amicable, and since political society emerges necessarily from these components, the question arises: what did Jefferson hold the best human life to be, and how strongly ought the regime compel its citizens towards such a life? These questions can be properly understood only when considering them in tandem with what he saw as the ideal political society. Jefferson believed that the best human life is one in which we cultivate virtue (which corresponds to our amicable nature, as seen in the moral sense) through continual social cooperation and political participation. This is "essential to the happiness of man," for "individual happiness [is] inseparable from the practice of virtue" (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803; to J. Correa de. Serra, April 19, 1814). Our moral sense and its corresponding virtues, then, must be cultivated correctly if happiness is to be well-sought. And, while we are not naturally selfish and egoistic, we are susceptible to corruption by these vices if our moral sense is not well-cultivated. This, Jefferson believed, would lead inherently to the avoidance and/or ignorance of our innate duties to others and to political society (to Edmund Pendleton, August 26, 1776).

Our potential to act in an adversarial and antisocial way - contrary to our nature - is "the sole antagonist of virtue." Vice, then, would be those traits or actions related to "self-gratification in violation of our moral duties to others" (to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814). From this, two things become clear. The first is that virtue or moral excellence, for Jefferson, is outwardly focused. He praised ancient philosophers¹¹ for their attention to our private morals and well-being, but was critical of them for the very same reason. In their attention to our private selves, they did not include the inclinations of our moral sense towards "peace, charity, and love to our fellow men," as one of our "primary obligations," whereas the ethics of Christ does (to Benjamin Rush, April

¹¹ "...particularly Pythagoras, Socrates, Epicurus, Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, Antonius" (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803).

21, 1803). The second is that, from this preceding primary ethical obligation, Jefferson held the pursuit of virtue - or, the refining and exercise of our moral sense - as one of the salient aims of human life.

What, then, are the salient aims of Jefferson's best American regime? Jefferson writes "that with nations, as with individuals, our interests soundly calculated, will ever be found inseparable from our moral duties" (*Second Inaugural Address*, March 4, 1805). To tie the interests of the regime to each citizen's outward duties would tie the interests of the regime to the cultivation of virtue (in accordance with their moral sense) - or, it would tie the interest of the regime to each citizen's *pursuit of happiness* (to J. Correa de. Serra, April 19, 1814).

The well-aimed regime would then have great interest in cultivating the hearts and minds of its citizens, for they could judge "to a competent degree" (to Peter Carr, Sept. 7, 1814) those things, morally and intellectually, that "will secure or endanger [their] freedom" (to John Tyler, May 26, 1810). This would also allow the citizenry to competently participate in political society, which therein exercises their social nature and moral sense.¹² It is this idea that strongly guides Jefferson's theoretical - and ideal - political structure. He writes that "the foundation of public happiness [is found] in wholesome laws, the execution of which alone remains for [individuals]..." (*Second Inaugural Address*, March 4, 1805). We will see shortly that the best American regime, for Jefferson, is one that equips its citizens for the cultivation of their outwardly focused virtue and the individual pursuit of happiness, while also securing their own individual rights and liberties - as achieved through their dutiful cooperation in, and self-governance of, political society.

¹² See his letters to Maj. John Cartwright, June 5, 1824; to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816; to John Taylor, May 28, 1816.

Jefferson saw significant importance in the regime meeting the "common wants and common aims" of its citizens (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803). Yet he also emphasized another aim: the protection and assurance of their natural and unchanging individual rights. Primary of these rights are those of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (*The Declaration of Independence*, 1776). Others are likewise emphasized, such as: "freedom... of religion¹³... [and] of property" (to Maj. John Cartwright, June 5, 1824). For Jefferson, the protection and assurance of such rights is a primary want and aim held in common. Yet, the pursuit of happiness for individuals of a virtuous citizenry is another such aim. Here, one can begin to see clearly the mixture of classical and liberal themes in Jefferson's political thought: the primary aim(s) of his best regime being to secure the common wants and aims of its citizens (such as their rights and liberties, and their happiness through virtue) as achieved by their direct political participation.

How does this shared emphasis - representative of the tension between modern liberalism and classical republicanism in Jefferson's political thought (Sheldon 1991; Yarborough 2006) - not contradict itself? In the his ideal American regime, Jefferson attempted to harmonize the tensions between those two aims - the protection of the rights of each individual, and the inclination of those same individuals to outwardly exercise their moral sense in political society. To understand this, we must examine the institutional and ethical components of Jefferson's regime. Only subsequent to this may we also examine the analogous components that give way to Aristotelian political friendship. How, then, would a regime be designed if its goals were to both guard the individual from the violation of their natural rights, while also cultivating their social, amicable moral sense? Jefferson believed strongly that representative republicanism, more than any other form of government, was best suited to achieve both of those aims.

¹³ See also *A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom* (1777, 1779)

Sec. V - *Ethical Institutions upon the Foundation*

Jefferson wrote that "a government is republican in proportion as every member composing it has his equal voice in the direction of its concerns." In cases of inability, these otherwise competent citizens would use their equal voices to govern instead "by representatives chosen by [themselves]" (to Samuel Kercheval, July 12 1816).¹⁴ These principles are best actualized, on a foundational level, by what Jefferson called ward republics. These "bore a striking resemblance to the ideal Greek polis," in that they "also strove to realize man's social nature through direct citizen participation in local community life" (Sheldon 1991, 67). These wards, while similar to the polis, were an original and unique institutional form of government suited to fulfill the aims of Jefferson's best regime. He even desired to revise the Virginia constitution¹⁵, imploring that legislators ought to "divide the counties into wards of such size as that every citizen can attend, when called on, and act in person." Functioning on the premise that "all power is inherent in the people," each citizen would then be "an active member of the government" (to Samuel Kercheval, July 12 1816). As such, they would be self-governing "in all cases which they think themselves competent." Or, again, in cases of elections and/or incompetence, "they may act by representatives, freely and equally chosen" (to Maj. John Cartwright, June 5, 1824). Each individual ward, being maintained through the self-governance of its citizens, would have important obligations of common interest that its citizens would attend to, such as: education, policing, care for the poor, local infrastructure, and the elections of jurors and other municipal positions.¹⁶ These obligations would make each ward "a small

¹⁴ See also the letter to John Taylor, May 28, 1816.

¹⁵ See Jefferson's *Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge* (1778).

¹⁶ See Jefferson's letters to Maj. John Cartwright, June 5 1824, and Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816.

republic within itself," with each citizen again "transacting in person a great portion of its rights and duties... entirely within his competence" (to Maj. John Cartwright, June 5, 1824). Ward republics, then, are designed to promote political participation and social cooperation through their necessary self-governance.

These "little republics" (to John Tyler, May 26, 1810), so aimed, were thought by Jefferson to be the best way of securing an ethical citizenry through the exercise of their social nature. Yet, an individual's morality is not nurtured only by their participation in self-governance. Their hearts, minds, and actions in political society must be guided by a proper education, available to all citizens. Jefferson wrote that without an educated citizenry, "no republic can maintain itself..." for *only* with an education can citizens properly govern themselves (to John Tyler, May 26, 1810). An educated citizenry is, for Jefferson, so necessary for the well-being of the regime that it would be provided and maintained "wholly at the public expense..." Each citizen, then, would receive an education "proportioned to the condition and pursuits of his life." Upon this foundation, these citizens would be suited "to a competent degree," both morally and intellectually, for their public duties and private pursuits (to Peter Carr, September 7, 1814). Such is why Jefferson believed so strongly in "a crusade against ignorance..." (George Wythe, August 13, 1786), because if each citizen was educated to a competent degree, they would be able to both defend themselves against intrusions of their natural rights and participate competently in republican self-governance. This would help to ensure, on an individual and institutional level, the accomplishment of both salient aims of Jefferson's republican government (protecting individual rights, while also cultivating our innate social and amicable moral sense).

How would education, within the framework of the ward republics, achieve such a feat? Jefferson believed it would be accomplished through the refinement of the head and heart of each citizen. The head possessing reason and prudence, the heart possessing the "feelings of sympathy, of benevolence... of justice, of love, of friendship" (to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786). A proper education would not only work to create citizens capable of deliberation and self-governance, but also those most capable of virtue in accord with the moral sense. Of those whose moral sense is lacking, Jefferson writes that the regime then should "endeavor to supply the defect by education, [and] by appeals to reason..." which, through "demonstrations by sound calculation," would show that "society is necessary to [their] happiness and even existence" (to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814). In other words, those whose moral sense is deficient would be led by education to recognize their nature, the necessity of the exercise their moral sense in political society, and also be made competent for proper participation in political society.

And what of those with extraordinary moral and intellectual predispositions? Jefferson writes that "natural aristocracy among men," is grounded in superior demonstrations of virtues and intellectual talents (to John Adams, October 28, 1813). This natural aristocracy is fundamentally different from the "artificial aristocracy founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents..." and it is considered by Jefferson to be "the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society." This natural aristocracy (*aristoi*) would emerge most purely from the ward republics, for the equality of opportunity from a publicly funded education for each citizen would allow for "worth and genius [to be] sought from every condition of life" (to John Adams, October 28, 1813; *Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge*, 1778). These citizens would move into the highest levels of education, being further educated and refined, morally and intellectually, to eventually take on a life as

legislators, scientists, religious leaders, and other leaders in political society. The natural aristocracy would have this education "maintained wholly at the public expense, on the same principles with that of the ward schools" (to Peter Carr, September 7, 1814). Jefferson's system of education was thus designed to raise "the mass of the people to the high ground of moral respectability necessary to their own safety, and to orderly government..." Along with crafting a citizenry capable of benevolent self-government within the framework of the ward republics, this system of education "would have completed the great object of qualifying [the citizens] to select the veritable aristoi, for the trusts of the government [as representatives and officials]" (to John Adams, October 28, 1813).

An educated citizenry -- whose moral sense and natural social duties are exercised along with their intellectual competence for self-governance -- is the best possible security against injustice and tyranny, for "every man [can] judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom" (to John Tyler, May 26, 1810). This ability of each individual to properly judge what is best for themselves is paralleled by the Aristotelian idea of prudence, or, the "political art" (*NE* 1141a22). And, arising from the prudent person's capability for deliberation of what is good for themselves, is an outward expansion of these considerations to others. Since the highest aim of human life (Happiness) guides the conduct of both the individual and the regime, the prudent person must consider the good of their fellow citizens and the common advantage for all.¹⁷ For Jefferson, this expansion of our considerations -- or, the widening of our perspectives -- is a more immediate and prominent feature of the citizenry. Jefferson's prudent citizen would appear to be superior in the context of political deliberation. Each citizen's moral sense, being exercised through political participation and social cooperation (which itself requires public deliberation -

¹⁷ See Frank (2005) for a more elaborated presentation of this argument.

an exercise of prudence), would prominently incline those citizens to act in accordance with benevolence, sympathy, charity, and friendship. This would not only make relationships between individuals more amicable, which may help to preserve their individual rights from infringement on a smaller scale, but would also be conducive to the deliberation of "common wants and common aids" (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803).

The citizens of Jefferson's republican system of government would have equal opportunity in almost all aspects of their lives. And, importantly, an inequality of outcome was likewise permissible, so long as it did not detract from the independent, competently educated, politically participating citizenry (see Sheldon 1991, 72-73). This is most clearly demonstrated in the ward's system of education, which provided a free education to each that was "proportioned to the condition and pursuits of his life" (to Peter Carr, September 7, 1814) though these proportionate conditions may offer someone of extraordinary intelligence more education than, say, one who wishes to become a farmer or a cobbler. This equality of opportunity and potential inequality of outcome likewise presents itself in the economic features of Jefferson's republican regime. As Jefferson writes in his *Second Inaugural Address*, it was among his goals that while the "equality of rights be maintained," the right and state of property would also be maintained, whether "equal or unequal, which results to every man from his own industry." Jefferson's support of individual industry and property rights is consistent with his views of what an educated, self-governing, independent citizenry must possess to remain as such, for each citizen must be economically independent to properly participate in political society. Without independence, those citizens cannot properly exercise their moral sense through participation, for "dependence begets subservience and venality, [and] suffocates the germ of virtue..." (*Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query XIX).

While he was supportive of private industry for the independence it would grant citizens, Jefferson was nevertheless supportive of a moderate economy -- not one of complete equality, for he was "conscious that an equal division of property is impracticable" (to James Madison, October 28, 1785). Economic moderation would ensure political independence, while also keeping at bay the economic immoderation that would see people of great wealth isolated -- out of leisure -- from participation in political society. Akin to representatives with life appointments, the immoderately wealthy "might perhaps be induced by their independence to forget..." their moral and political obligations to the regime (to Edmund Pendleton, August 26, 1776). Likewise, Jefferson had witnessed in Europe the result of gross economic inequality: it was conducive to "so much misery to the bulk of mankind..." (to James Madison, October 28, 1785), for the dependence it produces, again, "begets subservience and venality, [and] suffocates the germ of virtue..." (*Notes*, Query XIX). Jefferson held that, due to their economic moderation, competent education, and simplistic lifestyle, the large middle class of agrarian workers are those who are best suited for participation in political society and self-governance. This is why he says in praise that "those who labor the earth... [are the] peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue..." and, further, that the "corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age... has furnished an example" (*Notes*, Query XIX).

Jefferson's large agrarian middle class has strong similarities to Aristotle's large middle-class (*hoi mesoi*). In this way, we can see that Aristotle would agree with Jefferson that a regime composed of large inequalities would be wrought with factional conflict (*Pol.* 1301b26-27), which would "[suffocate] the germ of virtue..." (*Notes*, Query XIX) and thus be cause for "so much misery to the bulk of mankind..." (to James Madison, October 28, 1785). The openness and capability of Aristotle's large middle class to grasp prudence, right rule, and virtue (*Pol.*

1295a29-30, b26-34) is likewise paralleled by Jefferson's understanding that those with "a middling and sufficient property" (*Pol.* 1295b40) would be the "peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue..." (*Notes*, Query XIX).

In sum: the best life to be aimed at within Jefferson's regime is one that exercises and refines our social, amicable natures. In other words: one that cultivates our benevolent virtues through political participation and social cooperation. The best form of government to accomplish such aims, for Jefferson, was a unique republican framework of small, self-governing wards. Composed mainly of an economically moderate, middle class citizenry, these wards were designed to make social cooperation through self-governance necessary for its proper functioning. To ensure a competent citizenry in both their morals and their intellect, the wards would provide education at the public expense. Due to an educated, economically independent citizenry, characterized by their moral benevolence and a capacity for the prudent deliberation inherent in self-governance, these wards are most conducive to happiness: itself being tied, again, invariably to the practice of virtue. Ward republics were thus praised by Jefferson as being constructed and aimed so well that "the wit of man [could not] devise a more solid basis for a free, durable, and well administered republic" (to Maj. John Cartwright, June 5, 1824).

Sec. VI - Political Friendship within an Egalitarian Citizenry?

It is at this point of the inquiry that we may finally examine the analogous components between the ideal regimes of Aristotle and Thomas Jefferson, which will give way to an analogous concept of political friendship in the latter. In Jefferson's ideal political society, economic independence within a generally equal, moderate, large middle class was a necessary requisite for a regime aimed at the cultivation and maintenance of a virtuous, competent, self-

governing citizenry. Without economic independence for the largest number of citizens possible -- and more so without the gross inequality that Jefferson held to be a large source of political and moral corruption -- proper self-governance would be impossible. We can see also within Jefferson's disdain for gross inequality the Aristotelian argument against class-based hatreds, which are corrosive to the concept of right rule that is necessary for political friendship. Both the extremely rich and poor are unwilling or unable to obey reason, and cannot act prudently. The grossly poor are malicious towards those who would rule adverse to their interests, while the very rich are ignorant and unwilling to rule properly due to their leisure and luxury (*Pol.* 1295b15-34). Jefferson saw these gross economic disparities as violations of natural rights (to James Madison, October 28, 1785). Yet, importantly, he also saw them as "producing so much misery to the bulk of mankind" (to James Madison), that regimes characterized by it would be the farthest removed "from affection and a political community (*Pol.* 1295b24).

In order to be properly self-governing, along with economic independence and general equality, citizens must also possess a capacity for prudence and an understanding of right rule. Inherent in prudence is a widening of individual perspectives to accommodate that of others, which itself is necessary in order to properly consider the common advantage. Only after possessing prudence -- or, only after becoming capable of proper deliberation -- can citizens understand right rule and act in accordance with it, in that citizens rule and are ruled in turn by "having someone look to their good, just as when ruling previously they looked to his" (*Pol.* 1279a5-22). Jefferson's understanding of right rule within a competent citizenry fits well with Aristotle's understanding. When writing of the dangers of life-appointments of Senators, Jefferson argues that the legislators "might have in idea that they were at a certain period to return into the mass of the people and become the governed [again]... which might still keep

alive that regard to the public good that otherwise they might... be induced by their independence to forget" (to Edmund Pendleton, August 26, 1776). Inherent in Jefferson's concern is that these legislators, if made independent from the general citizenry's guidance, would not be inclined towards prudent partiality and a consideration of those things "conducive to living well in general" (*NE* 1140a25-32).

This understanding of right rule is fundamental for the carrying out of proper republican self-governance. In line with this, Jefferson's educated citizenry would possess both refined hearts (the benevolent moral sense) and minds (the intellectual capacity for prudence).¹⁸ This would not only engage and promote public and private deliberation among citizens, but also the "feelings of sympathy, of benevolence... of justice, of love, [and] of friendship" (to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786). These characteristics would inject meaning, and perhaps even efficiency, into the public attitudes and disposition necessary for deliberation and self-governance. These amicable feelings that arise in Jefferson's citizenry can be understood as another form of the mutual self-respect -- the same that characterizes Aristotelian political friendship. Therefore, not only would Jefferson's republican citizenry possess "knowledge of rule over free persons from both points of view" (*Pol.* 1277b15-16), but they would also be notably characterized by "practical intelligence [prudence], virtue, and goodwill" (*Rhet.* 1378a6-9).

Upon this look at Jefferson's ideal regime, we may now see that the instrumental features in producing Aristotelian political friendship do exist there. The citizenry of such a political society would indeed possess egalitarian attitudes. Their shared general economic equality, along with the capacity for prudence and right rule through their shared education, and a general attitude of benevolence and amicability between them as drawn out through the exercise of their

¹⁸ See the letters to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786; to George Wyth, August 13, 1786; to Thomas Law, June 13, 1786

moral sense, are all productive of expanded perceptions and outlooks that characterize mutual self-respect. Jefferson's republican citizenry may even be superior to Aristotle's *hoi mesoi* in this respect: it would have, as one of its "primary obligations," an aim to cultivate our natural moral sense of "peace, charity, and love to our fellow men" (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803). From all of these things shared between an independent, egalitarian, educated people, they may then properly deliberate and pursue their common wants and common aims. This is what Aristotle means when he claims that "like-mindedness [*homonoia*], therefore, appears to be political friendship" (*NE* 1167b2-3, *NE* 1155a23-27).

Where would political friendship find itself expressed in Jefferson's regime? Like Aristotle, it has no one specific place wherein it blooms. Instead, political friendship, as found in egalitarian and benevolent attitudes of mutual self-respect, would find itself exercised in a similar way to the moral sense: within the deliberation and public obligations necessary to a self-governing political society. It would go beyond only these institutional obligations, though, because of that very same moral sense. The Christian ethical ideas of benevolence, charity, love, and friendship towards our fellow citizens and neighbors would incline individuals within Jefferson's political society to expand or deepen their egalitarian attitudes. It is this expansion or deepening of our social duties, beyond institutional obligations, that led Jefferson to praise Christ for refining our natural moral sense with "the sublimest of eloquence" (to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803).

This like-mindedness, egalitarianism, goodwill, and political friendship between citizens would also set the two salient goals of Jefferson's republican regime within reach. A citizenry characterized by general economic equality, sharing an education in ethics and intellect, and exercising their benevolent social nature through self-governance, would find their liberty and

natural rights firmly secured. Likewise, they would have their good natures cultivated in line with the highest human good -- happiness. In reaching for these two goals, and cultivating harmony among benevolent political friends, Jefferson's ideal regime would best refine and preserves the citizens' "public morals and public tranquility" (*Second Inaugural Address*, March 4, 1805).

Sec. VII - Conclusion

Displayed within Jefferson's political philosophy are tensions between the general aims of modern liberalism and classical republicanism. The former aiming to protect the rights and liberties of individuals who comprise the political community, itself bonded by an artificial social contract, from external violations; the latter aiming to cultivate the more noble parts of our social nature, through direct participation, in a naturally emergent political society. These two views, when taken in such a way, would appear contradictory. Yet, I contribute substantively to debates in the literature¹⁹ by my showing that Jefferson's ideal political society, a direct manifestation of his political philosophy, would seek to reconcile this tension by combining what he held to be the most admirable and beneficial parts of each: only a well-aimed political society, designed for self-governance, could ensure the cultivation of our social natures while likewise securing our natural rights. In that way, he attempted to secure the mean.

Along with this, Jefferson augmented this classical understanding of human nature and political society. He saw human nature as much more outwardly focused and amicable, characterized by natural sentiments of benevolence and charity. This Christian addition to a

¹⁹ See Appleby 1976; Sheldon 1991; Yarbrough 2006.

classical understanding of human nature was aimed to incline citizens to reach "far beyond... in inculcating universal philanthropy..." (Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803). Thus, the cultivation of virtue, in accord with our benevolent moral sense, became an primary objective for Jefferson's ideal political society. The ward democracies would nurture our moral and intellectual wellness, and habituate the corresponding virtues through obligatory political participation and social cooperation. If the interests of the individual and the regime, soundly calculated, are "inseparable from our moral duties" (*Second Inaugural Address*, March 4, 1805), would this contradict a liberal emphasis on the protection of individual liberties? Jefferson thought not. With the prerequisites of economic, ethical, and intellectual independence and competence of citizens within the self-governing wards, Jefferson believed that his regime would be its own best defense against violations of natural rights (to Joseph C. Cabell, Feb. 2, 1816): Each competent citizen would best "judge for himself [of] what will secure or endanger his freedom" (to J. Tyler, May 26, 1810).

The harmonization of supposedly opposing influences in Jefferson's political thought is perhaps best demonstrated with his understanding of happiness. For Aristotle, happiness is defined clearly as the "activity of the soul in accord with virtue... [over] a complete life" (*NE* 1098a16-19): this is the exclusive teleological end of human life - that at which all things ought to aim. Jefferson proposed a similar definition, that "individual happiness [is] inseparable from the practice of virtue," and that such activity is "essential to the happiness of man" (to J. Correa de. Serra, April 19, 1814; to Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803). Where Jefferson departs, due to the influences of modern liberalism, is in the individual liberty of each citizen to pursue happiness as they see fit. Citizens can live as they like, so long as they fulfill their obligations to political society, which is conducive to the Christian virtues that are essential to the individual

happiness of each. This marriage of liberalism of classicism is best displayed in the preamble to the Declaration: that all are endowed with the *rights* to life, liberty, and the *pursuit* of happiness [emphasis mine] (*The Declaration of Independence*, 1776). Moreover, this project renews the possibility of future, more in-depth comparisons between Aristotle and Jefferson, about topics of perhaps even greater significance. After all, we have seen that, despite "analogy and difference, time and time again" (Lehmann 1947, 53), such comparisons are plausible -- and fruitful.

We can now consider another question posed at the start: have we human beings moved beyond the ancients, and is there nothing else left to learn from them? To answer, we may look to Jefferson. Upon the ethical and political principles he sourced from the ancients, he contemplated with notable prudence what the best American regime ought to be composed of, and how it could compel its citizens towards virtue, benevolence, and harmony, while nevertheless offering them liberty and the security of their rights. It was this sentiment that caused him to write that the best regime ought to "lay the foundations of public happiness in wholesome laws, the execution of which alone remains for others..." (*The Second Inaugural Address*, March 4, 1805). Within this regime, foundationally classical and with important liberal freedoms, Americans would possess a distinctive type of freedom which was ours to dutifully maintain. By searching for Aristotelian political friendship (*politikē philia*) and the "political art" of prudence (*phronēsis*) (NE 1141a22) within Jefferson's political thought - and finding it - we can look to his political philosophy with a renewed perspective. Perhaps more importantly, we can use the high aims and sentiments of Jefferson's philosophy as a guidepost to measure our own political realities.

Throughout this examination, we have discussed the *ideal* regimes of Aristotle and Jefferson; not those that exist in actuality. Political friendship, seen in Aristotle's regimes or

more amicably through Jefferson's addition of Christian benevolence, may be difficult to grasp from our contemporary context. What would it look like to look to each others' interests, and they to ours, as if we were considering our own interests? What would a harmonized political society look like, one of "undogmatic social unity" (Schwarzenbach 1996, 99), where togetherness is found not through coercion but through a genuine goodwill and desire to secure common wants and aims? Through this analysis of political friendship, its philosophical foundations, and the institutional components that give rise to it, we may see something that renews not only our perspective of Jefferson's America, but of our own. What is required of us to live within a republican democracy? Moreover, we must consider what is meant when we say *political community*, in reference to contemporary liberal democracies. That aside, our obligations to the political community -- if the nature and benefits of political friendship holds water -- must go far beyond the occasional vote or town hall attendance. We must, as individuals and as members of a community, genuinely endeavor to deliberate, harmonize, and secure our common wants and common aims. So, too, we must work to cultivate within ourselves (and the community) the intellect and goodness inherent in refined heads and hearts. To do this would allow us, as a community and as individuals, to reach towards the greatest good of all -- our happiness.

These considerations are profound, as are their implications. They are too difficult to fully grapple with here, and their answers perhaps too obscure. Yet, deliberation alone can be generative and beneficial. Our examination political friendship can, least of all, show what an authentic, amicable, egalitarian political community in America *could* look like. It is something to be hoped for. Or more: to be aimed towards.

Appendix I: Aristotle

The Nicomachean Ethics

Book I, chapters 1-5, 7, 9, 13

Book II, chapters 1-9

Book III, chapters

Book VI, chapters 1-13

Book VII, chapters 1-4

Book VIII, chapters 1-14

Book IX, chapters 1-12

Book X, chapters 6-8

The Politics

Book I, chapters 1-3

Book II, chapters 1-12

Book III, chapters 1-13

Book IV, chapters 3-16

Book V, chapters 1-4, 8-9

Book VI, chapters 1-8

Book VII, chapters 1-4, 7-10, 13-15

Book VIII, chapters 1-3

The Rhetoric

Book I, chapters 3-9, 13-14

Book II, chapters 1-3

Appendix II: Thomas Jefferson

Public Papers, Speeches, and Publications:

A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled, 1776 (Jefferson's Draft)
The Declaration of Independence, 1776
A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, 1778
The Constitution of the United States of America, 1787
Notes on the State of Virginia, Queries XVIII, XIX, 1787
Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1805

Correspondence to:

Edmund Pendleton, August 26, 1776
Chastellux, June 7, 1785
James Madison, October 28, 1785
George Wythe, August 13, 1786
Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786
Peter Carr, with Enclosure, August 10, 1787
John Adams, November 13, 1787
James Madison, December 20, 1787
Dr. Joseph Priestley, April 9, 1803
Benjamin Rush, April 21, 1803
John Tyler, May 26, 1810
John B. Colvin, September 20, 1810
John Adams, October 28, 1813
P.S. DuPont de Nemours, April 24, 1816
Francis W. Gilmer, June 7, 1816
J. Correa de. Serra, April 19, 1814
Thomas Law, June 13, 1814
Peter Carr, September 7, 1814
Joseph C. Cabell, Feb. 2, 1816
John Taylor, May 28, 1816
Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816
John Holmes, August 15, 1820
Jared Sparkes, February 4, 1824
James Heaton, May 20, 1824
Maj. John Cartwright, June 5, 1824

William Ludlow, September 6, 1824

Bibliography

Aristide Tessitore. 2003. "Chapter 7, Legitimate Government, Religion, and Education: The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson." In *History of American Political Thought*, eds. Bryan-Paul Frost, Jeffrey Sikkenga. USA: Lexington Books.

Appleby, Joyce. 1976. "Liberalism and the American Revolution." *The New England Quarterly* 49 (1):3-26.

Aristotle, Robert C. Barlett, and Susan D. Collins. 2011. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Chicago, USA: Chicago University Press.

Aristotle, and Carnes Lord. 2013. *Politics*. Chicago, USA: Chicago University Press.

Aristotle, and Robin Waterfield. 2018. *Rhetoric*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bartlett, Robert C. 1994. "Aristotle's Science of the Best Regime." *The American Political Science Review* 88 (1):143-55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2944887>.

Bickford, Susan. 1996. "Beyond Friendship: Aristotle on Conflict, Deliberation, and Attention." *The Journal of Politics* 58 (2):398-421. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2960232>.

Brewer, Talbot. 2005. "Virtues we can Share: Friendship and Aristotelian Ethical Theory." *Ethics* 115 (4):721-58. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/430489>.

Danzig, Gabriel. 2000. "The Political Character of Aristotelian Reciprocity." *Classical Philosophy* 95 (4):399-424.

Erkkila, Betsy. 2007. "Radical Jefferson." *American Quarterly* 59 (2):277-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40068463>.

Frank, Jill. 2005. *A Democracy of Distinction: Aristotle and the Work of Politics*. USA: Chicago University Press.

Lehmann, Karl. 1947. *Thomas Jefferson, American Humanist*. New York, USA: The Macmillan Company.

Lindsay, Thomas K. 1992. "Liberty, Equality, Power: Aristotle's Critique of the Democratic "Presupposition"." *American Journal of Political Science* 36 (3):743-61. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111589>.

Lockwood, Thornton, and Thanassis Samaras, eds. 2015. *Aristotle's Politics, A Critical Guide*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Maloy, J. S. 2009. "The Aristotelianism of Locke's Politics." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (2):235-57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40208102>.

McDowell, Gary L., and Sharon L. Noble, eds. 1997. *Reason and Republicanism, Thomas Jefferson's Legacy of Liberty*. USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Mulgan, R. G. 1977. *Aristotle's Political Theory, An Introduction for Students of Political Theory*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

PARIS, CRYSTAL C. 2016. "Ancient, Modern, and Post-National Democracy:; Deliberation and Citizenship between the Political and the Universal." In *On Civic Republicanism*, eds. GEOFFREY C. KELLOW, NEVEN LEDDY: University of Toronto Press, 89-116.

Peterson, Merrill D., ed. 1984. *Thomas Jefferson, Writings*. New York, USA: Penguin Books USA.

Ruderman, Richard S. 1997. "Aristotle and the Recovery of Political Judgment." *The American Political Science Review* 91 (2):409-20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2952364>.

Schwarzenbach, Sibyl A. 1996. "On Civic Friendship." *Ethics* 107 (1):97-128. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382245>.

Scorza, Jason A. 2004. "Liberal Citizenship and Civic Friendship." *Political Theory* 32 (1) (Feb 1,):85-108. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4148170>.

Shalhope, Robert E. 1976. "Thomas Jefferson's Republicanism and Antebellum Southern Thought." *The Journal of Southern History* 42 (4):529-56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2208005>.

Sheldon, Garrett W. 1991. *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson*. Baltimore, USA: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sherman, Nancy. 1987. "Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47 (4):589-613. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2107230>.

Smith, Thomas W. 1999. "Aristotle on the Conditions for and Limits of the Common Good." *The American Political Science Review* 93 (3):625-36. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2585578>.

Wood, Gordon S. 1998. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*. North Carolina, USA: University of North Carolina Press.

Yack, Bernard. 2006. "Rhetoric and Public Reasoning, an Aristotelian Understanding of Political Deliberation." *Political Theory* 34 (4):417-38. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20452473>.