NRH because Strauss's response to historicism, according to him, requires accurate historical studies, more accurate than those done on the basis of historicist presuppositions: "Our most urgent need can then be satisfied only by means of historical studies which would enable us to understand classical philosophy *exactly* as it understood itself, and not in the way in which it presents itself on the basis of historicism. … We need no less urgently a nonhistoricist understanding of historicism, that is, an understanding of the genesis of historicism that does not take for granted the soundness of historicism" (*NRH*, 33; emphasis added).

This view is confirmed by "Historicism" (1941): "if we take historicism seriously, if we take seriously the view that the whole past must be understood *adequately*, we are on the best way of overcoming historicism" (81; emphasis added). In that lecture, Strauss lists some rules of historical exactness, which he himself accepts. His standard for historical exactness was so keen that he could write: "While the modern historian accepts as binding the rules which I have intimated, he very rarely lives up to them, owing to the weakness of the flesh. As a matter of fact, I do not know a single historical study which is beyond reproach from the point of view of historical research. That study known to me which comes nearest to the goal of historical exactness is J. Klein's analysis of Greek logistics and the genesis of modern algebra" (80). The weakness of the flesh that Strauss refers to is not the desire to be an exact historian but the natural obstacles (both intellectual and passionate) that stand in the way of that goal.

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Danny Kaplan: *The Nation and the Promise of Friendship: Building Solidarity through Sociability*. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. xii, 227.)

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In 1911, Winston Churchill and his good friend F. E. Smith (Lord Birkenhead) formed the Other Club, a dining club of "clubbable" British notables. Its main purpose was to promote cross-partisan friendships, but it was also simply a social club where sociability was enjoyed for its own sake. Even so, more than twenty of its members would serve in Churchill's national government during World War II, and in July 1945, over a quarter of the entire government were members. One might say the Other Club was the crucible of Britain under Churchill.

The Other Club exemplifies Danny Kaplan's provocative argument that the modern nation-state is a form of friendship whose crucible can be found in the social clubs of the nation. If Plato argues the city is the soul writ large, Kaplan argues the nation-state is the social club writ large. For instance, to illustrate the rise of the civic egalitarian public sphere, he observes that by the end of the eighteenth century an estimated one-third of all English townsmen belonged to at least one such club. By drawing together the work of political sociologists of nationalism and civil society, historians of nineteenth-century European social clubs and cafes, political theorists working on (mostly) Aristotelian accounts of friendship, and his own empirical work on Israeli Freemasons, *Big Brother* television shows, and military friendships, Kaplan develops an account of how the nation-state is seeded by social clubs and other gatherings whose interactions are "pursued for [their] own sake irrespective of anything the participants have to gain from [them]" (47). Kaplan's discussion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social clubs in Great Britain reminds the reader of the Bertie Wooster character in the P. G. Wodehouse novels (Wodehouse was also a member of the Other Club). The clubbable Wooster frequently speaks of the "code of the Woosters," and so Kaplan's argument might be characterized as the "constitutionalism of the Woosters."

In addition to its introduction and conclusion, the book is divided into two parts. Part 1, containing six chapters, details the theoretical framework of the book. There Kaplan develops his account of the nation-state as a form of friendship by engaging mostly with scholarship of political sociology on nationalism and civil society. Kaplan explains the basic *problématique* of the nation-state as transforming strangers into friends. Most political sociologists fail to show how a national consciousness conveys a sense of close-knit community because, in treating national consciousness as something abstract, they fail to show how concrete personal friendships form the basis for "deep comradeship" at the political level. Kaplan is developing an action-based account of the common good or political friendship that depends on a citizenry capable of active personal virtue friendships, over and against the conventional academic view that treats nationhood as inactive identity constructed or imagined in top-down fashion. Indeed, in this sense Kaplan is more ambitious than even Tocqueville whose own hope for democratic political renewal through civil association did not extend to "deep comradeship" at the national level.

Kaplan develops a performance- or ritual-based account whereby strangers transform into friends in smaller settings like social clubs, and whereby they subsequently perform their "public intimacies" on the stage in civil society. Kaplan describes something like a chain of performances of "public intimacies" of strangers transforming into friends that expands outward from club to an active sense of national fellow-feeling. Mimesis is the mechanism of this "playground" for "negotiating the vocabulary, ideals, and tensions of civic-nationalism" (142): "Public intimacy mediates between interpersonal

and collective ties through a dynamic of seduction—staging relationships under the gaze of spectators in ways that tease and invite others to become participants" (12). Kaplan sees an analogy between the way clubs and nations negotiate boundaries of membership.

Crucial to this process is Kaplan's argument that social clubs serve no other purpose than sociability, a noninstrumentalism he also ascribes to the modern nation-state. Clubs are seeds of national fellow-feeling, while national fellow-feeling also informs the clubs; the relationship is reciprocal, which is why the reader must be careful not to mistake him as offering a causal theory of the nation. If anything, the causation is formal, not efficient. Kaplan's characterization of social clubs and of the nation-state compares with Michael Oakeshott's characterization of the modern state as a civil association (which owes much to Montaigne's account of friendly conversation), which he compared with friendship as a practice that needs no justification outside itself.

Part 2 consists of three case studies in Israel of social clubs seeding the political friendship of the nation-state: (1) Freemasons, (2) public spectatorship of the television show *Big Brother* (Israel), and (3) military friendships and commemoration of the missing and the dead. The Freemason case study fits most closely with the general social club model and also happens to compare fruitfully with Niall Ferguson's recent treatment of social networks, including the Freemasons, in *The Square and the Tower*. But the key to Kaplan's analysis is in demonstrating how the Freemasons provide a model for the "deep comradeship" of civic nationalism. Kaplan emphasizes civic nationalism because, like virtue friendship, it is based not upon kinship ties but upon cultivation of character: moral and intellectual in the case of personal friendship, and civic virtue in the case of civic nationalism. The Freemasons dedicate themselves to "philosophical 'enlightenment'" and "society building." He cites one particular Masonic doctrine that was developed by American occult philosopher and Confederate general Albert Pike, "who interpreted the Masonic Scottish Rite as a moral allegory for citizenship and statesmanship" (132). He discusses various Freemason rituals, including the "Chain of Brothers" and "White Table," that "magnif[y] the quality of 'selfless unisonance' experienced during national ceremonies and present[] a moral order of unity and singularity" (140). Thus Kaplan concludes: "The distinct patterns of sociability fostered in Masonic clubs cultivate a civic-national attachment and reveal how this form of national solidarity combines a universalist ethos of fraternity with a particularist preference for a selected group of citizen-friends" (144).

Kaplan's discussion of how national fellow-feeling develops out of the public spectatorship of *Big Brother* is less convincing. He illuminates how the show reflects national sentiments but provides inadequate evidence that the show produces them. *Big Brother* is not the same as the Athenians learning practical wisdom and justice by watching Aeschylus's *The Persians*. Robert Putnam, after all, argued television was largely to blame for the decline in America's social capital. *Big Brother* is a "gossip community"

which falls well short of the type of deliberative speech characteristic of a political regime capable of collective action. Conversely, Kaplan's analysis of military friendships and commemoration is insightful but also haunting and beautiful. He nicely captures the pathos of commemoration of the missing and dead soldiers, and shows how political friendship is indeed made possible by the supreme acts of loving self-sacrifice of a regime's heroes.

Most consider the modern nation-state to be something quite different from if not hostile to the idea of political friendship. Kaplan's argument that most literature on the formation of nations and nationalism fails to explain the phenomenon is compelling, and his social club model of the nation-state is a promising avenue of argumentation and future research.

Kaplan presents his findings as preliminary for an agenda of future research. I propose two additional themes worth examining. The first is Kaplan's frequent reference to the transformation of strangers into friends as "magic." Commonsense experience of becoming friends with someone (not to mention the formation of political friendship on a large scale) does indeed confirm it is magical but modern social science can hardly make sense of this claim. The premodern political philosophers Kaplan mentions (and whose insights he claims his work provides empirical verification of) can assist in making better sense of it because of their attention to how the practice of friendship eludes our categories for understanding it. For example, in Plato's *Lysis*, Socrates asks how one makes a friend. It is also a mysterious dialogue over which Hermes, the god of reconciliation, hovers.

Second, the author needs to clarify further the character of political friendship. It is more than simply fellow-feeling or solidarity. *Homonoia* enables a people to act in concert, as a people. One fascinating modern example of political friendship in this sense, that fits well with Kaplan's analysis, is the Baltic peoples during the collapse of the Soviet empire. Guntis Šmidchens has shown how their choral festivals not only were the crucible of their nationalism, but also enabled them, astonishingly, to act politically and nonviolently in national liberation. Their "Singing Revolution" finds its precedent in the regime described by the Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws*, which is a political friendship expressed chorally and, indeed, perhaps magically. Kaplan's book overturns conventional ancient-modern dichotomies by demonstrating the endurance of this Platonic logic of political friendship. The Platonic case is also perhaps a fascinating instance of the constitutionalism of Bertie Wooster, who was of course guided by his own philosopher-king, Jeeves.

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