still others warn that, for a variety of reasons—the weakening of and loss of confidence in religious institutions, the much-remarked "rise of the nones" and general secularization, the increasing salience of "culture war"–related conflicts between the religious commitments of some and others' understandings of equality's demands, and so on—it can no longer be taken for granted that American officials, administrators, regulators, and citizens assign foundational importance to religious freedom and its demands.

West ends with the suggestion that, whether or not the early Americans' understanding of the free-exercise principle is morally attractive or should guide the construction of Supreme Court doctrine, understanding and giving a "respectful hearing" to the principle's original meaning can help Americans today decide, "in a careful and thoughtful way," "how government should treat religion" (308). We should hope that he is correct.

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John von Heyking: *Comprehensive Judgment and Absolute Selflessness: Winston Churchill on Politics as Friendship*. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2018. Pp. ix, 187.)

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John von Heyking intends to make the case for friendship as a central political category. The case is not, as cynics would have it, that friendship is a means to power, but that the best politics is itself the practice of a certain form of friendship. Aristotle's foundational account of virtue friendship provides the theoretical framework, while the life and statecraft of Winston Churchill bring theory to life. In framing Churchill's deeds and thought in Aristotelian terms, von Heyking does us the service of reminding us of the possibility of a nobler vision of friendship, politics, and the convergence of the two than is usually met with today.

The opening chapters introduce the main themes, most of which concern the interpenetration of theory (understood in terms of story rather than philosophic contemplation) and practice. Praising the bard at the court of the king of the Phaeacians, Homer's Odysseus acknowledges the festive banquet hall as the appropriate setting for reflection on great deeds; this ancient scene prefigures Churchill's own dining society, the Other Club, whose function is at once leisurely and practical. Sharing in convivium with one another, members cement the personal ties that will reinforce their political friendships and public pursuits of virtue. Friendly conversation mixes reflective

solemnity and playful flexibility; it thus both images and cultivates the phronetic wisdom appropriate to political judgment. The Club's festive atmosphere also provides a transcendent anchor of sorts, reminding political actors that ultimately leisure is above action and peace is above strife.

If there is a core idea at the book's heart, it is probably the way in which a certain type of holistic vision informs and inspires virtuous action. The theme first appears in the context of von Heyking's view that political acts do not find their fitting completion until they have been recounted in times of leisurely reflection, for stories (approximating contemplation) give form and meaning to deeds. The most proper locus of this storytelling is friendship, which von Heyking, citing Aristotle, understands as "living together and sharing conversation and thinking" (16). The experience of friends reflecting back on their shared actions "has something visionary about it. Together, we friends behold and pursue the good and the beautiful while beholding each other" (16). The quotation expresses von Heyking's understanding of Aristotle's term *sunaisthēsis*, translated as "shared perception" and understood as a perceptual activity whose triadic structure links two friends together with the good and, in so doing, constitutes the crowing peak of friendship.

The second chapter contains a thematic reflection on difficult tensions in the life of von Heyking's subject: between the pursuit of greatness and friendship, and between a desire for honor and a love of truth. von Heyking understands Churchill's pursuit of greatness in terms of two ancient categories: Aristotelian magnanimity (tempered by Christian mercy) and Platonic daimonism. Von Heyking's protreptic reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* takes the internal tension in the magnanimous individual's desire for honor from inferiors to point towards the eventual recognition that genuine greatness requires subordinating the desire for honor to the desire for truth, a recognition von Heyking glimpses in Churchill's attitude towards his failure in the 1945 election.

Another form of greatness involves a certain "daimonism or musical soul"; von Heyking links this characterization to the Socratic figure who in Plato's *Symposium* mediates between the human and the divine realms (36). Such mediation can manifest itself in the political creativity characteristic of the great individual who comprehends the whole and concretely reflects that order through his governance. On von Heyking's telling, Churchill saw himself as one blessed with such an intermediary role, aided by his personal charisma and ability to move souls with the music of words.

The three remaining parts of the book relate the central themes to the particular friendships and episodes that made up Churchill's life and career, focusing on Churchill and Roosevelt, Churchill's complex attitude towards parliamentary democracy, and his biography *The Life of Marlborough*.

Churchill and Roosevelt, with their largely overlapping but sometimes opposed interests, reveal the possible tension between virtue friendship and realpolitik national interests, memorably illustrated by Roosevelt's

willingness to slight Churchill publicly in order to curry favor with Stalin. Elsewhere von Heyking's focus is more uplifting: a worship service on HMS *Prince of Wales*, carefully orchestrated by Churchill, cements the relationship of the two allied powers through festive bonds and reveals the "the liturgical essence of political friendship" (89). Later, Churchill's extended visit to Washington offers the two statesmen opportunity to test one another's characters in the course of "thinking and speaking together." The sharing proper to friendship reached its height on a trip to Marrakesh, when together they viewed "the sunset on the snows of the Atlas Mountains" (94). The sunaisthetic appreciation of transcendent beauty that unites two friends with one another and with the good constitutes a brief moment when the leisurely end of philosophical or artistic absorption interrupts everyday business, a business that is in the end justified insofar as it makes such leisurely moments possible.

In part 3, "The Friendly Regime," von Heyking considers how parliamentary democracy links members from different political parties, social classes, and even time periods into a form of friendship that constitutes one great "Island Story." There remains, of course, the difficult question of relations to those who stand outside the bonds of this national friendship: a chapter on the tension between Churchill's commitment to parliamentary democracy and his imperialist ambitions revives some of the earlier problems associated with magnanimity.

Part 4, "Friendship and the Sum of Things," revisits the core themes while reflecting on the nature and purpose of Churchill's biography of his ancestor, the duke of Marlborough. Again a synoptic vision is of central importance, though here it appears in the nonleisurely context of the battlefield, where Marlborough's ability to discern enemy strategies was legendary. Churchill movingly describes the parallel between this form of political judgment and the aesthetic judgment exercised by a great painter in a passage that calls to mind Aristotle's comparison of the virtuous individual and the artist: both aim at the proportionate in light of the whole (*EN* 2.6).

Marlborough's insight into the political and military realities before him is intimately linked to his capacity to enter into the "ethos" of another. Churchill writes: "It is these qualities of *perfect comprehensive judgment* … this fixing with untiring eye and *absolute selflessness* the problem as a whole, that deserve the study and respect of soldiers of every age" (148). The essential link von Heyking sees here between political prudence and virtue friendship evidently inspired the title of his book, but it is not clear that "absolute selflessness" is a phrase that sits all that comfortably with the Aristotelian model of virtue friendship (see *EN* 9.8). This in an example of larger pattern that may lead the reader to appreciate the depth of von Heyking's insights while also believing that his associative style would be fruitfully supplemented by a more exact analysis of the conceptual links.

Churchill, who was critical of Marlborough's preference that his deeds speak for themselves, believed it fell to him to provide the narrative structure

that would give those deeds lasting meaning. One has the sense von Heyking is sympathetic to Churchill here, but the importance placed on such public storytelling revives an earlier tension associated with magnanimity. If the great-souled individual is content with the truth of his deeds, then ensuring the proper public narrative seems to be of little importance (both points seem true of Marlborough). If, as seems to be the case for Churchill, action acquires its intelligibility owing (at least partly) to the stories later told about it, then we are left with the question of whose story will dominate, as well as the threat that honor can be stripped from the individual as soon as a new storyteller comes along. Will the great-souled individual who is wedded to the importance of storytelling really be so willing to subordinate his desire for honor to a desire for truth at the end of the day?

Perhaps the answer to the tension is hinted at in von Heyking's final chapter, "Friendship with the 'Old Man.'" Von Heyking draws his own story to a close with the acknowledgment that human narration, however gifted the storyteller, does not truly complete political action. Churchill seems not to have been a religious believer in any traditional sense, but von Heyking finds traces of an underlying hope that his actions will ultimately be found significant within the framework of a moral cosmos that ensures the triumph of justice. It is this hope that, von Heyking tells us, sustains both the pursuit of justice and the possibility for political friendship. Perhaps it assures the final convergence of proper honor and truly great deeds as well.

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Aaron Tugendhaft: *Baal and the Politics of Poetry.* (London: Routledge, 2018. Pp. xviii, 165.)

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Aaron Tugendhaft's *Baal and the Politics of Poetry* studies the Ugaritic mythological poem of *Baʿlu* for what it can reveal about the relationship between poetry and politics in its ca. thirteen-century BCE Syrian coastal context. Ugaritic is a Northwest Semitic language closely related to Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic and is known primarily from alphabetic cuneiform tablets discovered since 1928 at the tell of Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) and other sites. *Baʿlu* narrates on six clay tablets the exploits of the eponymous local storm god, who battles and overcomes the sea god Yammu (tablets