



# Friendship Reconsidered: What It Means and How It Matters to Politics

*P. E. Digeser*

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In the history of Western thought, friendship's relationship to politics is checkered. Friendship was seen as key to understanding political life in the ancient world, but it was then ignored for centuries. Today, friendship has again become a desirable framework for political interaction. In *Friendship Reconsidered*, P. E. Digeser contends that our rich and varied practices of friendship multiply and moderate connections to politics. Along the way, she sets forth a series of ideals that appreciates friendship's many forms and its dynamic relationship to individuality, citizenship, political and legal institutions, and international relations.

Digeser argues that, as a set of practices bearing a family resemblance to one another, friendship calls our attention to the importance of norms of friendly action and the mutual recognition of motive. Focusing on these attributes clarifies the place of self-interest and duty in friendship and points to its compatibility with the pursuit of individuality. She shows how friendship can provide islands of stability in a sea of citizen-strangers and, in a delegitimized political environment, a bridge between differences. She also explores how political and legal institutions can both undermine and promote friendship. Digeser then looks to the positive potential of international friendships, in which states mutually strive to protect the just character of one another's institutions and policies. Friendship's repertoire of motives and manifestations complicates its relationship to politics, Digeser concludes, but it can help us realize the limits and possibilities for generating new opportunities for cooperation.

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