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## **Friendship as the Missing Ingredient in Modern Politics: Examining the Role of Friendship in Fostering Virtue in the Works of Aristotle and Cicero**

This paper delves into the theoretical relationship between virtue, friendship, and politics, exploring the pivotal role of friendship as a bridge between individual ethics and the public sphere. Drawing upon the Aristotelian link established in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, where friendship serves as the crucial connection, the paper examines how cultivating virtuous friendships can foster positive change in the political realm. Further enriched by the contributions of Cicero, the paper compares and contrasts his perspective on friendship with that of Aristotle. It argues that reinvigorating the concept of the republic in contemporary politics necessitates a renewed emphasis on virtue, which can only be achieved through strong, virtuous friendships between political actors. Only through such bonds can the republican ideal of a just and flourishing society be truly realized. The paper contends that this transformation of political character must originate within civil society, ultimately aiming to transform political parties from their current state. This perspective necessitates a reframing of the contemporary role of political parties in democracies, emphasizing the importance of genuine friendship and shared values over partisan divides. By exploring the historical and philosophical underpinnings of this concept, the paper ultimately aims to offer a compelling vision for a more virtuous and effective political landscape, where friendship serves as a cornerstone for building a better future.