

Sunlight is the best disinfectant? Étienne de la Boétie on corruption and transparency

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Abstract

Étienne de La Boétie (1530–63) is a central, if enigmatic, figure in modern French political philosophy. While his name is most famous for his friendship with Montaigne, his *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (Discourse of Voluntary Servitude) is a tour-de-force of humanist political writing, a youthful paean to liberty arguing that subjection to tyrants is the result of popular corruption. This article argues that the text can be read as a reflection on the perils and promise of transparency. Reading La Boétie helps us see two radically different ways in which members of a polity can be known to one another – two models of transparency – and it offers an important, but ultimately unsettling, political ideal based on a classical conception of civic friendship. The article draws out the importance of this ideal for modern anti-corruption efforts.

Keywords

corruption, friendship, La Boétie, liberty, transparency

‘I firmly believe . . . that sunlight is the best disinfectant, and I know that restoring transparency is not only the surest way to achieve results, but also to earn back . . . trust in government.’¹ The author of this cliché is immaterial; it could have emerged from the mouth of any political leader since it was first coined in 1914.² It speaks to a widespread view: the gangrene of corruption can be cured by exposing it to the light of day. Corruption thrives in secret; we must eliminate the shady deals in dark back-rooms. And transparency itself *creates* trust. Of course, for all that political figures parrot the phrase, most concede that politics requires some degree of opacity: to insist that there ought to be no secret negotiations is akin to insisting that there be no feathered birds. (The WikiLeaks scandals have led many champions of open government to question the ideal of total transparency.)

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But if the transcendental principle of publicity appears to belong more to a noumenal realm than to the grubby world of politics, we remain generally receptive to the idea that corruptible human beings require mutual surveillance to keep them honest. This view is strongest in a modern, liberal philosophical tradition that is sceptical about human perfectibility and that seeks to control cities of devils through the mutual checking of powers. This call for transparency is an outgrowth of distrust.

Of course, transparency is not synonymous with integrity; when there is no capacity for enforcement, a transparent abuse of power merely makes a bad situation worse. Nor does transparency render legitimate those actions that, while legal, are widely mistrusted. Until recently American campaign financing was transparent (some might say brazen), but it still raised significant concerns about systemic corruption. Nonetheless, the increased opportunities for secrecy in the funding of campaign advertising cannot be seen as a step forward: transparency is widely seen as a necessary, if insufficient, condition of integrity.

But there are grounds for ambivalence even here. Foucaultian objections to transparency suggest themselves: the transparent world is the world of the Panopticon, the nanny-cam, the constant surveillance of oneself and others that serves to reinforce dominant relationships of power.³ We are rendered transparent even beneath the skin; our very souls are observed and configured with scientific tools. Transparency is a word that hides a move to uniformity – in shining their light into every dark corner, the champions of transparency subject the world to control, strengthening the power of those who play the transparency game best. One polemical author (less subtle than the Foucaultians) has gone so far as to equate the call for transparency with totalitarianism: ‘George Orwell has already described the place where the fanaticism for transparency leads.’⁴

Appealing as this iconoclastic argument is, however, it cannot allay well-established – even ancient – concerns that those who conduct political affairs in secrecy will be tempted to turn public goods to private purposes. Nor is the worry about shadows merely a liberal concern. We recall Rousseau’s enthusiastic praise of Geneva, ‘a state where, with all private individuals being known to one another, neither the obscure maneuvers of vice nor the modesty of virtue could be hidden from the notice and the judgment of the public’.⁵ (It is interesting that Foucault saw modernity as more psychologically intrusive than traditional village life, where mutual surveillance enforced the type of rigid moral codes that so delighted Rousseau.) Given our mixture of moral intuitions in this matter, it appears that the first place where we should be seeking transparency is in the conceptual contours of transparency itself.

The difficulty is that transparency is a metaphor that defines a number of possible phenomena. What is being made transparent, to whom, how? If transparency cures corruption, how does it do so? What is the pure state of integrity that is preserved by this visibility? Does transparency engender trust, as our opening quotation suggests? What is seen and what is concealed in situations of transparency? In this article I propose to explore one civic humanist response to these questions, Étienne de La Boétie’s *Discours de la servitude volontaire*.⁶ A classic in

French political philosophy, this 16th-century text has somehow fallen below the radar of the English-speaking world.⁷ La Boétie, famous friend of Montaigne and member of the Parliament of Bordeaux, wrote a youthful paean to liberty arguing that subjection to tyrants is the result of corruption – not primarily of the tyrant, who is indeed corrupt, but of the subjects, who lose their desire for liberty and equality and come instead to will their own subjection. The story that he tells is of a human falling away from a natural, healthy condition of radical mutual transparency and civic equality to a corrupted condition of estrangement, inequality and subjection. This article seeks to highlight the manner in which La Boétie conceives of a healthy, uncorrupted political community as one in which there is complete mutual transparency – but it is a transparency of a different sort than that with which we are most familiar. My main purpose in reading La Boétie is to draw out two competing conceptions of how members of a polity are known to one another, two models of transparency: transparency as political friendship and transparency as mutual surveillance. These models are mutually exclusive, and they have radically different effects on trust. Those with civic republican sympathies would do well to consider La Boétie's reflections on the links between mutual transparency and civic freedom.

An objection might well be raised at the outset, however: is this not a question of comparing apples and oranges? On the one hand I have spoken of the desire for citizens to know what their governments are doing, and on the other I have spoken of government surveillance of citizens. Surely these are radically different phenomena that cannot be unified under one general term 'transparency', just as the classical republican conception of civic corruption differs from the conception of government corruption animating contemporary political discourse. I wish to argue, however, that they are intimately linked. Indeed, the dialectic between trust-transparency and surveillance-transparency is precisely that which is revealed in a reading of La Boétie. To watch someone like a hawk is to foreclose the capacity to watch him like a dove. Calls for transparency and openness attempt to have things both ways; I intend to point out some social-psychological trade-offs. In addition, I suggest that the view that one can cultivate openness above and secrecy and privacy below requires a capacity for constant compartmentalization of public and private disposition – a compartmentalization that runs against the grain of classical civic republicanism. The battle between the two competing models of transparency that I am highlighting here is ultimately a battle between competing conceptions of the political good, and the social psychologies of trust and distrust are tied to wider regime considerations, a fact that comes clearly into view when one engages with La Boétie and the classical tradition that so informed his analysis.

The first section of the paper outlines the relationship between tyranny and corruption in the *Discours*, pointing out the manner in which appeals to narrow self-interest keep people in a state of subjection and mutual enmity. The subsequent two sections outline the nature of the healthy Boétian community based on full mutual transparency, arguing that its greatest debt is to a classical conception of political friendship. Against some dominant interpretations of the *Discours*, I insist

that La Boétie does offer a republican political ideal that, while vague on institutional details, entails extreme solidarity. The final section bolsters this interpretation and offers some significant reservations about La Boétie's stirring civic ideal by turning our attention to his late reflection on French confessional strife, the widely neglected 1561 *Mémoire sur la pacification des troubles*. I will argue that his call for a strict and violent reinstatement of confessional uniformity is not a complete *volte face*, but is intelligible in light of his insistence on radical solidarity – and it suggests that there is a high price to pay for extreme civic friendship. I will conclude with some reflections on the comparative utility of these competing models of transparency.

Systemic corruption: tyranny and the bribe

If corruption is widely defined as the 'abuse of public office for private gain', this definition naturally raises more philosophical questions than it answers. What is the right relationship between public and private? What constitutes gain, what abuse? But if the phrase is excessively broad, it can be made to capture radically different conceptions of neglect and abuse of public office, from Aristotelian tyranny to Lockean abuse of prerogative.⁸ The central civic humanist worry has been about the corruption of *citizens* such that they neglect the public good; decadent individuals abandon their civic duties for personal ends inimical to free civic life. This leaves them prone to subjection. Étienne de la Boétie's attack on tyranny as a product of the corruption of citizens follows this humanist line quite closely. But the *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, otherwise known as the *Contr'un*, equally appears to have a foot in many other camps: classical philosophy, modern state of nature theory and even anarchism. A masterpiece of renaissance rhetoric, the book's success lies in its fruitful ambiguities.

The question that La Boétie poses is the following: why do masses of people persist in obeying tyrants? Why would multitudes of reasonable beings persist in obeying a single individual who has no particular merit of which to speak and who even appears determined on courses of action that run counter to his subjects' most basic interests? It is particularly perverse that people would allow themselves to suffer a thousand cruelties 'non pas d'un Hercule ni d'un Samson, mais d'un seul hommeau, & le plus souvent le plus lasche et femelin de la nation'.⁹ It cannot be that subjects are mere cowards, following tyrants because they fear for their lives: on the contrary, some show resolute courage in war, giving their lives for this very cretin who oppresses them. Why, then, do they obey? The entire essay's argument will flow from the manner in which La Boétie has phrased this question. For the essay's brilliance is to have posed this question at all; it was certainly a rhetorical coup in 16th-century France to make obedience to one's monarch appear to be an odd, unhealthy anomaly in need of explanation.¹⁰ Only someone steeped in classics – Cicero, Livy, Plutarch, Tacitus, Xenophon – could so pose the question as to make the very notion of servitude to a single ruler appear illegitimate from the outset. What is clearly implied in the question is the conclusion that La Boétie is going to draw: authority always derives from the consent – indeed, the *desire* – of

the governed. People must obey tyrants willingly. The real question is one of social psychology: why do people will such a strange thing?

The response is that people allow themselves to be tyrannized because they have become slavish. Servitude itself corrupts subjects – habituated to their condition, they no longer seek freedom. For, La Boétie argues, if people wish to be free, they need merely to stop obeying tyrants. But regrettably, people have lost that love of liberty that was so common among the ancients. La Boétie seeks to shake his readers, awakening them to their misfortune: ‘Pauvres & miserables peuples insenses, nations opiniatres en vostre mal & aveugles en vostre bien,’ he harangues, why do you allow yourselves to be dominated? Tyrants are but little men with two arms, two eyes – ‘D’où a il pris tant d’yeux, dont il vous espie, si vous ne les luy bailles? Comment a il tant de mains pour vous fraper, s’il ne les prend de vous?’¹¹ Subjects of tyrants are complicit in their own subjection.

The current Payot paperback edition of the *Contr’un* bears the frontispiece from Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. It is in some ways an apt image of La Boétie’s claim that the power of the ‘one’ is, in fact, the power of all who obey him. The ‘little man’ who seems individually so contemptible is actually the head of a massive artificial man. La Boétie appears equally to be Hobbesian *avant la lettre* in conceiving of the sovereign’s power as a product of his subjects’ consent and the sum total of the subjects’ power united. La Boétie is, naturally, thoroughly anti-Hobbesian in decrying as tragic this loss of natural liberty. If one can feel a certain civic republican thrill in this heady cry for liberty, one can also conceive of a sensible Hobbesian reluctance to break one’s bonds. Indeed, La Boétie’s suggestion that regaining one’s liberty is perfectly easy – a mere question of wanting it, and of ceasing to lend one’s hand to one’s own oppression – comes across as an unforgivable rhetorical excess. But La Boétie’s account of our servitude is more complex than this, and the text is more than a mere exercise in humanist composition. While the beginning of the *Discours* offers an optimistic, empowering message, the later sections paint a bleak picture of group psychology.

The great question is, what makes a people will so perverse a thing as its own domination? The apparent paradox here is derived from the double sense of the word ‘people’: the ‘idiotic peoples’ whom La Boétie addresses are being addressed at the same time as collectivities and as individuals. In brief, La Boétie’s argument is that in the situation of subjection there is no true collectivity, hence no public-spiritedness; the state’s power – the eyes with which it spies and the arms with which it strikes – is born of radically atomized individuals each in their own little way serving, through active participation or passive acquiescence, to buttress the power structure that is so inimical to liberty. People are co-opted into a system of servitude by being individually and collectively corrupted.

His story of collective corruption follows the typical civic humanist story of decadence undermining virtue. The Emperors bribed the people collectively, intoxicating them with spectacles, coliseums, festivals and other populist measures that made the people forget their subjection or come to think that the lack of freedom is in their best interests. Second, he argues that tyrants typically corrupt religion, turning the honest worship of God into a superstitious devotion to the tyrant’s

person. He quotes a passage from Virgil approvingly in which a Sybil suffers ‘cruel torments’ ‘pour vouloir imiter les tonnerres du ciel, & feus de Juppiter’,¹² and he damns to hell contemporary Kings who cultivate such superstitions in their people.¹³

But if the people are corrupted collectively through populism, luxury and superstition, the main source of slavery, ‘the spring and the secret of domination’,¹⁴ is the system of individual corruption that the tyrant establishes. La Boétie describes a pyramidal power structure in which a small group of advisers, sharing in the tyrant’s dissipate desires, join him in pillaging the public. They each have, under their control, a hundred clients who maintain the system for rank and profit; they, in turn, have the power of purse, places and rank over their clients, and so on.¹⁵ The entire system reposes on the cultivation of a tyrannical/servile sensibility in people – they seek individual profit and the joy of possessing power themselves: ‘ces perdus . . . sont contents d’endurer du mal pour en faire, non pas à celui qui leur en faict, mais à ceus qui endurent comme eus’.¹⁶ This is the way in which people actively become their own enemies: they are charmed by the idea of wealth and power represented in the dominant figure of the King and his counsellors – like moths seeking some inexplicable pleasure in the flame of the candle, they are drawn to that which destroys them.¹⁷

Identifying with the source of repression, people make themselves its servants. They do not recognize that the system that they are reinforcing is merely the principle of piracy rendered political: the state becomes entirely dependent on the desire for domination and individual enrichment joined to a constant terror of losing not merely what they have gained, but their lives as well. La Boétie completes his treatise with a classically inspired tableau of horrors decrying as ephemeral the pleasures of the courtier, client and tyrant. With a mixture of erudition and outrage, he illustrates the folly of accepting the tyrant’s bribe, and the dreadful uncertainty in which both the clients of the tyrant and the tyrant himself live. Simply put, the bribe is not worth it; the dependency of the patron–client relationship both habituates people to a slavish condition and renders their existence entirely precarious.

Nature, community and communication

So far we have a familiar, classical picture of tyranny as a product of total corruption – a system in which servile people are entirely dependent on a chain of personal dependency in which the public is merely a source of wealth to be pillaged for private gain. The civic republican picture of corruption as a loss of civic virtue here is fully consonant with our contemporary picture of corruption as patron–client networks preying on the public. And indeed, La Boétie’s description of the tyrannical state, in all its horrors, would not appear out of place in a description of 20th- (and 21st-) century totalitarianisms and kleptocracies. Nor is its relevance limited to these extreme conditions – the phenomena described as the springs of tyranny are the types of social pathology (clientelism, state capture) that are central in any account of contemporary corruption.

If La Boétie is both classical in his allusions and in the philosophical sources, there is something surprisingly modern about his call for liberty: the *Discours* offers what appears to us to be an embryonic theory of the state of nature. Human beings, he argues, were made to be free. As children, we have a natural inclination and duty to follow our parents, but this is a mere preparation for adulthood when we can follow nothing but our own reason. And, he suggests, at some point in the past we lived in a condition of radical equality, in which each was free from domination.

The Rousseauian dimension of this is striking, and we might wonder whether La Boétie is pointing to some prehistoric condition akin to that found in the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. Pierre Clastres suggests that La Boétie differs from Rousseau only in that La Boétie believes the original condition actually existed.¹⁸ In Clastres's view, La Boétie wrote an anarchist text that envisaged a pre-political society, a society before the state, taken as an institution in which some rule over others. This is an influential reading, and one that has some textual justification, but it overlooks the examples of free societies to which La Boétie refers his readers: Sparta, republican Rome, and democratic Athens. (I hesitate to mention the non-historical example he gives, Plato's *Republic*. To laud the 'liberty' in Plato's *kallipolis* is surely a strange thing, and no clear explanation is offered in the text. We will return to this puzzle later.)

If a Spartan and an Athenian can be said to enjoy liberty, we can hardly conclude that the Boétian ideal is pre-political. It is not a 'state of nature' understood as a pre-political society; it is a 'natural' state, understood as a political system in which the human *telos* is realized. Far from being prehistorical, it is a historical reality one can encounter when one enters into discourse, by means of books, with Xenophon, Cicero, Aristotle and Plutarch. But it is difficult to pin down precisely what type of rule he wishes to celebrate. Sparta is not Athens, after all. And if La Boétie appears to be the consummate democrat, he exhibits a thorough disdain for the demos, whom he thinks easily duped by populists. Equally perplexing is the question of whether La Boétie means to condemn princes in general, or whether the text merely attacks tyrants.¹⁹ In some editions of the *Contr'un* one can read a clear distinction between the two: 'Il y a trois sortes de tyrans, je parle des meschans princes.'²⁰ This qualifier, however, is widely considered to be a later attempt to water down the text's radical conflation of prince and tyrant. If the Aristotelian conceptual distinction between a king and a tyrant is never questioned in the text, La Boétie clearly suggests that it is difficult to see 'anything public in a regime where everything belongs to one',²¹ and he articulates the standard republican concern that living under a good prince is bad for citizen virtue.²² Ultimately, any attempt to determine the precise nature of the republican regime championed in the *Discours* is bound to be speculative: the text simply does not have enough determinative content to support a full political philosophy. But this is not the text's purpose: its purpose is to awaken a dormant passion for equality. It is meant to awaken the feelings of a *citizen*. To establish the precise institutional arrangements entailed by the ideal of non-domination requires us to go beyond this brief display of literary virtuosity to the sources animating La Boétie's passion. The burden of the philosophical duty is carried by the ancient philosophers and

historians to whom La Boétie points. That is, while some readers (notably Claude Lefort) would have us understand this text's vagueness about regime types as indicating a break from the philosophical tradition, I suggest, on the contrary, that it is only comprehensible in light of a tradition of civic thought to which it points. Its antique references are not ornaments; they are signposts.

La Boétie claims that the love of liberty (defined as obeying nothing but one's own reason) is a natural human passion, and the strange condition of his fellows – their desire for their own subjection – is a corruption of their fundamental nature. This claim is far from self-evident, and La Boétie defends it with several arguments that hinge on his readers' aversion to slavery. But ultimately his case rests on a teleological claim: nature has made us for the *purpose* of friendship and mutual aid: 'Nostre nature est ainsi, que les communs devoirs de l'amitié emportent une bonne partie du cours de nostre vie.'²³ Friendship requires equality and the absence of compulsion, things that are incompatible with a situation of subjection: 'la nature, la ministre de dieu, la gouvernante des hommes nous a tous faits de mesme forme, et comme il semble, a mesme moule, afin de nous entreconnoistre tous pour compaignons ou plustost pour frères'.²⁴

Friendship is our natural *telos*, and because friendship requires a degree of equality and reciprocity, the subjection of some to others is unnatural. Inequalities in talents and strengths exist, of course, but they exist that we might use them to help each other, not to dominate over one another. Most importantly, we were made to *know* one another ('de nous entre-connaître tous pour compaignons'):

... ceste bonne mere [nature] nous a donné à tous toute la terre pour demeure, nous a tous loges aucunement en mesme maison, nous a tous figures a mesme patron afin que chacun se peust mirer & quasi reconnoistre l'un dans l'autre; ... elle nous a donné à tous ce grand present de la voix & de la parole pour nous accointer & fraterniser davantage, & faire, par la commune et mutuelle declaration de nos pensees une communion de nos volentes.²⁵

Language is not the essentially human trait because it enables us to discuss the just and the unjust (as in Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a10); language is essential to our nature because it is the manner with which we become *transparent* to one another. With the capacity to express our wills, we can not only make promises (a preoccupation of later social contractarians), but we can *know* one another, we can see ourselves in the other.

It is important not to mistake this for a proto-Hobbesian claim. La Boétie writes, 'Ce qui rend un ami assuré de l'autre, c'est la connoissance qu'il a de son intégrité.'²⁶ The Hobbesian trusts his fellow citizen's word because the sword of the sovereign, established by mutual consent, is there to back it up. Such a situation is the antithesis of the Boétien ideal: 'entre les meschans, quand ils s'assemblent, c'est un complot, non pas une compaignie; ils ne s'entr'aident pas, mais ils s'entrecraignent; ils ne sont pas amis; mais ils sont complices'.²⁷ Hobbesian human beings are naturally distrustful of others, and can attain confidence under

the overawing sword. The very existence of sovereignty is due to individuals' fearing one another. La Boétie is suggesting that we are naturally gregarious and that it is the artifice of subjection that makes us mutually distrustful.

La Boétie speaks of our natural friendship as something that is both philosophically and temporally prior to servitude: it is both an Aristotelian final cause and a real historical condition. People can be habituated to servitude, much as horses can be habituated to the bit, but this is an unnatural condition and a corruption of their original state. He laments (in a phrase whose Rousseauian overtones have misled modern readers into identifying La Boétie's nature with a *pre-political* historical moment): 'quel mal rencontre a esté cela, qui a peu tant denaturer l'homme, seul né, de vrai, pour vivre franchement, & lui faire perdre la souvenance de son premier estre & le desir de le reprendre?'²⁸

One source of our initial fall is, paradoxically, our natural penchant for friendship itself. Because our capacity for friendship draws us to and makes us grateful to virtuous people, we have a tendency to accord respect and authority to benefactors that can slip ever so dangerously into servitude.²⁹ We thus tend to seek out our own domestication – we so easily slip from a rational obedience to outright servitude. It does not take long for people to become habituated to servitude and to lose their memory of equality and liberty. Thus, the people La Boétie insists on browbeating for their servile natures are in a sense not responsible for their condition – like fallen man afflicted with original sin, they are both inculpated and exculpated. But if La Boétie thinks the mass of people can be domesticated and, in a Machiavellian sense, lose their civic *virtù*, he insists equally that there are always some individuals in whom the yearning for liberty is strong.³⁰ Custom – habituation to servitude – denatures people, but it never entirely drowns out nature's voice. What prevents these people from acting is their solitude. And their solitude is ensured by eliminating the means of communication.

The sovereign closes down communication in two ways. First, he prevents the free communication of ideas. La Boétie, the enthusiastic humanist, knew the thrill of – and the radical political inspiration in – reading about ancient liberty.³¹ (This is precisely why Hobbes would later warn his readers about the dangers of allowing young people to read classic texts.³²) By barring access to texts, the tyrant isolates people in their own time such that they can no longer imagine anything better outside of it.

But it is not enough to erase communication with tradition; one must also erase any form of solidarity. The final isolation is achieved by preventing communication between subjects:

Or, communement, le bon zele & affectation de ceux qui ont gardé maugré le temps la devotion à la franchise, pour si grand nombre qu'il y en ait, demeure sans effect pour ne s'entreconnoistre point : la liberté leur est toute ostee, sous le tiran, de faire, de parler & quasi de penser; ils deviennent tous singuliers en leurs fantaisies. Doncques Mome, le dieu moqueur, ne se moqua pas trop quand il trouva cela à redire en l'homme que Vulcan avoit fait, dequoi il ne lui avoit mis une petite fenestre au coeur, afin que par là on peut voir ses pensees.³³

This isolation is not merely the means by which people are kept in bondage – it is itself the negation of their essential communicative nature. Momus's lament is a fair one – if we were automatically transparent to one another we could not be so easily divided. But we require speech to reveal ourselves to others, and kings have the power to bridle the tongue.

The greatest corruption for La Boétie, then, is the destruction of our capacity to *know* one another. We are rendered atomized, isolated individuals: our natural penchant for communication and friendship is broken down. 'Abuse of public office for private gain' is the entire *modus operandi* of this regime – public office exists *for* private gain because there is no longer a *public* good to speak of. Indeed, there is no 'people', but merely a collection of separated individuals spying on one another. Hence the enormous difficulty involved in renouncing one's servitude: when La Boétie tells his readers that they are responsible for their own oppression he is addressing the people as people, that very collectivity whose existence depends upon reciprocal knowledge of one another's character. He may berate the cowardly people as much as he will – there's no 'people' to address, for they have been rendered atomized individuals, prevented from mutual self-revelation. In the condition of subjection, rare are the instances of friendship – each is to the others a terrifying spectre, an eye watching their every act, an arm waiting to strike.

Transparency and corruption

Let us notice what a fine contrast this makes to the Hobbesian story about human nature. In the Hobbesian world, we are naturally strangers. The only way to bring us together is to force words – the windows on our wills – to stay in place. Both the keeping of our word and the keeping of words become the duty of the sovereign, whose sword guarantees contracts and establishes the limits of our rights. The Hobbesian subject is corrupted when his mind is corrupted – he fails to see that justice and obedience are in his interests. This is a result of excessive freedom of communication and the dangerously unclear use of concepts such as the ancient term *liberty* or dangerous religious opinions, the product of aberrant, uncontained priest-craft. Rational clarity and mutual transparency are produced when the meaning of words and the connection between words and wills are firmly fixed by the force of the sovereign's sword. In nature we are strangers; in the commonwealth, under the authority of an absolute and arbitrary sovereign, we can finally know one another. The *Discours* gives the inversion of this teaching – it is the sovereign that breaks down our natural knowledge of one another, thus breaking apart our solidarity. Much depends here on their contrasting views of language – for Hobbes, language is artifice, for La Boétie it is natural. The art directors at Payot ought to have printed *Leviathan's* frontispiece in photo-negative.

Let us push this comparison further by considering the Foucaultian complaint about the link between transparency and control. In a sense, the Hobbesian project is both about establishing transparency through force, and establishing force through transparency. But it is a limited transparency: our wills become transparent to one another because we state them in commonly established terms and the

law makes sure that our wills conform to our words. The law (and the sword upholding it) thus places fetters on our acts and words (for speaking is an act), thereby eliminating the terrible uncertainty that a state of anarchy engenders. But in the deepest recesses of our minds, we remain impenetrable. This is important, for one of the most important and salutary consequences of Hobbesian solipsism is that the holy inquisition is thereby rendered illogical. Acts of hand and tongue must be regulated; the dark recesses of our thoughts are no more visible than they are governable. But the commonwealth makes a community with words, thereby making us predictable to one another.

If we attend to La Boétie, we will question the cost of this attempt to pin down words and wills with swords. Atomized individuals purchase their security with subjection, but conformity in word and deed must be assured by surveillance. Hobbes himself wrote of the necessity of spies, 'For discoverers to Ministers of State, are like the beames of the Sunne to the humane soule . . . and therefore are they no lesse necessary to the preservation of the State, than the rayes of the light are to the conservation of man.'³⁴ But La Boétie is suggesting that this surveillance model is inimical to mutual self-revelation. Either we are all transparent to one another – through friendship – or we are made the object of a tyrannical gaze. On La Boétie's analysis, the insecurity of the ruler's position leads to an unquenchable interest in the souls of subjects. No ruler can assume that the subject means what she says; no subject can trust the insecure ruler. In the condition of radical hierarchy, the tyrant must deploy the most invasive techniques of surveillance – the many eyes that spy. Of course, this is never entirely possible – hence the ruler's perpetual unease and perpetual resort to violent threat and example (horrors La Boétie describes with flourish).

So we find ourselves with two radically opposed conceptions of political health as transparency – Hobbesian surveillance and Boétian disclosure. The surveillance model, in its Hobbesian form, is content to rest on the surface of things (you can think whatever you want); the Boétian suggestion is that this is not possible – the psychology that reigns in such a situation of inequality will make the ruler perpetually distrustful and ever in greater search of certainty. Nor does La Boétie suggest that it is desirable, for it undermines the *entre-connaissance* that he thinks is the hallmark of free social existence – note, indeed, that this is a level of mutual knowledge that Hobbes thought impossible. What I'd like to argue is that there is a trade-off between these ideal-types, transparency through surveillance and transparency through reciprocal self-revelation. When we all lend our eyes to the sovereign, spying on each other, we occlude the possibility of friendship.

This leads me to the much debated question of La Boétie's ideal regime. Claude Lefort tells us that the *Discours* is clearly a response not merely to tyranny, but to all principalities,³⁵ and it is difficult to disagree with this assessment given the necessary inequalities that exist in a monarchy, and indeed in any form of hierarchy that does not involve some sort of shared ruling and being ruled in turn. The implication for Lefort is that the text breaks entirely with the traditional Aristotelian distinction between corrupt and uncorrupted regimes. Some have gone so far as to see in La Boétie's vague natural condition of liberty a ground

not for a republican political project, but rather for the radical revolt against politics itself, against the fact of domination that exists in all states. Eric Voegelin sees this as a weakness, arguing that La Boétie's spirit of revolt represents the quintessential example of courage without wisdom; a similar claim about his institutional vagueness is made with more celebratory intent in Gauchet and Abensour's declaration that La Boétie's revolt forces us 'à penser la liberté contre le pouvoir'.³⁶ At the same time, it is difficult to reconcile this with his praise of Sparta (or yet of Plato's *Republic*). Lefort argues that while La Boétie mentions these ancient (and ideal) states he fails to identify the good regime precisely because he is claiming that all instantiations of political unity, all regimes, manifest this perverse desire to be dominated.³⁷ If La Boétie addresses himself to a 'peuple' and attributes agency to a 'peuple', his back and forth on the collective and yet plural nature of this entity is intended to undermine the view of a unified people.³⁸ For Lefort, La Boétie is offering a stark warning about the desire for a unity that erases the distinctions between people: it is this 'singular' that so bewitches and 'enchants' us.³⁹ It is in La Boétie's appeal to our linguistic nature that we learn both of our unity and of our separation: 'Pensant le langage, nous pensons déjà le politique, délivrés de l'illusion de l'Un.'⁴⁰

Philosophically fruitful as Lefort's use of La Boétie is, I suggest that it is not entirely faithful to La Boétie, being largely a product of Lefort's project of illuminating the symbolic form that mediates between the (plural) people and their political unity. In the *Discours* language does, indeed, provide us with a means of uniting disparate individuals. But that unity is an extreme unity. According to the *Discours*, the fact of language demonstrates that nature 'a montré en toutes choses qu'elle ne vouloit pas tant nous faire tous unis que tous uns'.⁴¹ Lefort's take on this phrase is the following:

... affirmer que le destin des hommes est d'être non pas tous unis, mais *tous uns*, c'est ramener le rapport social à la communication et à l'expression réciproque des agents, accueillir par principe la différence l'un de l'autre, faire entendre qu'elle n'est réductible que dans l'imaginaire et, du même coup... dénoncer le mensonge des gouvernants qui font de l'union de leurs sujets... le signe de la bonne société.⁴²

This is a rather large *sous-entendu*, and it stems from a line that is capable of being read in a different manner. Surely La Boétie's claim that nature did not 'did not want merely to unify us, but to make us all one' could be read as a call to *radical* solidarity of the sort that Lefort thinks illegitimate.⁴³

For Lefort, the name of the 'one' conjures up an image of a massive power that the people, perversely, desire. La Boétie, he tells us, is breaking from traditional political philosophy in that he is not offering any conception of an uncorrupted polity – we shouldn't try to fill in the blanks with utopian images and collapse society into politics. I do not wish to dissuade readers from attending to Lefort's reflections, but I would like to suggest that La Boétie was proposing precisely what Lefort wants to warn us about: a radical civic unity. This is a republicanism that has its origins in ancient philosophy. The text's vagueness about institutional

matters is due to its pointing outside of itself to a classical literary tradition (precisely the tradition tyrants wish to silence). The free people who existed prior to the great descent into servitude were free precisely because they were able to establish radical solidarity through mutual transparency. The tyrannical regime corrupts their souls because it makes them incapable of friendship, and thus incapable of solidarity. The artificial unity that tyranny creates is violent and inherently exploitative: it exists at the expense of solidarity. Lefort has rightly noticed that there is something curious in La Boétie's addressing of a unified 'people' at all, but we are not thereby to understand that the unified 'people' is a dangerous fiction or that the text cannot conceive of any 'free people'. The *Discours* is arguing, rather, that domination has been rendered possible because the 'people' has been broken down into a collection of individuals. La Boétie is saying to the 'people', 'you each individually feel the weight of this domination to which you each individually contribute'. It is as if the will of all runs counter to the general will: the 'you' is the collective subject that, could it will collectively, would never will its own subjection, but because people will separately, each in his own cocoon, the wills combine to support an insufferable condition.⁴⁴ The ruler, in his turn, is rendered more than the weak little individual that he is: he is transformed into an image of power.

The type of unity that Lefort would have us see in La Boétie's ideal is one of unity in difference. The nature of language, for Lefort, entails differentiation – by claiming that our mutual communication of our natures requires the mediation of language, La Boétie is implicitly arguing for human plurality against the dangerous fiction of unity. Lefort's is an Arendtian ideal, in which people make themselves known to each other in great speech acts in the civic realm. Hannah Arendt celebrates respect, which, in distinction to love, does not erase the difference between people: 'Respect, not unlike the Aristotelian *philia politike*, is a kind of "friendship" without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us.'⁴⁵ But, however accurate this is as a description of Aristotelian political friendship, it is not the model that La Boétie offers: rather, he offers something closer to a perfect Aristotelian friendship of virtue. He writes: 'l'amitié c'est un nom sacré, c'est une chose sainte; elle ne se met jamais qu'entre gens de bien, & ne se prend que par une mutuelle estime; elle s'entretient non tant par bienfaits, que par la bonne vie'. But what most cements friendship is, as we have already noted, 'la *connaissance* qu'il a de son intégrité'.⁴⁶ There is an epistemological element to this friendship. We can see how appropriate it was for Montaigne to want to preface his publication of La Boétie's article with a paean to friendship heavily inspired by Aristotle. Montaigne cited approvingly Aristotle's view that friendship is the pre-eminent concern for legislators,⁴⁷ and he celebrated a kind of virtue-friendship that went perhaps further than Aristotle would have wanted, bordering on the complete effacing of differences between friends: 'En l'amitié dequoy je parle, elles [nos ames] se meslent et confondent l'une en l'autre, d'un meslange si universel, qu'elles effacent, et ne retrouvent plus la cousture qui les jointes.'⁴⁸ This is a version of what Aristotle called 'perfect friendship', though it posits much more unity than Aristotle would have approved of (recall his insistence on heterogeneity in *Politics* 1261a).

Indeed, Aristotle himself might be seen as closer to Lefort's view that language presupposes heterogeneity, insofar as it is that which permits us to discuss the just and the unjust and to deliberate together (*Politics* 1253a). La Boétie sounds even closer to the civic ideal of Plato's Kallipolis, where the guardians all say 'mine' and 'not mine' to the same things (*Republic* 462c). For all the rarity that Aristotle and Montaigne – and even La Boétie – see in virtue-friendship, for all that it seems to describe the unity of great souls, the *Discours* treats it as the dominant principle in the pre-servile condition. The ideal is one of extreme unity through 'entre-connaissance', where mutual beneficence is a product of mutual *knowledge* of one another's integrity; it is this very knowledge that is undermined in the tyrannical condition.

This mutual transparency is a product of a radical openness to one another – an openness that requires language as a medium, and equality as a condition.⁴⁹ That is, La Boétie shares Momus's complaint – since we cannot see one another's hearts, the only way to feel confident in our neighbours is if they reveal themselves to us. Pointing to the linguistic medium of our mutual recognition does, as Lefort suggests, imply an assumption about plurality, but this is a plurality that La Boétie thinks can be overcome with radical reciprocity. Nature 'a tasché par tous les moiens de serrer et estreindre si fort le noeud de nostre alliance et société'.⁵⁰ Such a bond cannot occur in conditions of domination; it requires equality. Equality and unity are inseparable; we are offered here a politics of friendship that ultimately transcends division, and thus that runs counter to the Lefortian and Arendtian project of preserving plurality.

In short, La Boétie's *Discours* offers us, in its ideal-types of the tyrannical and free conditions, two social psychologies, one based upon mutual knowledge and trust – a version of classical civic friendship – and another based upon mutual suspicion, where each is a possible enemy to each, and all are held in the chain of short-sighted self-interest; for the ignorant part of the people have a tendency to be 'soupçonneuse envers celui qui l'aime' and 'confiante envers celui qui la trompe et la trahit'. People can be habituated to this condition – and learn to love the very chains that bind them – because they are no longer in a condition of being able to understand civic friendship. They spy on one another because their natural mutual transparency has been broken down.

Friendship and the pacification of troubles

There is much in the *Discours* that can stir the heart of the modern civic republican or egalitarian. La Boétie's commitment to a generous form of civic friendship based on equality and mutual recognition is extremely appealing, but its utopian dimensions might appear fanciful. When political thinkers seek to transform politics into friendship they generally face the charge of obscuring or eluding the political itself. We can picture a knowing Florentine smirking at this attempt to found a republic on affection. But if the *Discours* is a text that warms our hearts as it raises our eyebrows, what are we to make of this Parlementaire's 1561 *Mémoire sur la pacification des troubles*, offering political advice in the face of violence between Huguenots and Catholics? For here, La Boétie – ever faithful to his King and

church – argued that the tolerationist policy favoured by Catherine de Medici and her chancellor Michel de l’Hôpital was unacceptable for political reasons, and he urged a two-pronged strategy of accommodation and repression. Like many Catholic humanists, La Boétie was convinced that serious reforms were needed in the church – ecclesiastical corruption, he thought, not doctrinal questions, had been the main basis for the popular appeal of the Protestant cause. But he was also convinced that tolerance was an untenable policy and that those Protestants who had manifested violence towards the King’s law should be violently suppressed, and a bloody example made of the leaders. ‘On ne sauroit croire de combien, après ceste tereur, il [le peuple] sera plus traictable, plus facile à renger, et plus aisé à contenter.’⁵¹ It is clear from his condemnation of the counterproductive efforts to convert people with the sword that he would not have supported the St Bartholomew massacre that came eleven years later, but the terror that he advocates here seems remarkably like the type of behaviour we might expect from the tyrant who is so thoroughly denounced in the *Discours*. One almost wonders how both texts could be the work of the same person.

One response to this tension would be to suggest that La Boétie was no longer the same person: in contrast to the *Discours*, the *Mémoire* is the work of a mature man directly implicated in the political life of his province. Certainly he was young (La Boétie was 31 at the time), but this was a very ripe 31, having spent the previous decade serving as a counsellor at the Parliament de Bordeaux – he was certainly not the enthusiastic student of the *Discours* writing odes to the liberty he found in classic literature. Another possibility would be the suggestion, which has recently resurfaced after a long period of being considered disproven, that the *Discours* was actually penned by Montaigne – the case for this claim is made by several authors in the collected volume *Freedom over Servitude*.⁵² This attribution, while based on a fair amount of conjecture, gains some plausibility when one notes the murky origin of the *Discours* and Montaigne’s playful use of misdirection in the *Essais*. It remains, however, a suggestion that has not caught the imagination of the vast majority of La Boétie and Montaigne scholars.⁵³ One of the things that pushes these authors towards this interpretation is the apparent distance between the *Discours* and the *Mémoire*. But I would like to suggest that the gulf between these two texts is not as great as one might think, even if it does somewhat reflect both the distance between youthful extravagance and mature cynicism, and between theory and practice. Without entirely reconciling the texts, I wish to suggest that the primary concern animating his advice in the *Mémoire* is equally that animating the *Discours*: the importance of mutual transparency and social unity.

La Boétie argued that the main causes of popular Protestantism were not the subtle theological matters that preoccupied Luther, Zwingli or Calvin, but merely the abuses of the church and the comparative probity of the reform leaders. The second cause of the troubles had been the obstinate and violent response to this cry for reform. Trying to root out unbelief with violence backfired, causing people to flock to the new church not only for its tempting novelty but also out of a sense of respect for martyrs. Things had thus been allowed to fester to such an extent that there were effectively two forms of religion being established in the realm.

In response, he championed what in England would later be called ‘comprehension’, a type of doctrinal compromise that would prevent the church from fracturing by weakening the main causes of division. (Somewhat naïvely, he gave some theological and sacramental propositions that he thought would be widely acceptable and he proposed some ways of papering over divisions.) At the same time, those engaged in violent sedition must be punished in an exemplary fashion. For if it had been foolish of Kings François I and Henri II to pursue heresy with fire and sword, it was equally foolish for Catherine de Medici to tolerate the establishment of two churches within the state.

Note that while La Boétie offered an anti-tolerationist teaching, he did not support any type of holy inquisition. On the contrary, his call for the moderation of church doctrine derived from his commitment to respecting (within limits) Protestant consciences. Indeed, as Malcolm Smith has pointed out, La Boétie thought that one was *not* duty-bound to obey one’s sovereign in matters of religion.⁵⁴ Nor ought the sovereign to attempt to enforce opinion with fire and sword. Aside from being a tactical error,⁵⁵ it is simply useless to try to burn one’s way into someone’s mind. La Boétie displays awareness of the observation, most associated with Hobbes, that one can only legislate deeds, not thoughts. (Though the *sous-entendu* here is always that thoughts will follow practice.)

But why should religious diversity be so untenable? Some of La Boétie’s responses are typical of his age. Like many of his contemporaries, he did not regard tolerance as a virtue, but rather perceived policies of toleration to be mere cease-fires, and not real peace.⁵⁶ And like many, La Boétie had difficulty countenancing the idea of allowing falsity to flourish – and he was no different from the bulk of his fellows in thinking it untenable that truth and falsehood should both have rights (and his *Mémoire* suggests a naïve simplicity on the nature of theological truth that is surprising from one so close to Montaigne).⁵⁷ But La Boétie’s intolerance was largely based on a political concern about the effects of religious division on social unity. He wrote:

Nulle dissention n’est si grande ny si dangereuse que celle qui vient pour la religion. Elle separe les cytoiens, les voisins, les amis, les parens, les freres, le pere et les enfans, le mary et la femme; elle rompt les aliances, les parantés, les mariages, les droitz inviolables de nature, et penetre jusques au fondz des cœurs pour extirper les amitiés et enraciner des haynes irreconciliables.⁵⁸

Now, he was particularly worried about how this division makes the state an easy target for its enemies.⁵⁹ But he did not say that this condition of division is inconsistent with obedience to a king: ‘Il est bien possible, qu’encore qu’elle face tout cella, que pourtant elle n’ostera rien de l’obeysance que le subject doibt à son souverain.’⁶⁰ No, indeed. For division, we know, is no enemy of obedience – we have seen that divisions are exploited by tyrants, and this is precisely what makes this division so inviting to invaders.⁶¹ Religious divisions have split the body politic, leaving ‘une respublicque desmembree’,⁶² where there is ‘une hayne et malveillance quasi universelle entre les subjects du Roy’.⁶³

His call for uniformity – indeed, his incipient Gallicanism, for La Boétie intimated that the French church should reform itself – was political rather than theological.⁶⁴ La Boétie was expressing the view, quite commonly held, that religious pluralism would lead to the demise of social cohesion. Implausible as this seems to us, it speaks to a widespread 16th-century fear, felt by many who had no necessarily strong views on the theological details of salvation by works or faith, that the reformers' breaking away from the church entailed the destruction of all social bonds. To understand this point it is important to remember the centrality of the church in ordering and facilitating communal life. Attending mass was widely held to be something requiring a clean, repentant soul – to take Eucharist one must have reconciled with one's enemies; similarly, the *pax* or 'kiss of peace', one of the more important lay experiences in the mass, offered a powerful experience of neighbourly reconciliation and purification. As Virginia Reinburg writes of 16th-century worship, 'For lay congregants, the mass was less a ceremonial representation of eucharistic doctrine or Christ's original sacrifice than a sacred rite uniting them with God, the Church, and each other.'⁶⁵ The common practice of worshipping was not merely unifying in the way that national festivals or cultural activities are unifying – it was conceived of as itself being the glue that held communities together, and there was a fear that if people worshipped separately they were not merely endangering their own salvation, but were breaking the social bond. Simply put, it was thought to be essential for *everyone* to come together repeatedly, reconciling any differences through the kiss of peace, forgiving one another their trespasses, reconnecting on a weekly basis with the source of communal trust.

In arguing for the civic importance of uniform worship, La Boétie was not offering anything novel, but was rather giving voice to a commonplace opinion. But I wish to stress the connection between this view and his earlier claim about the importance of mutual transparency for social cohesion and liberty. Religious uniformity, like language, serves as a medium for the mutual revelation of our character to one another. That is, uniform public worship serves to cultivate civic trust and mutual transparency. To split this institution was to undermine trust and friendship.

This is a view with a heritage in the sources La Boétie and Montaigne so admired. The classical opposite of civic friendship is, naturally, not confessional strife, but rather faction and division of opinion. Cicero, in his treatise on friendship, has Laelius argue that 'friendship is in fact nothing other than a community of views on all matters human and divine, together with goodwill and affection', and he exclaims, 'What house is so well established, what state is so strong that it may not be entirely torn to pieces by hatred and division?'⁶⁶ 'Unanimity', Aristotle insisted, 'also seems to be a friendly relation.' This unanimity (*homonoiia*, otherwise translated as concord or harmony) is not the unanimity of opinions about factual matters that are not causes of mutual concern, but about the common itself: 'a city is unanimous when men have the same opinion about what is to their interest, and choose the same actions, and do what they have resolved in common' (*NE* 1167a, 9.6).⁶⁷ This is the nature of 'political friendship' (1167b). The opposite of this unanimity is faction, discord over the nature of justice and who ought to rule.

Aristotelian civic friendship is possible between good people – hence it has an element of virtue-friendship to it. Those who are not good ‘cannot be unanimous except to a small extent, any more than they can be friends, since they aim at getting more than their share of advantages... The result is that they are in a state of faction, putting compulsion on each other but unwilling themselves to do what is just’ (1167b). Note how these two conditions appear to mirror respectively La Boétie’s natural (free) and unnatural (servile) conditions in the *Discours*: the one condition entails mutual transparency, the other entails distrust and exploitation. Now, I do not propose here to answer the thorny question of whether Aristotle’s *philia politike* is a friendship of virtue or utility (it appears to share elements of both). What I wish to suggest is that something akin to – or even more extreme than – Aristotle’s ideal is the inspiration for the political friendship that La Boétie thought the defining feature of the political condition that accords with human nature.

It is in this context that we might understand his perplexing reference in the *Discours* to the ‘liberty of Plato’s Republic’. Is it possible that La Boétie did not throw this in as a mere learned reference, but rather that he intended his readers to consider the Platonic unity created by the strict control over the stories told about the divine? But this raises a significant tension. How can La Boétie on the one hand condemn both the censorship that deprives people of ancient texts and the political usurpation of religion and yet support a policy of civil religion?⁶⁸ First, we can dispose easily of the usurpation of religion – there is no question of kings pretending to any divine power here. La Boétie’s concern is not to sneak supernatural justification into the justification of rule. The civic interest in church unity is due to its importance in achieving communal unity. Put differently, it’s not about ideological legitimation of the ruling order. The Machiavellian desire to invest citizens with fervent, superstitious civic piety is not the desire animating La Boétie. Indeed, the dispute is not primarily about doctrinal opinion: ‘on se trompe fort si on pense que tant d’hommes se soient séparés de nous pour la contrariété de l’opinion’.⁶⁹ It is the exterior forms of worship that most offend normal people, and it is here where common ground must be found. La Boétie expressed optimism that these could be sufficiently altered that most people would think matters solved – particularly if preachers are prevented from stirring up divisions. Thus, when he insisted that, once the church was reformed no one be permitted – on pain of death – to preach or administer sacraments outside of the church, it was not because of the theological content of the preaching, but because this was the creation of a separate church which split the population into hostile camps.⁷⁰

Common worship, like a common language, serves as a means of keeping people open to one another and cultivating social trust. La Boétie’s religious intolerance is based on the view that confessional unity is the minimal condition of civic friendship. But there is also a paradox here. It is as if a dirty secret is let loose in the *Mémoire*: mutual transparency, the most natural thing of all, requires some artifice to maintain it, a civic religion; but the means required to maintain this might well lead us back to the surveillance society. For, after all, how else would one prevent the type of ecclesiastical splitting if one did not engage in surveillance of some sort?

The trust and mutual self-revelation that La Boétie thought to be the natural human *telos* were the products of a political project – just as people could be habituated to obedience, so too could they be habituated to liberty and mutual trust. But this requires institutions, and his mature political reflections led him to the disquieting suggestion that trust required ecclesiastical uniformity, even going so far as to grant the King rights to reorganize the church in order to preserve this source of mutual trust. Again, this is not a question of doctrinal content, but rather the maintenance of a common cultural practice that, like language, permits us to overcome the problem of not being able to see into one another's hearts. But the business of achieving 'natural' friendship of a free society entails habituation through well-constructed laws and institutions. Lycurgus, noted La Boétie in the *Discours*, 'avec ses loix & sa police, nourrit & fait [fait] si bien les Lacedemoniens, que chacun d'eux eut plus cher de mourir mille morts que de reconnoistre autre seigneur que la loy & la raison'.⁷¹ Note that Lycurgus did not merely habituate Spartans to love liberty – he *made* them what they were; he constituted them as a people.

Conclusion: *homonoiia* as the medium of transparency

In exposing the distance between the type of mutual knowledge entailed in civic friendship and the closed, watchful condition of the tyrannical client–patron network, La Boétie's *Discours* can be read as powerful indictment of the surveillance society. The ubiquity of cameras, audits, wire-taps, 'whistle-blowers', 'vigilant' citizens inquiring into the nature of their neighbour's piety – all these thousand eyes that seek to open up the soul have the effect of closing us up within ourselves. For all that they can ensure some degree of conformity in outward behaviour, these are systems that undermine the very unity they seek to create – people are corrupted by the surveillance society, rendered incapable of trust and more likely to seek out opportunities for private gain at public expense. This is akin to shining a searchlight into a dark room – one side of the objects within appear illuminated, but they cast the darkest shadows behind them. Yet if we allow our eyes to be accustomed to the dark, the objects in the room will disclose themselves to us. The nature of our neighbours will be disclosed to us if we allow ourselves to listen. We are truly transparent to one another when we are friends. Reading La Boétie alerts us to the fact that there is an essential conceptual difference between transparency through mutual surveillance and transparency through mutual friendship. And when comparing the ideals it is surely difficult not to find appealing La Boétie's *philia* both in principle and in practice – is one's relationship with one's neighbours rendered more secure through friendship, or through having video cameras trained on their front door? In the attempt to cultivate civic virtue through transparency it is worthwhile paying attention to what manner of openness we wish to cultivate. For La Boétie, to be in a position of having to watch one another like hawks is to be already in a corrupted condition.

But surely, it will be objected, this surveillance model is only disturbing when it comes from above. If there is sufficient surveillance from below (*sousveillance*, as

the ugly neologism has it) things will balance out and civic life will not be allowed to erode completely. Certainly, this is an element of the Machiavellian project – the constantly tensed muscles of the plebs and their perpetual distrust of the patricians assures the preservation of free civic life. But such a stance might come at a price, and if the emerging social science literature on the utility of generalized trust is any indication, it may be a price too high for the benefit it confers.⁷² It is a commonplace observation that corruption undermines trust in institutions; the reverse is also true – lack of trust is corrupting. The two models of transparency we have drawn from La Boétie are ideal-types – no country or organization can be founded on total surveillance, nor yet on pure friendship. My point is that it is important to reflect on the trade-offs between these two psychological dispositions of friendship and distrust.⁷³

This is not to suggest that we can cure corruption simply by according blind trust to the powerful. I must emphasize that the key to La Boétie's republican ideal of mutual *entre-connaissance* is some form of civic equality – radical inequalities are incompatible with friendship and trust. Attempts to undermine oppressive networks of political clientelism need to attend to the regime contexts in which such networks thrive. That is to say, civic republican conceptions of corruption as the loss of civic virtue and the increase of dependence are not mere anachronisms in contemporary debates about corruption, in spite of the irretrievable nature of the ancient polis. The importance of attending to inequality should not be forgotten by those who seek purely cultural determinants of corruption; if the reader will permit the Putnam reference, La Boétie is not merely saying that subjects of tyrants are bowling alone, but that they are pushing and shoving for access to the bowling alley. La Boétie does not spell out the nature and extent of the equality that he thinks congenial to trust and friendship, but he is insistent that friendship 'a son vrai gibier en l'égalité, qui ne veut iamais clocher, ains est toujours egale'.⁷⁴ It is worthwhile for students of political corruption to give greater attention to the effects of material inequality and zero-sum competition than is often done.

But if we are thereby offered a powerful defence of equality and friendship, we are also apprised of their great difficulty. The radical virtue-friendship that underwrites La Boétie's natural ideal is presented by Montaigne and Aristotle as the rarest of things. Indeed, one wonders if one can ever even approach such a complete *entre-connaissance*; after all, as a reading of Montaigne himself would remind us, it is hard enough to know ourselves.⁷⁵ What guidance can this ideal offer us in our quest to render political life non-exploitative? This goes beyond the administrative studies' question of how to cultivate trust in large bureaucratic institutions: it challenges us to think about citizenship anew, all the while raising disquieting questions about the relationship between pluralism and equality. Can we think of non-exclusionary forms of social interaction that nonetheless retain the functions that La Boétie ascribed to the church? We are fortunately at some distance from the communalist view of uniform public worship as a necessary condition of social harmony, but a wider question remains open about what types of uniformity are required for *philia politike* and whether these forms of uniformity recreate the

exclusions and homogeneity that have come to be associated with the liberty of the ancients.

Notes

1. Barack Obama (2009) 'Remarks by the President on the Economy after Meeting with Business Leaders', White House East Room, 28 Jan. URL (consulted Sept. 2012): <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/01>.
2. Louis D. Brandeis (1914) 'What Publicity Can Do,' *Other People's Money And How The Bankers Use It.*, p. 92. New York: Stokes. Incidentally, the subject of this essay was not government corruption, but rather corporate corruption: Brandeis was concerned here with collusion among bankers.
3. One excellent work that takes a Foucaultian line (without approaching the caricature I offer here) is Jacqueline Best (2005) *The Limits of Transparency*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. On her reading, transparency means control, and it equally entails the elimination of room for *phronesis*, though Best does not use the term. Certainly, there is an ideological element in the deployment of the term transparency: one sees a clear tendency to scrutinize *public* officials, and command economies are the prime target for charges of opacity; board rooms are not presumed to require similar scrutiny.
4. Gaspar Koenig (2009) *Les discrete vertus de la corruption*, p. 265. Paris: Grasset.
5. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1987) 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', in *The Basic Political Writings*, tr. D.A. Cress, p. 26. Indianapolis: Hackett.
6. In looking to classical civic republicanism, I am following a lead of Mlada Bukovansky, who thinks the anti-corruption discourse has too long been deaf to this central tradition: (2006) 'The Hollowness of Anti-Corruption Discourse', *Review of International Political Economy* 13(2): 183.
7. There is a sizeable literature in French political philosophy (particularly in the work of Pierre Clastres, Miguel Abensour and Claude Lefort), but fairly little in English. There is a good introductory essay by Nannerl O. Keohane (1977) 'The Radical Humanism of Etienne De La Boetie', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38(1): 119–30. There is a small collection of essays by David Lewis Schaefer (ed.) (1998) *Freedom over Servitude: Montaigne, La Boétie and On Voluntary Servitude*. Westport, CT: Greenwood. There is also an excellent work by Marc D. Schachter (2008) *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship: From Classical Antiquity to Early Modern France*. Aldershot: Ashgate. But, apart from periodic references to him in works on Montaigne, and periodic praise of him by anarchist and libertarian readers, it is fair to say that La Boétie has not yet captured the imagination of the English-speaking political theory community.
8. This article is part of a wider project outlining the philosophical and historical underpinnings of corruption discourse. There has been a tendency in policy studies literature to deploy the concept in a manner that is inattentive to the diverse – and clashing – presuppositions of its use. The past 15 years, however, have begun to see the emergence of an interest in the term's theoretical and historical dimensions, with notable work from Mark Warren, Peter Euben, Lisa Hill, Arlene Saxonhouse, Mark Philp, Mlada Bukovansky and Peter Bratsis. These scholars have begun fruitful conversations with the dominant social-scientific students of the phenomenon such as Michael Johnston (who unpacks the ideological dimensions of the term in a manner as rare as it is useful), Susan Rose-Ackerman, Ulrich von Aleman and Eric Uslaner. Beyond interpreting La Boétie, this article aspires to further that cross-disciplinary conversation.

9. Estienne de La Boétie (1967) *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Paul Bonnefon, p. 5. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints. (All quotations contain the original orthography and all translations, unless otherwise stated, are mine.) '... by neither a Hercules nor a Samson, but by one little manikin, who is most often the most dissipate and effeminate of the nation' ('hommeau' is either a rare word or a Boétian neologism indicating a diminutive stature).
10. Claude Lefort makes a similar point when he emphasizes the work's radical capacity to undermine commonplace assumptions. See 'Le nom d'un', in P. Léonard (ed.) (1976) *Le Discours de la servitude volontaire, La Boétie et la question du politique*, p. 253. Paris: Payot.
11. 'Poor, miserable, idiotic people, prejudiced towards your own harm, blind to your good...' 'Where has he taken all these eyes with which he spies on you if you haven't given them to him? How is it that he has so many hands with which to hit you unless he takes them from you?' (pp. 12–13).
12. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 42, 'for wanting to imitate the thunder of the sky and the fire of Jupiter.'
13. In a brief aside, he assumes a pious tone with regard to his own monarchy's superstitions, indicating that traditions of divinizing the King have served the French well, since their Kings have always been so beneficent that one might truly believe them to have been divinely appointed. And anyway, he notes, eliminating such things would take away some wonderful material for the poets! Readers may judge for themselves his sincerity here.
14. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 44: 'le ressort & le secret de la domination'.
15. Ibid. pp. 45–6.
16. Ibid. p. 48: 'these lost souls... are happy to endure suffering in order to inflict it, not on the one who harms them, but on those who suffer like them'.
17. Ibid. p. 55.
18. Pierre Clastres, 'Liberté, Malencontre, Innomable', in Léonard (n. 10), p. 233. Clastres's argument might be strengthened if we consider the similarity of Montaigne's reflections on 'cannibals': asked what they found striking in Europe, visitors from the new world declared that they were surprised to see many well-armed men obeying a child (Charles IX). This echoes the surprise that La Boétie sought to elicit at the strange fact of obedience to a little 'hommeau'. But there is no textual evidence in La Boétie's text suggesting that indigenous people are the reference; there is much pointing directly to the ancient polis, as I shall argue.
19. In his life he never gave any signs of disobedience. Montaigne emphasizes this point, while noting that his friend would nonetheless have preferred to live in Venice than in France. 'De l'Amitié' in (2007) *Les Essais*, ed. Jean Balsamo et al., p. 201. Paris: Gallimard.
20. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 19, n. 41.
21. Ibid. p. 3: 'il est malaisé de croire qu'il y ait rien de public en ce gouvernement, où tout est à un'.
22. In a brief aside, he declares that he will not discuss the best regime, but at the same time he intimates clearly that monarchy is illegitimate. Ibid. p. 2. There is an interesting contrast to be made here with Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, a text that La Boétie translated into French. In this text, we learn that the art of governing slaves in a household is akin to a general's art in governing free men: both need to make the governed *serve willingly*. Xenophon, through the mouth of Isomachus, suggests that good government of slaves (government based on the cultivation of their love of honours and praise) can almost

- make the master–slave relationship monarchical rather than despotic. In the *Contr'un*, such voluntary servitude is treated as essentially slavish. It is as if he has learned from Xenophon that servitude can be voluntary, but that this is precisely what makes it so worthy of contempt. For an excellent discussion of La Boétie's translation of Xenophon, see Schachter (n. 7).
23. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 4.
 24. Ibid. p. 15, 'Nature, the minister of God, the governess of men, has made us all in the same form, and, as it appears, of the same mould, in order that we may know each other as companions, or rather, as brothers.'
 25. Ibid. p. 16: 'this good mother gave us all the earth for a home, and lodged us all in the same house, made us all on the same model in order that each might be able to be mirrored in another, and recognize ourselves in the other; for she gave us this great present of the voice and the word (la parole) in order that we might better be acquainted and fraternal, and that we might make, by the common and mutual declaration of our thoughts a communion of our wills.'
 26. Ibid. p. 53. 'What makes a friend certain of the other is the knowledge he has of his integrity.'
 27. Ibid. pp. 53–4, 'between evil people, when they gather together, there is a conspiracy and not a companionship; they do not love one another, but fear one another; they are not friends, but accomplices'.
 28. Ibid. p. 19. 'What evil occurrence that was that could so denature man, the only creature truly born to live freely (franchement), such that he lost his memory of his original condition and his desire to regain it?'
 29. Ibid. p. 4.
 30. Ibid. pp. 29–30.
 31. Ibid. p. 30, 'Le grand Turc s'est bien avisé de cela, que les livres & la doctrine donnent, plus que toute autre chose, aus hommes le sens & l'entendement de se reconnoître & d'haïr la tyrannie.'
 32. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macperson, ch. 21, pp. 267–8. London: Penguin: 'I think I may truly say, there was never any thing so deerly bought, as these Western parts have bought the learning of the Greek and Latine tongues.'
 33. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 31, 'The zeal and affection of those who kept, in spite of the times, their devotion to liberty (la franchise), however great they are in number, remains without effect because they do not know one another: under the tyrant they are entirely deprived of the liberty (la liberté) to do, to speak, and almost to think: they become all isolated in their imagination. Thus, Momus, the God of Mockery, was not joking when he lamented that one had not placed a little window in the heart such that one might see people's thoughts.'
 34. Thomas Hobbes (1983) *De Cive*, ed. H. Warrender, 13.7, p. 159. Oxford: Oxford University Press. In the preface, he points out the need for perpetual suspicion of others, and he calls on his readers to denounce those who believe regicide is justifiable (p. 36).
 35. Léonard (n. 10), pp. 256–7.
 36. Eric Voegelin (1998) *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. J. L. Wiser, vol. 23, p. 39. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press. Léonard (n. 10), p. xxix.
 37. Léonard (n. 10), pp. 257–8.
 38. Ibid. pp. 265–7.
 39. Ibid. pp. 268–9.
 40. Ibid. p. 271.

41. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 16.
42. Léonard (n. 10), p. 271: 'to affirm that the destiny of men is to be not merely unified but *all one* is to bring the social relation back to communication and the reciprocal expression of agents; it is to recognize in principle the difference of one from another, and to let us understand that this difference is only reducible in the imagination, and at the same time. . . it is to denounce the lie of the governors who make of the union of their subjects the sign of the good society.'
43. Much hangs on how one translates the plural 'uns'. Miguel Abensour suggests, following Lefort, that La Boétie is opposing 'all ones' against 'all one': Abensour (2011) *Democracy against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*, p. xxxvi. Cambridge: Polity, I do not think, however, that the plural 'uns' here is meant to be a term of art to indicate diversity. Some modernized French translations read 'pas seulement unis, mais tel un seul être'; other modernised French versions read 'tous un'. Harry Kurz translated the passage, 'not so much to associate us as to make us one organic whole' (2008) *Politics and Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, p. 50. Auburn, AL: Von Mises Institute. Schaefer (n. 7), p. 198, translates it 'did not want to make us all united so much as all one[s]', thereby avoiding taking a stand on the issue (though he agrees with Lefort on p. 24, n. 65). I do not think, however, that the 's' in 'uns' ought to be taken to indicate plurality. La Boétie, in his translation of Plutarch's writing on marriage, gives the following line: 'Les philosophes disent que les unes choses sont faites de pieces diverses & separees, comme une armee de mer & un camp; les autres sont de parties assemblees & unies, comme une maison . . . les unes toutes unies & d'un naturel, comme chasque animal en soy mesmes est conforme à soy. Quasi de mesme sorte le mariage : si c'est de personnes qu s'entrayment il est lors du ranc de choses qui *sont unes & conformes*; si c'est de gents qui sot mariez pour le bien . . . il est se parties assemblees & unies.' La Boétie (n. 9), p. 175. Here, being *unis* means being separate people united together for an instrumental purpose, artificially assembled, whereas being *uns* means being ONE because of mutual love. The 's' in 'uns' is rather simply a grammatical variant in 16th-century French than a claim about individualism. The grammatical construction 'ils sont uns' meaning 'they are one' (NOT 'they are separate ones') is not novel to La Boétie. His contemporary, Jacques Amyot would later translate a passage in the same essay from Plutarch as follows: 'Or faut il, que comme les physiciens disent que les corps liquides sont ceulx qui se meslent du tout en tout l'un avec l'autre, aussi que de ceulx qui sont mariez ensemble, et les corps et les biens, et les amis, et les parents soient *tous uns et communs*['] (1803) *Œuvres Morales de Plutarque traduit du grec par Amyot*, vol. 3, p. 20. Paris: De Cussac. Consider the following passage from Jean Godard (1564–1630), which equally speaks of language as a unifying force:

Nature ayant fait les hommes pour habiter et vivre tous ansamble leur a aussi baillé à tous ansamble la faculté de parler, comme une chose requise et necessaire à la societé humaine. . . C'et par là que la hantise qui se forme de plusieurs, fait comme un seul cors de plusieurs, ou plutôt comme une seule ame qui se communique à tous ces divers cors, qui leur donne même intellijance, même pansee, même desir, et qui les rand *tous uns* d'affection, en une grande diversité de personnes.

'La Langue françoise', in Peter Rickard (ed.) (1992) *The French Language in the Seventeenth Century: Contemporary Opinion in France*, p. 227. Cambridge: Brewer.

- A translation of Polybius from the 1550s has ‘les evenements ne fussent pas tous uns, mais divers’. (1558) *Les cinq premiers livres d’histoire de Polybe*, p. 280. Lyons: de Tournes. A 17th-century dictionary, defining ‘commun’, reads, ‘le mari & la femme sont uns & communs en biens’ (1690) *Dictionnaire Universel*, ed. Antoine Furetiere, vol. 1. The Hague: Arnout et Reinier Leers. I could go on citing random examples, but I might just finish by suggesting that if La Boétie had intended to point to the difference between ‘ones’ and ‘one’ as Abensour would have it he would have been clearer to have written ‘qu’elle ne vouloit pas tant nous faire tous UN que tous UNS’.
44. While it would be misleading to stretch comparisons with Rousseau, this does suggest a curious inversion of Rousseau’s view that the General Will can only be arrived at if people refrain from communicating with each other at voting time.
 45. Hannah Arendt (1998) *The Human Condition*, 2nd edn, p. 243. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 46. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 53; emphasis, mine. ‘Friendship is a sacred word, and a holy thing. It is never found except between people of quality, and it only is achieved through mutual esteem. It is nourished not as much by good actions, but by good living; that which renders a friend confident in the other is the knowledge that he has of the other’s integrity.’
 47. Montaigne (n. 19), 1.27, p. 190; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155a.
 48. Montaigne (n. 19), pp. 194–5. Montaigne faults Cicero with having denigrated someone who had put obedience to his friend above civic duty. His response is that a true friendship of virtue entails such complete knowledge of the other that one could no more doubt his (always his) civic piety than one could doubt one’s own – the friend is *known*. But this raises a further question – can one truly know oneself?
 49. La Boétie, we note, does not specify exactly what type of equality this would entail in a free city.
 50. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 16: ‘[nature] endeavoured to with every means to tighten and solidify the knot of our alliance and society’.
 51. Estienne de la Boétie (1983) *Mémoire sur la pacification des troubles*, ed. Malcolm Smith, p. 63. Geneva: Droz. ‘You would be amazed to see to what degree, after this terror, the people will be more tractable, easier to control, and more easily contented.’
 52. Schaefer (n. 7). The argument was first made at the turn of the 20th century by Arthur Armaingaud, engendering a heated polemical exchange with Paul Bonnefon: Armaingaud (1910) *Montaigne, Pamphlétaire* (Paris: Hachette, 1910), Though Schaefer, Daniel Martin and Régine Reynolds-Cornell dispute some of Armaingaud’s arguments they basically agree with him. Their argument has not (yet) undermined the widespread consensus that the attribution to Montaigne is, as Simone Goyard-Fabre asserted in 1983, ‘definitively’ refuted: Étienne de la Boétie (1983) *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, ed. Simone Goyard-Fabre, introduction, p. 40. Paris: Flammarion See also Schachter (n. 7), p. 52, who rejects Schaefer and his associates’ claim, albeit somewhat dismissively. One motivation for the attribution to Montaigne is the apparent distance between the *Discours* and the *Mémoire*; I argue, however, that the two texts are actually closer than they might at first appear. I do not think it correct to say that they are ‘at opposite ends of the political spectrum’, Reynolds-Cornell, ‘Smoke and Mirrors,’ in Schaefer (n. 7), p. 123. The *Mémoire* calls for enforced religious uniformity, but that is not something that necessarily clashes with republican liberty – particularly when the religious doctrine championed is specifically crafted to be so elastic as to comprehend various competing interpretations. Tensions still exist between the two

texts, as I shall show, but it is somewhat misleading to characterize the political spectrum as does Reynolds-Cornell.

53. Xavier Bouscasse de Satin-Aignan, 'Parler sous le masque', in Isabelle Moreau and Grégoire Holtz (eds) *Parler Librement: La liberté de parole au tournant du XVIe et du XVIIe siècle*, p. 21. Lyon: ENS Éditions. 'Aujourd'hui, seul D. Martin continue de soutenir que Montaigne est le véritable auteur du *Discours*, avec des arguments ésotériques assez peu convaincants.' (He was perhaps unaware of Schaefer's English-language collaboration with Martin et. al.) I have not the space here to enter into the details of the Schaefer/Martin/Reynold-Cornell thesis. Some of their arguments (particularly those of Martin) are highly speculative; others (notably Schaefer's) draw on compelling textual affinities between La Boétie and Montaigne (though these could be explained in a way consistent with Montaigne's characterization of events). See also Martin (1998) *Montaigne et son cheval, ou les sept couleurs du discours de la servitude volontaire*. Tours: Nizet. Prior to the publication of Schaefer and Martin's books the thesis of Montaigne's authorship was widely rejected, and Schaefer/Martin have not (yet) succeeded in reviving it, though they do cause one interpreter to hedge her bets: Biancamaria Fontana writes that 'in the absence of new evidence it seems impossible to establish' whether the *Discours* was written by La Boétie entirely, modified by Montaigne, or yet entirely written by Montaigne: (2008) *Montaigne's Politics: Authority and Governance in the Essais*, p. 34. Princeton: Princeton University Press. But if there is certainly no 'smoking gun' evidence of any of these positions, one is justified in leaning towards the majority opinion that La Boétie was indeed the author of his most famous book. The bulk of the argument for Montaigne's authorship rests on Schaefer's previous reading of Montaigne as a closet political radical. Sarah Bakewell argues that Schaefer's theory is implausible, but explains the attraction it might hold: 'Like all conspiracy theories, [this theory] offers the thrill of fitting the pieces together, and it makes Montaigne glamorous: a one man revolutionary cell and a master of intrigue.' (2010) *How to Live: Or a Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer*, pp. 99–100. London: Chatto & Windus. It is worth noting, however, that even if one retains reservations about the portrait of Montaigne as a radical, Schaefer's work on the political thought of Montaigne remains a highly insightful and provocative book: (1990) *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
54. La Boétie (n. 51), p. 36; see also Smith's introduction, p. 13. Smith elaborates upon this argument (somewhat overstating his case) in (1991) *Montaigne and Religious Freedom: The Dawn of Pluralism*, ch. 3. Geneva: Droz. I don't think the text can be made into a defence of political freedom, but it is worth noting that the distinction between calling for enforced uniformity of action and calling for enforced uniformity of belief is a real one.
55. La Boétie (n. 51), p. 43.
56. *Ibid.* p. 57.
57. On this we might merely note that Montaigne did not embark on his solitary life of study and reflections on scepticism until well after La Boétie's death.
58. *Ibid.* p. 49. 'No other dissention is so great or so dangerous as that that comes out of religion. It separates citizens, neighbours, friends, parents, brothers, the father from his children, the husband from the wife; it breaks alliances, parentage, marriages, the inviolable rights of nature, and penetrates to the depths of hearts to rip our friendships and plant irreconcilable hatreds.'
59. In particular, as the editor to the *Mémoire* notes, Philip II of Spain was being encouraged by Rome to threaten invasion in order to preserve Catholicism in France. La Boétie (n. 51), p. 47. n. 17.

60. Ibid.
61. In response to a possible rejoinder that Christians live in apparent peace with Muslims in the Ottoman empire, he argues that this is because they are completely subject to the Sultan. The multiplicity of confessions contributes to their servitude. Ibid. p. 60. He also suggests that Islam and Christianity can live side-by-side because they are so different and live entirely separately, and hence are not in competition with each other. Heresy is a greater source of strife than 'paganism' (as he describes the Turks' faith).
62. Ibid. p. 44: 'a dismembered republic'. In Lefort's interpretation of the *Discours*, the phantasmagoric reference to the many eyes that spy on one, etc., is a repudiation of the image of the body politic. Here we see La Boétie employing this imagery in a univocal manner.
63. La Boétie (n. 51), p. 36: 'a near universal hatred and ill will between the subjects of the king'.
64. Indeed, his view might even be considered Erastian, though the text is not explicit on the proper relationship between temporal and ecclesiastical authority.
65. Virginia Reinburg (1992) 'Liturgy and the Laity in Late Medieval and Reformation France', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23(3): 541; emphasis, mine.
66. Cicero (1990) *Laelius, on Friendship and the Dream of Scipio*, tr. J. G. F. Powell, pp. 37–9. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
67. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. W. D. Ross, in (1952) *The Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols, vol. 2. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.
68. La Boétie's civil religion should not be understood as Erastian, or at least was not overtly so. He insisted on the clergy's rights and the unity of the universal church. But he nonetheless argued that the King should intervene directly and make decisions on church organization by fiat. He felt the need to defend this policy at length, and tried to make clear that this did not involve the crown overstepping its bounds.
69. La Boétie (n. 51), p. 64.
70. Ibid. p. 89.
71. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 25.
72. To mention just one author in the burgeoning 'trust' literature, Eric Uslaner has done some useful empirical work on trust, following and qualifying the views of Robert Putnam. See his (2002) *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See also for a discussion of the relationship between trust and equality, Uslaner (2008) *Corruption, Inequality, and the Rule of Law*, pp. 48–53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. One study arguing for the ineffectiveness of placing all one's efforts in scrutiny of officials is Anechiarico and James Jacobs (1996) *The Pursuit of Absolute Integrity: How Corruption Control Makes Government Ineffective*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
73. One of the more powerful reinvigorations of classical *philia politike* in recent political thought is Danielle Allen (2004) *Talking to Strangers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Allen attempts to find a balance between intimacy and strangeness, encouraging a trusting relationship among citizens without proposing that they attain radical unity (chs 9 and 10).
74. La Boétie (n. 9), p. 54.
75. This raises a fundamental question that preoccupied Rousseau, as Jean Starobinski has argued forcefully in his (1957) *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle*. Paris: Gallimard.

