Lieberman's new book *Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect* hits the shelves this month. It's a book about relationships and why relationships are a central—though increasingly absent—part of a flourishing life. Lieberman draws on psychology and neuroscience research to confirm what Aristotle asserted long ago in his *Politics*: "Man is by nature a social animal … Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god."

New book uses recent research to confirm Aristotle's theory that people need to be social.

Just as human beings have a basic need for food and shelter, we also have a basic need to belong to a group and form relationships. The desire to be in a loving relationship, to fit in at school, to join a fraternity or sorority, to avoid rejection and loss, to see your friends do well and be cared for, to share good news with your family, to cheer on your sports team, and to check in on Facebook—these things motivate an incredibly impressive array of our thoughts, actions, and feelings.

Basic needs do not only consist of food and shelter. Relationships are a basic need, too.

Lieberman sees the brain as the center of the social self. Its primary purpose is social thinking. One of the great mysteries of evolutionary science is how and why the human brain got to be so large. Brain size generally increases with body size across the animal kingdom. Elephants have huge brains while mice have tiny ones. But humans are the great exception to this rule. Given the size of our bodies, our brains should be much smaller—but they are by far the largest in the animal kingdom relative to our body size. The question is why.

Scientists have debated this question for a long time, but the research of anthropologist Robin Dunbar is fairly conclusive on this point. Dunbar has found that the strongest predictor of a species' brain size—specifically, the size of its neocortex, the outermost layer—is the size of its social group. We have big brains in order to socialize. Scientists think the first hominids with brains as large as ours appeared about 600,000-700,000 years ago in Africa. Known as *Homo heidelbergensis*, they are believed to be the ancestors of *Homo sapiens* and the Neanderthals. Revealingly, they appear to be the first hominids to have had division of labor (they worked together to hunt), central campsites, and they may have been the first to bury their dead.

The brain is the key to socializing. Larger animals usually have larger brains, but based on body size, people should have smaller brains. Research suggests our brains are larger in order to socialize.