Omnibus Meis Amicis:

“Oooh, I get by with a little help from my friends,
Yeah, I get high with a little help from my friends,
I’m going to try with a little help from my friends.”
- The Beatles
# Table of Contents

Abstract

List of Abbreviations Used

Acknowledgments

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: The Virtue of *Philia*

Chapter 3: Contemplation as *Philia* with God

Chapter 4: Civic Friendship

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Bibliography
ABSTRACT

Aristotle devotes two books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*—one fifth of the whole work—to the topic of *philia*, but the relation between these treatments and the rest of the work is unclear. My thesis shows the importance of *philia* in the wider context of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Friends of equal virtue provide the virtuous with worthy comrades: together they can find opportunities for courage and magnificence which they would be incapable of alone. Together, friends can contemplate better. In *philia* the sphere of what is one’s own becomes enlarged: instead of ‘I’ and ‘you’, we become ‘we’. This movement to a more universal perspective makes our contemplation more like God’s divine contemplation of the whole cosmos. Finally, civic friendship provides a surer bond among citizens than justice, providing the surest foundation for the *polis*, and through civic friendship, all citizens participate in the good life.
# List of Abbreviations Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De Anima</td>
<td>DA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eudemian Ethics</td>
<td>EE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysics</td>
<td>Met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicomachean Ethics</td>
<td>EN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Pol.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Eli Diamond, my advisor. His comments, his critiques, and most of all his counsel, not only during the writing of this thesis but also during the many courses I have taken with him, have made the successful completion of this thesis possible. To the other professors in the Dalhousie Classics Department I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. As Aristotle tells us, the debt we owe to our superiors, both moral and intellectual, they who are the cause of our being, is enormous and can never be repaid. All I can offer, however, is honour and gratitude to those who have helped me in innumerable ways.

Aaron Higgins-Brake and Joseph Gerbasi graciously read early drafts of several chapters and helped me refine and clarify my writing immensely. Aryeh Kosman provided a very detailed critique of my second chapter which substantially improved it. I would particularly like to thank my readers, Wayne Hankey and Michael Fournier, whose criticisms helped to correct and elucidate many parts of this thesis.

To Rachel, my wife, who listened with patience to the innumerable frustrations of thesis writing, who pushed me to work when I needed to work, and told me to relax when I needed to relax, and whose skilled copyediting tenaciously pulled out the weeds of error from the garden that is this thesis, I owe many, many thanks.

Finally, I thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Dalhousie, and the Black & Gold Club, without whose generous provision of external goods this thesis could never have reached completion.
CHAPTER 1: 
Introduction

Aristotle’s treatment of *philia*, found in books VIII and IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics* “appears as an anomaly in the scheme of the [*Nicomachean Ethics*],” as Francis Sparshott puts it.¹ Before book VIII, *philia* is only mentioned in passing as a minor social virtue; there is no indication it comprises a major aspect of ethics. Sparshott concludes that the treatment is merely a digression, placed “where [one] can reasonably appear in a Greek treatise, where there are no appendices: immediately before the final topic that leads the work to its triumphant conclusion”.² I shall establish in this thesis that the treatment of *philia* is no mere digression, but rather an integral part of the organizational scheme of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and of Aristotle’s ethical thinking more generally: it looks back to the life of practical virtue, treated in books III-V, since *philia* is the truest expression of all the practical virtues; it looks forward to the conclusion, found in book X, that the life of theoretical contemplation is the best human life, since the joining of two friends’ lives, two separate ‘I’s becoming a single ‘we’, provides the friends a more universal and god-like perspective, and contemplation itself can be thought of as *philia* with God; and it looks forward to the transition to the *Politics*, since *politikē philia*, the bond of citizens in a state, replaces justice as the bond between citizens: a state held together by *politikē philia* is most likely to properly instill virtue among its citizens. Aristotle tells us as much in his introduction to the topic of *philia*. Not only does *philia* contribute to the excellence of the practical and theoretical virtues, for “those in the prime of life it stimulates to noble actions—‘two going together’—for with friends men are more able both to think and to act”,³ but it also is essential to man’s political nature, since

³ EN 1155¹⁴-⁶. “τοῖς τ’ ἐν ἀκμῇ πρῶς τάς καλὰς πράξεις· σύν τε δ’ ἐρχομένω· καὶ γὰρ νοήσαι καὶ πράξαι δυνατότεροι”.

1
“friendship too seems to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice”. Philia is absolutely integral to human life and eudaimonia; this fact justifies the inclusion of this discussion within the Nicomachean Ethics.

The second-century C.E. commentator Aspasius saw no problems with treating philia in a course on ethics. He writes that it is “most proper for the investigator of character and virtue to consider philia”. This is because it is both a minor social virtue and a characteristic of the good man, connected with justice, for “justice is a kind of distributive equality, and friends are always most equal to each other”. Likewise, the paraphrast Heliodorus takes no issue with a treatment of philia in the Nicomachean Ethics. He writes that “philia is a kind of virtue or attaches to virtue,” since it is both a mean between churlishness and flattery and perfect-friendship is only found among the virtuous. The limit of Aspasius’ and Heliodorus’ views is that they accept Aristotle’s assertion seemingly at face value—perhaps it seemed self-evident to them. But to the modern reader of Aristotle, it seems hard to see how philia is characteristic of the good man or relates to the exercise of the virtues other than justice.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, writing in the thirteenth century, accounts for the inclusion of a treatment of philia, because it is founded upon virtue as an effect of it, [since] friendship is a kind of virtue inasmuch as it is a habit of free choice. [Furthermore] it is reduced to the genus of justice as offering something proportional … or at least it accompanies virtue insofar as virtue is the cause of true friendship.

---

4 EN 1155a22-4. “Εϊκε δὲ καὶ τὰς πόλεις συνέχειν ἡ φιλία, καὶ οὐ νομοθέται μᾶλλον περὶ αὐτῆς σπουδάζειν ἢ τὴν δικαιοσύνην”.
6 Aspasius, “Commentary on Nicomachean Ethics VIII,” 135’24-5. “ἡ τε γὰρ δικαιοσύνην ἴσοτης τίς ἐστιν ἀπονεμητική καὶ ἡ φιλία τοῖς φιλοις ἴσοτητα παρέχει”.
Aquinas’ exegesis is somewhat more satisfying, in that it provides a concrete relation between philia and the virtues: philia like the other virtues is a habit, and it is a species of justice. However, Aquinas treats philia as merely an effect of virtue, as something that the virtuous man has as a consequence of his virtue, neglecting how philia is instrumental in the acquisition, maintenance, and exercise of virtue. Furthermore Aquinas, as well as Aspasias and Heliodorus, ignore the relationship between philia and man’s contemplative life.

The French commentators Gauthier and Jolif, in their 1958 commentary L’Éthique à Nicomache, seem to take Aristotle at his word that philia is “a certain kind of virtue or involves virtue”. They comment, on the difference between the Eudemian Ethics and the Nicomachean Ethics, that in the latter, “Aristote a trouvé le moyen d’intégrer à son plan d’ensemble d’étude de la continence et celle de l’amitié: toutes deux se rattachent à l’étude de la vertu, car la continence est une demi-vertu et l’amitié est une vertu, ou un épanouissement de la vertu.” Concerning Aristotle’s opening remark of book VIII, they merely state that “cette notation justifie la place du traité de l’amitié dans le plan de l’Éthique: il se rattache au traité de la vertu.” They offer no exegesis of why a discussion of philia is germane to a course on ethics.

The first modern scholar to appreciate the importance of philia in Aristotle’s thought is John Cooper. In two articles published in 1977 and another in 1990, he outlines his views on Aristotelian friendship. Cooper identifies two reasons why friends are necessary for eudaimonia—which justify the inclusion of two books on the subject in the Nicomachean Ethics:

---

10 Gauthier and Jolif, L’Éthique à Nicomache, (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1959), 51*-2*
11 Gauthier and Jolif, L’Éthique, 660.
first, that to know the goodness of one’s life, which [Aristotle] reasonably assumes to be a necessary condition of flourishing, one needs to have intimate friends whose lives are similarly good, since one is better able to reach a sound and secure estimate of the quality of a life when it is not one’s own. Secondly, he argues that the fundamental moral and intellectual activities that go to make up a flourishing life cannot be continuously engaged in with pleasure and interest … unless they are engaged in as parts of shared activities, rather than pursued merely in private”.

*Philia* helps the *eudaimones* because it helps them be sure and aware of their virtue and helps them actualize their virtuous characters. Cooper also expands upon the nature of civic friendship: through participation in the common life of the *polis*, citizens can “achieve … an active, perfected, and self-sufficient life”. Cooper thus establishes the areas in which *philia* is important: practical virtue, intellectual life, and political life.

Suzanne Stern-Gillet’s 1995 book *Aristotle’s Philosophy of Friendship* treats the topic of *philia* differently. In her introduction she writes that Aristotle’s treatment of *philia*, “far from being a mere appendix to [Aristotle’s] ethics, constitutes an integral and crucial part of it … [because *philia*] uniquely contributes to the cognitive self-actualization of virtuous persons”.

*Philia* plays such a prominent role because it is only through the ‘mirror’ that the other self provides that we can fully actualize ourselves. As she explains,

> only those individuals can be said to be selves who have succeeded in harmonizing, within their own lives, the claims of reason, emotion, and appetite. Although becoming a self is not, of course, the same as becoming virtuous, the two processes are co-extensive, and the wicked, as well as the akratic, remain mere *loci* of incongruous, dissonant, and divergent forces.

Thus *philia* provides us with the means of becoming virtuous, and therefore happy, people.

The interpretive principle that guides this thesis, and sets my interpretation apart from others, is my reading of *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.ix, where Aristotle discusses why even *eudaimones*, who, to a greater degree than anyone, are self-sufficient, still require friends.

---

13 Cooper, “Friendship and the Good,” 351.
14 Cooper, “Political Animals,” 375.
Aristotle’s answer is that friends offer us synaisthēsis and syngnorizesis—co-perception and co-knowing. This is not a mutual perception and contemplation, each friend of the other, as Stern-Gillet interprets it. Rather, it is better and more pleasurable to perceive together and know together with a friend, because, as Aryeh Kosman explains, it provides an expanded sphere of being, an expansion of the self to encompass everything that one’s friend does and thinks, in addition to one’s own thoughts and actions. Human life is essentially relational: the full actualization of human nature requires philia; a man who is sufficient unto himself and lives apart from other humans, without friends and without a polis, is not truly human but “either a beast or a God”. This interpretation has a number of consequences. First, philia is linked to virtue because it is in the context of perfect-friendship that the virtuous can best actualize and exercise their virtue. Take for instance the philia between Gilgamesh and Enkidu: before he met Enkidu, Gilgamesh was at a loss as to what to do, to such an extent that he terrorized his own people. With Enkidu, however, Gilgamesh has someone with whom he can actualize and exercise his heroic virtue: together they go and slay the terrible beast Humbaba. Turning to the theoretical side of human life, this expansion of the self means that one can identify and contemplate a tiny bit more of the cosmos as one’s own. This brings us closer to God’s all-encompassing perspective and contemplation. Finally, concerning civic friendship, I shall expand Cooper’s treatment, showing that civic friendship is more similar to perfect-friendship than to utility-friendship. As such, all the citizens of a polis will share, in a limited sense, in the excellence and eudaimonia of the best citizens.

First, in Chapter 2, we shall look at philia in relation to the practical side of human life. Aristotle opens his discussion of philia by telling the reader that philia “is a certain kind

18 Pol. 1253a29 “ἡ θηρίαν ἦν ἡθος”.
of virtue, or involves virtue”. Philia is both a particular virtue, lying on a mean between churlishness and obsequiousness, as well as something which comprehends the whole of virtue. In this respect it is similar to justice, which, as Aristotle outlines in book V of the Nicomachean Ethics, has both a particular and a universal sense. It is only with friends that we can best actualize the virtues, and philia even replaces justice as the chief of the virtues, since “when men are friends they have no need of justice”. Philia supercedes justice because friends naturally portion out things equally, not only because friends are inherently equal, but also out of affection for the friend. This is opposed to justice, which compels equality.

In Chapter 3, we turn to the theoretical side of human life, to see how philia is necessary here as well. Aristotle’s discussion of why the endaimon needs friends shows why we desire friends at all: it is because they—to use Aryeh Kosman’s phrase—“expand our sphere of being”, such that we can identify more of the cosmos as being identical to us. The tiny step, by which two friends’ lives become so intertwined that they share everything brings both friends slightly closer to God’s divine perspective; God stands to the cosmos as form stands to matter: everything is God. Philia enables the virtuous to see more of the world as identical with themselves. Furthermore, even the theoria of an individual can be thought of as a form of philia with God. The man who lives virtuously and pursues philosophy is most of all a lover of nous; but man does not contemplate “in so far as he is man … but in so far as something divine is present in him”. In other words, to pursue philosophy is to be a philos of God.

Finally, in Chapter 4 we shall look at politike philia. Although Aristotle says that civic friendship is a kind of utility-friendship, I shall argue that under a good constitution, it more

20 EN 1155a26-7. “μάλλον περὶ αὐτῆς στουδάζειν ἢ τὴν δικαιοσύνην”.
21 EN 1177b27-8. “οὐ γὰρ ἡ ἀνθρωπός ἐστιν ὁπως βιώσεται, ἀλλ’ ἡ θεόν τι ἐν αὐτῶ ὑπάρχει”.


closely resembles perfect-friendship. This is because civic friendship “is but the reflection, in the lives of individuals, of the constitution of the state. Considered in itself, civic friendship is neither noble nor pettily contractual, neither disinterested nor manipulative, neither stable nor unstable”. Under a constitution that brings citizens together merely for the sake of self-sufficiency (i.e. utility), civic friendship will certainly reflect the constitution and be akin to utility-friendship; yet under a good constitution, where the polis aims at not merely life, but the good life (i.e. the life of moral excellence), civic friendship will resemble perfect-friendship. Citizens in such a polis will live together (suzēn) by sharing in discussion and thought, they will not dissolve the friendship—consequently the constitution will be proof against revolution, and most importantly they will have a concern for the moral improvement of their fellow citizens. Lawgivers care for civic friendship “more than justice” because just as philia replaces justice between two personal friends, civic friendship replaces justice as the bond of the state. By the addition of the feeling side of the soul, the citizens willingly abide by the constitution and help their fellow citizens, instead of doing so merely because justice—as instantiated in the laws—demands it.

Finally, a brief note about my use of Aristotle’s ethical texts: although this thesis is focused on the role of philia in the Nicomachean Ethics, I periodically make reference to Eudemian Ethics, the other genuinely Aristotelian ethical treatise. Anthony Kenny has shown that the so-called ‘common books’—books V-VIII of the Nicomachean Ethics being identical in the manuscript tradition to books IV-VI of the Eudemian Ethics—originally belonged in the Eudemian Ethics, which was known in antiquity, at least until the time of Aspasias, as

22 Stern-Gillet, Philosophy of Friendship, 153-4.
23 EN 1155a24. “μακάλον ... ἦ ἡ τῆν δικαιοσύνην”.
24 While some, such as John Cooper, consider the Magna Moralia to be written by Aristotle himself, this is not a widely-held opinion.
Aristotle’s primary ethical work.\textsuperscript{25} I make no claims regarding the relative dating of the two works, nor do I suppose the *Nicomachean Ethics* to be in any way superior to the *Eudemian Ethics*. I see the *Eudemian Ethics* as a useful aid in understanding Aristotle’s thought: where the text of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is obscure and dense, a reading of the corresponding passage in the *Eudemian Ethics* can prove fruitful. Therefore my procedure in the present work is to mainly refer to the text of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and refer to the *Eudemian Ethics* where it can help to elucidate the meaning of a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

At the opening of book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tells us that *philia* “is a certain kind of virtue or involves virtue”.\(^{26}\) The manner in which *philia* is a virtue is not made explicit in Aristotle’s ethical treatises, nor has it received significant attention from scholars. This chapter is an exegesis of *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII and IX on *philia* with the aim of illuminating Aristotle’s opening remark. *Philia* and justice are very closely related; friendship embraces justice and goes beyond it through the addition of friendly feeling. As such, like justice, *philia* has both a particular and a universal sense. In the particular sense, it is a specific virtue: the mean between churlish and obsequious dispositions. In the universal sense, it perfects, completes, and provides the best situation for all the other virtues to flourish.

Without friends, virtue seems to remain inactive: this is best seen in the case of the magnanimous man, who, despite possessing all the virtues, will “be sluggish and hold back except where great honour as a great result is at stake and [will be] a man of few deeds”.\(^{27}\) Friends enable him to exercise his virtue because it is *kallion*, in Aristotle’s view, to be courageous, liberal, and magnanimous towards friends than strangers; friends afford the virtuous man more worthy opportunities to exercise his virtue. *Philia* even supersedes justice as chief of the virtues: since “friends hold everything in common”,\(^ {28}\) the question of the equitable distribution of goods becomes irrelevant. Thus, to be *eudaimon* in the sphere of practical activity, *philia* is absolutely necessary, since it both is a virtue and actualizes the other virtues most fully.

\(^{26}\) EN 1155a4. “[*φιλία*] ἔστι γὰρ ἄρετή τις ἢ μετ’ ἄρετῶς”. My own translation.

\(^{27}\) EN 1124b24-5. “καὶ ἄργον εἶναι καὶ μελλῆτιν ἄλλα ἢ ὅπου τιμὴ μεγάλη ἢ ἔργον καὶ ἐλίγων μὲν πρακτικῶν”.

\(^{28}\) EN 1159b31. “κοινὰ τὰ φίλων”.
Hitherto, there has been little treatment of *philia* as a virtue. Robert Crouse’s very short article on Aristotelian *philia* makes it clear that he views it as a virtue. He writes: “[*philia*] is not just a virtue, but includes all the rest”.  

Paul Schollmeier also argues that *philia* is a virtue; his analysis, however, requires correction at some key points. Further, he only treats the core elements from Aristotle’s definition of *aretē* in *Nicomachean Ethics* II, whereas I shall discuss two other marks of *aretē*: being for the sake of the *kalon* and being both created and developed by its activity. Other commentators, such as Gauthier and Jolif, merely brush off the opening comment as a way to tie a discussion of *philia* into the *Nicomachean Ethics*.  

There is the further confusion of the apparent ambiguity in the *Nicomachean Ethics* between the descriptions of *philia*: at II.7 it is listed among the minor social virtues, being a mean between obsequiousness or flattery on the one hand and surliness on the other at IV.6, where this virtue is unnamed, “though it most resembles friendship”; and in books VIII and IX, where it is treated in much more depth. Geoffery Percival, in his quaint expanded translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, writes the following: “Friendship is a virtue, as we saw in our discussion of the virtues of the social life: or if this statement appears strange to those among us who do not usually understand by friendship a characteristic of an individual, we may perhaps say that it involves virtue”. Francis Sparshott agrees with Percival’s interpretation, arguing that *philia* in

---

31 See René Antoine Gauthier and Jean Yves Jolif, 681.
32 *EN* 1108a31.
33 *EN* 1126b20.
Nicomachean Ethics VIII and IX is not the virtue discussed in Nicomachean Ethics II and IV.\textsuperscript{35} Lorraine Pangle contends that \textit{philia} is “like a virtue”, and “resembles the virtues”, but nevertheless thinks that “Aristotle acknowledges at 1157\textsuperscript{b}5-7, almost in passing, that friendship is not one of the virtues”, since although the other virtues “involve pleasure and emotions ... pleasure is far more central to friendship”.\textsuperscript{36}

Commentators seem to resist treating \textit{philia} as a virtue because, whereas \textit{philia} as the minor social virtue is a specific mean, the right amount of sociability in a given situation, books VIII and IX “explore the whole range of feeling of which the virtue of \textit{philia} is a mean, a feeling which is simply a function of interaction and not a ‘disposition to choose, lying on a mean’”.\textsuperscript{37} What Sparshott and others who hold this opinion miss is that there are two different, but clearly related, senses of \textit{philia} at work here. Like justice, which has a particular sense as well as a universal sense,\textsuperscript{38} \textit{philia} also has a two related meanings: both the particular sense of being the virtue of sociability—or what might be called friendliness—as well as something that runs much deeper throughout human society, i.e. intense interpersonal friendship. It is this ambiguity that I shall explore in this chapter.

That \textit{philia}, as discussed in books VIII and IX of the Nicomachean Ethics, is the particular virtue, described in book IV is neither self-evident nor explained by Aristotle. But in order for it to be so, it must fit the definition of \textit{aretē} adopted by Aristotle. Therefore it must: (i) be a fixed disposition, (ii) spring from choice, (iii) be a mean between two extremes, and (iv) be determined by reason, as a prudent man would determine it.\textsuperscript{39} Further, (v) all the

\textsuperscript{35} Sparshott, \textit{Taking Life Seriously}, 272.
\textsuperscript{36} Lorraine Pangle, \textit{Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54. I shall note in passing that the passage, allegedly discounting \textit{philia} as a virtue, says no such thing. And as we shall see below, perfect-friendship lies on a mean between too much and insufficient pleasure and friendly feeling.
\textsuperscript{37} Sparshott, \textit{Taking Life Seriously}, 272.
\textsuperscript{38} EN 1129\textsuperscript{b}3ff.
\textsuperscript{39} EN 1106\textsuperscript{b}36-1107\textsuperscript{a}2.
virtues come into being and are maintained by their active use, and (vi) all the virtues are done for the sake of the kalon. Now, to discover whether philia conforms to these characteristics of virtue, we must look to perfect-friendship, the friendship between men of similar virtue, rather than to friendships based on either pleasure or utility. For reasons I shall explain below, pleasure- and utility-friendships are only incidentally called friendships by being imitations of perfect-friendship. We should, like Aristotle himself, look to the full and complete form of philia if we are to see how it fits the aforementioned definition of aretē.

i) In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle says that “it seems that attraction is a passion, but friendship is a fixed disposition”. While we can easily have an attraction to inanimate objects, such as wine, philia is something deeper than an emotion. As Crouse writes, “philia involves the passage from a passion (pathōi) to a stable disposition of character (hexis); that is, from a sensitive stimulation, passive and immediate, to a rational appetite, freely willed”. Our dispositions are “the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions”. Thus philia is a disposition regarding the correct choice concerning with whom to spend our time and act. Virtuous philia is to spend time with those who are pleasant and good absolutely, not with those who only are only good and pleasant in relation

---

40 cf. EN 1103b12-17.
41 Aristotle nowhere states this explicitly, but it is clear from his treatment of the virtues in EN III-V. See especially EN 1115b13: “[ο λαθρησκός] φιλήστευε μέν οὐν καὶ τα τοιούτα ... τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα”.
42 What I shall refer to as perfect-friendship Aristotle terms philia teleia (EN 1156b8). It is also referred to as character-friendship or primary friendship in the scholarly literature.
43 Cf. EE: 1236a17-20: “there must, then, be three kinds of friendship, not all being so named for one thing or as species of one genus, nor yet having the same name quite by mere accident. For all the senses are related to one which is the primary, just as is the case with the world ‘medical’; for se speak of a medical soul, body, instrument, or act, but properly the name belongs to that primarily so called”.
45 Aristotle here seems to be echoing Plato’s Lysis 212d-e: “So there are no horse-lovers unless horses love them back, and no quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, or exercise lovers”. In the Lysis, as we shall discuss in Chapter 3, we find that our inter-personal philai are grounded in our common pursuit and non-reciprocal philia for the Good.
47 EN 1105b26. “καθ’ ἵκις πρός τα πάθη ἐγιμεν εὖ ἢ κακις”.
to us. This is what it means to ‘stand well’ with reference to the passion of *philesis*. The good man will spend his time with men of equal virtue because he himself is absolutely good, and to him the apparent and the real good will coincide. Further, since he is constant, he will continually choose to spend his time with those who are absolutely good; thus it will be his nature to spend time with good men.  

(ii) Likewise, *philia* springs from choice, which “is the characteristic thing in a friend”. All friendships start with *eunoia*, which is termed “inactive friendship” and is similar to *philesis*. But *eunoia* is not *philia* because it does not involve choice: people “only wish well to those for whom they feel goodwill, and would not do anything with them nor take trouble for them”, i.e. to those for whom one feels *eunoia*, one *wishes* the good, but for those to whom one is a friend, one *chooses* the good and acts to obtain it, because one has reflected on the feeling of *eunoia* and has decided that the friendship is worth pursuing. Further, perfect friendships do not develop quickly, because they “require time and familiarity ... [and men] cannot admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each”. Though they start with *eunoia*, friends must test each other, in order to know the virtue of the other, determining that each is worthy of friendship. This testing requires friends to spend time together, *suzên*, not just living, but actively doing things; as Aristotle tells us in the *Eudemian Ethics*, *philia* is the reciprocal choice of acting

---

48 For the difference between *philia* and *philesis*, see the glossary.
49 EN 1156b7ff.
50 EN 1164b1. “ἀλλ’ ἂν προσάρισες γὰρ τοῦ φιλοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς.”
51 EN 1167a11. “ἀλλ’ ἂν εὐνοία ἄρρητα εὐλογοῦντοι.”
52 EN 1167a9-10. “ὑπολοντες γὰρ μὲν οὖν τὰ ἄτομα οἷς εἰσὶν εὐνοίᾳ, συμπράξεις ἄρτων ὑπὲρ ἑλθεῖν υπὲρ αὐτῶν”.
53 EN 1156b26-30. “Εἰ δὲ προσδέχεται χρόνον καὶ συνηθείαν ... ὅδε ἐπιδέχεσθαι δὴ πρότερον ὁδόν εὐνοία φιλοῦν, πάν ἄν ἐκτέρσι ἐκτέρσῃ φανή φιλήταις καὶ πιστευθή.”
54 EN 1167a4. “εὐνοία ἂν ἔσχες δὴ ἄρρητα εὐλογοῦντοι.”
with someone known to be “absolutely good and pleasant”. 56 Philia therefore relies on the original and continuing choice to spend time with, and therein to promote the good of, a friend.

(iii) Philia is a kind of a mean in two ways. First, “equality ... is held to be characteristic of friendship”. 57 Schollmeier grounds the equality in philia upon the fact that good men will love each other equally because their virtues and activities are similar. 58 This holds true for friendships between men of equal virtue, but it neglects the possibility of equalizing an otherwise unequal friendship by means of affection. Aristotle recognizes unequal friendships exist between father and son, king and subjects, and generally in situations where the two people are not equal; 59 what renders these friendships equal is affection: “for when the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality”. 60 These unequal friendships can still be classified as perfect-friendships, for when “children render to parents what they ought to render to those who brought them into the world, and parents render what they should to their children, the friendship of such persons will be lasting and excellent”. 61 There is a limit, however, on the scale of inequality: “it is not possible to define exactly up to what point friends can remain friends; for much can be taken away and friendship remain, but when one party is removed to a great distance, as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases”. 62 Thus the mean in philia is not, as Schollmeier argues, an...
equality in virtue between two friends, but rather *philia* is a virtuous mean combining the right amount of affection to the worthiness of the friend.

More importantly, however, the three kinds of *philia* can be thought as excess, deficiency, and virtuous mean. This has not been noticed by commentators previously. Perfect-friendship lies on a mean between insufficient *philēsis*, namely utility-friendship, and excessive *philēsis*, namely pleasure-friendship. In utility-friendship, the friends scarcely feel affection for one another. They “do not spend their days together nor delight in each other”; in this regard it is a deficiency, just as cowardice, the inability to face any fearful things is a deficiency. Pleasure-friendships, on the other hand, lie on the side of excess. As Aristotle writes, “*erōs* is a kind of excess”, *erōs* being perhaps the prime instance of pleasure-friendship. In pleasure-friendship, the friends are too wrapped up in *philēsis* of one another to appreciate any virtue they might possess; the friendship is not based on appreciating beauty of soul, but rather beauty of body. Only in perfect-friendship is a mean achieved: such friends appreciate the worth of the other, and render due affection, but without carrying *philēsis* to excess. Of the two deficient kinds, pleasure-friendship is more like the mean, just as rashness more closely resembles true courage than cowardice does, for friendship “for the sake of pleasure is more like [perfect] friendship, when both parties get the same things from each other and delight in each other”. *Philia* therefore lies on a mean.

---

63 EN 1158a7-10 “φίλων δ’ οὐ πάνυ εἰσὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ συμμετέχειν μηδὲ χαίρειν ἄλληλοις, ἀ δὴ μάλιστ’ εἶναι δοκεῖ φιλικά”.

64 EN 1158a12-3. “τερωτη τέοιχε γὰρ ὑπερβολή”. Concerning whether *erōs* might be incorporated into perfect-friendship, Aristotle is silent. My point here is that sexual desire divorced from any virtue of character is an excess. For a discussion of *erōs* in Aristotle, see Price, *Love and Friendship*, 236ff.

65 EN 1158a18-20. “τούτων δὲ μᾶλλον ἐσχάτη φιλία ἢ διὰ τὸ ἢδυ, ὅταν ταύτα ἀπ’ ἀμφότερον γίγνεται καὶ χαίρομαιν ἄλληλοις ἢ τοῦς αὐτοὺς”.

15
(iv) For \textit{philia} to be a virtue, it must also be “determined by reason, as a prudent man would determine it”\footnote{EN 1107a-2. “ὤφισμενή λόγοι καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὑμίνειν”.}. While friendship starts as a brute sensation - we perceive someone as being useful, pleasant, or good - in perfect-friendship we have a rational desire for the good of the other. Moving from the brute perception of someone who seems good to us to \textit{philia} requires

\begin{quote}
précisément une intervention de l'intellect décident, après épreuve faite, de prendre les moyens de réaliser ce souhait d'amitié qu'est l'aimer simple ... Ainsi, si la passion suffit pour aimer sans espoir de retour, il faut pour répondre à un amour une décision intelligente. Mais il va de soi pour Aristote que la décision, précisément parce qu'elle est un acte d'intelligence réfléchi et délibéré, exprime plus qu'un ébranlement passager du désir, qu'une passion : un état habituel, c'est-à-dire quelque chose qui constitue notre caractère profond."\footnote{Gauthier and Jolif, \textit{L’Éthique}, 681.}
\end{quote}

This is to say that our \textit{response} to the emotion of \textit{philēsis} requires rational deliberation: it will be part of the character of the virtuous man to respond correctly to how he feels about other people and how other people feel about him. He will habitually choose to spend his time with good, not base, men, because he rationally deliberates upon their goodness, if it is a worthy match for his own.

(v) Further, friends become friends by being friends, i.e. living together. For all the virtues, it is the active exercise of that virtue which produces the disposition in the soul: “it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good”\footnote{EN 1105b-9-11. “ἐὰν οὖν λέγεται ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ τὰ δίκαια πράττειν ὁ δίκαιος γίνεται καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τὰ σώφρονα ὁ σώφρων ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μὴ πράττειν τὰτα ὁδεῖς ἢ ὁδὲ μελλήσαει γίνεται ἄγαθος”.}. Virtuous action produces virtuous character, which in turn produces virtuous action. So too is it with the virtue of friendship: the activity of being a friend produces friendship. Men “who live together delight in each other and confer benefits on each other”\footnote{EN 1157a-6-7. “οἱ μὲν γὰρ σύμφωνες χαίρουσιν ἀλλήλους καὶ πορίζουσι τὰγαθὰ”.}. But when the friends no longer spend time together, their friendship withers on account of inactivity, and can even be
destroyed: “distance does not break off the friendship absolutely, but only the activity of it. But if the absence is lasting, it seems actually to make men forget their friendship; hence the saying ‘full many a man finds friendship end / for lack of converse with his friend’. Just as a courageous man, if he were to repeatedly run away in battle, would cease to be courageous, a formerly friendly man, by lack of interaction with his friend, ceases to be a friend.

Virtuous activity breeds virtuous disposition. Thus *philia* is like the other virtues in this way also: active exercise produces the state of character, while inactive neglect destroys it.

(vi) Finally, *philia* is something *kalon*, as are the other virtues. ‘*Kalon*’, however, in the context of moral philosophy, is a notoriously hard word to translate, since the usual translation ‘beautiful’ seems quite out of place. Aryeh Kosman, in his illuminating article “Beauty and the Good: Situating the *Kalon*”, argues that “a thing’s being *kalon* is not a cosmetic supplement, a surface that is painted on; it is the shining forth of a thing’s nature”, a nature which implies goodness. To put this as a ratio, *to kalon* : goodness :: appearance : being. The English rendering of *to kalon* as ‘the beautiful’ obfuscates the meaning of the Greek word; for while we oppose an object’s appearance to its essence - whence the phrase ‘beauty is only skin deep’ - the Greeks knew no such difference. When Aristotle writes that courage is a *kalon* thing, and in general that the virtuous man acts for the sake of the *kalon*, he does not refer to a sort of aesthetically pleasant idea. Courage itself is not a pretty thing, nor is a battlefield, strewn with gore, the result of courageous acts, a beautiful sight. Rather courage is *kalon* because it is the outward manifestation of man’s excellence *qua* political animal. Because man is a political animal, and, *qua* man, the *polis* is his

---

70 EN 1157b12. Translation of the proverb is by H. Rackham. “οἱ γὰρ τόποι: οὐ διαλύουσι τὴν φιλίαν ἀπίστως, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν. 'Εὰν δὲ γρόνος ἢ ἀπουσία γίνηται, καὶ τῆς φιλίας δοκεῖ λήθην ποιεῖν· ἔθεν ἔρημα· πολλὰς δὴ φιλίας ἀπροστηγορήτως διέλευσεν’”.


highest end, it is most kalon for him to do everything in his power to preserve it, including, if necessary, dying for it: this is “the shining forth of [man’s] nature”. And as with courage, so it is with the rest of the virtues: they are kalon, and therefore praiseworthy, because they manifest the best of man’s own nature.

**Philia** must therefore also belong to man’s intrinsic nature, if being properly situated with regards to friends is to be kalon.\(^73\) It is evident that man is a political animal, one that requires others; it is only through a relation to another that we become fully actualized. Humans first come together as husband and wife, since “mankind has a natural desire to leave behind them an image of themselves”\(^74\), since humans require an other for procreation and the supply of simple needs. Families also come together, forming a village for the sake of “something more than the supply of daily needs”\(^75\), and finally villages unite into a self-sufficient community, the polis, “originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life”\(^76\). Now this rehearsal of the opening of the *Politics* establishes clearly that “man is by nature a political animal”\(^77\), but does it establish that philia is an essential part of man’s nature? It does, because while the heights of perfect-friendship may not be available to all men,\(^78\) nonetheless all, except perhaps the most wicked, are capable of the lesser forms: utility- and pleasure-friendships, the kinds of friendship of which the family naturally consists: “the friendship of man and wife seems to be one of utility and pleasure combined. But it may also be based on virtue, if the partners be of high moral

---

\(^{73}\) Aristotle says or implies that *philia* is *kalon* a number of times in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: 1155a29, 1162b36, 1168b30.

\(^{74}\) *Pol.* 1252a30. “φιλοίς τῷ ἐρήμεσθαι, οἷον αὐτῷ, τοιούτων καταλιπεῖν ἐπερών”.

\(^{75}\) *Pol.* 1252a16. “χρῆσαι ἐνεκέν ὑπὲρ ἑφιμέρου”.

\(^{76}\) *Pol.* 1252a29-30. “[Ἡ πόλις] γυνομένη μὲν τὸν ζήν ἐνεκέν, οὖσα δὲ τοῦ εὖ ζήν”

\(^{77}\) *Pol.* 1253a2-3. “ὁ ξυνόμενος φύσει πολιτικὸν ψεον”.

\(^{78}\) For a rather more attractive view, that to the degree they possess some virtue, all men are capable of perfect-friendship, see Cooper, “Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship,” in *Reason and Emotion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 312-35.
character; for either sex has its special virtue, and this may be the ground of attraction”.  

Furthermore,

parent seems by nature to feel $[\phi\lambda\iota\alpha]$ for offspring and offspring for parent ... $[\phi\lambda\iota\alpha]$ is felt mutually by members of the same race, and especially by men, whence we praise lovers of their fellow men. We may see even in our travels how near and dear every man is to every other. 

It is clear, then that $\phi\lambda\iota\alpha$ is by nature something proper to humans. Thus perfect-friendship is $k\alpha\lambda\circ$, since it is the best form of $\phi\lambda\iota\alpha$ among men, the best expression of man’s nature as a gregarious animal.

$\phi\lambda\iota\alpha$ is a virtue because, just like the other virtues, it is a habit, springs from choice, is concerned with a mean, and is rationally determined. Further, it finds its origin in, and is continued by, its activity. It is something $k\alpha\lambda\circ$. As a virtue, it is necessary for the flourishing life, and even the virtuous man, who otherwise strives to be as self-sufficient as possible will need friends. Aristotle’s opening remark is neither, as Gauthier and Jolif think, “[une justification de] la place du traité de l’amitié dans le plan de l’Éthique : [parce que] il se rattache au traité de la vertu”, since this is no mere parenthetical remark to establish the importance of the topic, but rather a statement of real philosophical import; nor is it, as Sparshott believes, perhaps even an interpolation. Rather, $\phi\lambda\iota\alpha$, as discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII and IX is the virtue mentioned in books II and IV.

---

79 EN 1162a24-7. “καὶ τὸ γρήγορον εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ τὸ ἥδυ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ φιλίᾳ. εἶτε δὲ ἂν καὶ δὲ άφετην, εἰ ἑπιεικεῖς εἶναι ἐπὶ ἐκατέρου άφετη, καὶ γαῖροις ἄν τὸ τοιοῦτον”.  
80 EN 1155a16-21. “φύσει τε ἐνυπάρχει έν οἷς πρὸς τὸ γεγεννημένον τῷ γεγεννημένῳ καὶ πρὸς τὸ γεγεννημένῳ τῷ γεγενημένῳ, ... καὶ τοῖς ομοθυμανῖσι πρὸς ἀλλήλα, καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς άνθρώποις, ὧδε τοῖς φιλανθρώπως ἐπανάλυσαν ὕδαι δὲ ἂν τὶς καὶ ἐν ταῖς πλάναις ἦς οἰκεῖον ἰακοῦς ἄνθρωπος ἄνθρωπος φιλίαν καὶ φίλον”. For a discussion of the development of the idea of $\phi\lambda\iota\alpha$, from blood-kinship in Homer and Hesiod to a similarity in ways and habits in the 5th century, see Francisco Gonzalez, “Socrates on Loving One’s Own: a Traditional Conception of $\Phi\Lambda\iota\alpha$ Radically Transformed,” *Classical Philology* 95.4 (2000): 379-98. Aristotle seems to both affirm the traditional view, that $\phi\lambda\iota\alpha$ is based upon blood-kinship, and the new conception that it rests on similarity by $\phi\gammaις$.  
Friendship is not only a virtue, however, but it also completes the other virtues, providing a proper outlet for the virtuous man’s activity. Robert Crouse writes that in *philia* all the other virtues “have their actuality, their concrete life.” In this section, I shall provide an explanation and justification of Crouse’s statement, showing that it is only through the shared life of perfect-friends that the virtues are fully exercised. Even the most virtuous man will require external relations towards whom he can exercise his virtues, since man is by nature a political animal, one whose life is inherently relational. Although justice fulfills this role, in the universal sense of justice as the totality of virtue, *philia* goes beyond justice because whereas universal justice compels by law, friends willingly do virtuous acts out of love.

Aristotle seems aware of the necessity of *philia* for the full activity of the virtues, although he is nowhere explicit. Friends provide an appropriate outlet for virtuous activity, without which virtue seems impotent. Without friends the magnanimous man, a man of complete virtue, will be passive; he will rarely have the opportunity to exercise his virtue. Such a man will “be sluggish and hold back except where great honour as a great result is at stake and [will be] a man of few deeds.” A person of such superior excellence hardly acts because there are few opportunities great enough to be worthy of his virtue. The virtuous man, however, should be active; “for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well. And as in the Olympic games it is not the most beautiful and the strongest that

---

84 Magnanimity “seems to be a sort of crown of the excellences; for it makes them greater, and is not found without them” EN 1124a1-3: (ἔοικε μὲν οὖν ἡ μεγαλοπρεπεία οὸν κόσμος τις εἶναι τῶν ἄρετῶν· μείζους γὰρ αὐτὰς ποιεῖ, καὶ οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ ἑκείνου).
85 EN 1124b24-5. "καὶ ἀργὸν εἶναι καὶ μελλήτην ἄλλη· ἢ ὅπου τιμὴ μεγάλη ἢ ἔργον καὶ ομίλους μὲν πρακτικῶν".
are crowned but those who compete". The mere possession of virtue apart from virtuous acts is nothing; the activity alone is what matters; whence it might be said that the bad are as happy as the good half their lives, since when asleep, both are inactive. Worthy friends, however, bypass the problem faced by the magnanimous man: they provide a proper outlet for virtue, since “it is nobler to do well by friends than by strangers, [therefore] the good man will need people to do well by”. To give money is in itself kalon, but to give to a friend is kallion. The addition of philia makes actions, otherwise unworthy of the virtue of the magnanimous man, dignified, and therefore fitting to his excellence.

The activity of perfect friendships is the performing of virtuous actions. As O’Connor writes, suzēn, the “most characteristic thing” in friendship, should be translated not as “living together” but rather “acting together”. He argues that our modern idea of friendship, where “friendship at its best is characterized by a distinctive mode of being together, a special kind of intimacy, and this intimacy is manifested in even the seemingly meaningless routine of everyday life”, where what we do with a friend is less important than the time spent together, is different from Aristotle’s conception. Aristotle’s ideal of philia necessarily involves the sharing of specific activities. Friends, in his conception, in whatever existence means for each class of men, whatever it is for whose sake they value life, in that they wish to occupy themselves with their friends; and so some drink together, others dice together, others join in athletic exercises and hunting, or in the study of philosophy, each class spending their days together in whatever they

---

86 EN 1099a3-8. “[ἐνέργεια] πράξει γὰρ ἐξ ἀνίκτης, καὶ εὖ πράξει. ὡσπερ δ’ Ὁλυμπίασαν οὖ χαλλίστοι καὶ ἵσχυστοι στεφανώμεναι ἄλλ’ οἱ ἄγωνιζόμενοι.”
87 EN 1095b32.
89 O’Connor, “Two Ideals”, passim.
90 O’Connor, “Two Ideals”, 111.
love most in life; for since they wish to live with their friends, they do and share in those things as far as they can.\textsuperscript{92}

The point is that for Aristotle, perfect friendships are constituted not by doing any old thing together, but through doing virtuous actions. Further, in the \textit{Eudemian Ethics}, \textit{suzēn} is equated with doing things together (\textit{sunergein}).\textsuperscript{93} It is clear, therefore, that to live with a friend is to be engaged in activities with him. Virtuous men, for whom friendship is based on virtue, will therefore spend their time together seeking out and performing noble actions and good deeds. Together they might do something courageous, like slaying a terrible beast, as Gilgamesh and Enkidu did, or something magnificent, such as jointly establishing a fund for underprivileged children. The friendship between virtuous men will consist of exercising their virtue together.

Moreover, each of the virtues is best realized when virtuous action is done towards friends. First, let us take courage, since Aristotle discusses it first. Courage is at its root a proper disposition towards fearful things. It is most truly displayed towards the most terrible of things: death, specifically the most \textit{kalon} death, that in battle.\textsuperscript{94} But how does courage find its actuality in \textit{philia}? All of the virtues stem from a proper love of self. We are to rate \textit{nous} above all things: the true lover of self “assigns to himself the things that are the noblest and best, and gratifies the most authoritative element in himself and in all things obeys this”.\textsuperscript{95}

The courageous man will sacrifice his own life in order to save his friend, if that is what \textit{nous} dictates: he “does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies...

\textsuperscript{92} EN 1272\textsuperscript{a}1-8. “καὶ ὃ τι ποτ' ἔστιν ἕκαστος τὸ εἶναι ἢ ὦ γὰρν αἰρόμεντα τὸ ζῆν, ἐν τούτῳ μετὰ τῶν φίλων βούλομαι διὰ διδάσκειν μὲν συμπέπλευσιν, οὐ δὲ συγκυβεύομαι, ἀλλοι δὲ συγκυβεύονται καὶ συγκυβευοῦμαι ἢ συμφιλοσοφοῦμαι, ἕκαστοι ἐν τούτω συμμερεύοντες ὃ τί περ μᾶλλον ἀγαπᾶσθαι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ συζήν γὰρ βοιλόμενοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, τοῦτο ποιώμεθα καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦμεν ὡς οἷον τε [σφετε].”

\textsuperscript{93} EE 1245\textsuperscript{a}3.

\textsuperscript{94} EN 1115\textsuperscript{a}26-30.

\textsuperscript{95} EN 1168\textsuperscript{a}29-31. “ἀπονέμει γὰρν ἐστὶν τὰ καλλίστα καὶ μᾶλλον ἀγαθά, καὶ χαρίζεται ἐστὶν τῷ χυριστάτῳ, καὶ πάντα τούτῳ πείθεται.”
for them... gaining for himself nobility".\textsuperscript{96} It is not hard to imagine such a circumstance when \textit{nous} would dictate self-sacrifice: throwing oneself onto a grenade is choice-worthy if thereby one’s comrades are saved. The source of the nobility lies not in the death itself, but in the preservation of one’s friends. Thus courage is properly displayed only when one’s gallantry can preserve the life of a friend, or one’s \textit{polis}, which is held together by what Aristotle terms “civic friendship”\textsuperscript{97}

The other virtues find their actuality in \textit{philia} as well. Temperance requires abstention from overwhelming sexual desires; just so, perfect-friendship lies on a mean between the excess of pleasure that characterizes pleasure-friendships and the insensibility of utility-friendships. The twin virtues of liberality and magnificence, being concerned with the giving and taking of money, also find their fullest expression in \textit{philia}. While it may be noble and good to give money to a beggar, “it is nobler to do well by friends than by strangers”\textsuperscript{98}, and it would seem preposterous, in Aristotle’s world, to endow a \textit{polis} other than your own with a trireme or put on a lavish festival anywhere but at home. Honour too can be given to a friend; in this we can see the actuality of the virtues of pride and magnanimity. A virtuous friend would gladly yield the honour of some prize or distinction to his friend: “he will throw away both wealth and honours” for the sake of his friend\textsuperscript{99}. This casual dismissal of public recognition is clearly the actuality of the virtues concerned with honour.

Finally, there is a very close relationship between \textit{philia} and justice, \textit{philia} even supplanting justice as the best relation between people. Aristotle says that friends “have no

\textsuperscript{96} EN 1169\textsuperscript{a} 18-9. “\textit{ἀληθεῖς δὲ περὶ τῶν σπουδαίων καὶ τῶν φίλων ἄνεκα πολλὰ πράττειν καὶ τῆς παραμόδας”.
\textsuperscript{97} EE 1242\textsuperscript{a}1-2. “\textit{φιλία ... πολιτική}”. For an extended discussion of civic friendship, see below, Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{98} EN 1169\textsuperscript{b} 12. “\textit{χάλλων δ’ εὖ ποιεῖν φίλους ὕθενεῖν}”.
\textsuperscript{99} EN 1169\textsuperscript{a} 20. “\textit{προῆσται γὰρ καὶ χρήματα καὶ τιμᾶς}”.
need of justice ... and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality”, and “friendship and justice seem ... to be concerned with the same objects”. Philia encompasses justice as both the particular and the universal virtue. As the particular virtue, friends equalize their relationship by means of affection. While in “acts of justice what is equal in the primary sense is what is in proportion to merit, while quantitative equality is secondary ... in friendship quantitative equality is primary and proportion to merit secondary”. Proportional equality is secondary in philia because the truest form of philia is between equals. True perfect-friends are equal or very nearly so in virtue and merit. Therefore, for such friends, proportional equality will be the same as quantitative equality. Unequal friendships, such as parents to children, however, are equalized by affection, affection proportional to the inequality. When this affection “is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is held to be characteristic of friendship”. Philia thus is a prime instance of particular justice, because all friendships naturally are equal, either because the friends are themselves equal, or the affection between unequal friends render them equal.

Philia is also the truest embodiment of universal justice; this is because both justice and philia are co-extensive with the range of virtue. Justice, in its universal sense as doing what the law commands—since the law comprehends the whole of virtue, commanding courageous, temperate, and other virtuous acts—“is complete excellence ... in its fullest
sense, because it is the actual exercise of complete excellence”. Justice is thought to be chief of the virtues because it comprehends all the virtues. But in the activity of **philia**, as we have seen, all the virtues too find their fullest expression. **Philia**, however, can be thought of as even better than justice: for it removes the compulsion of ‘doing what the law commands’. This is why “the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality”. Justice can be thought to be terrible because it requires giving each his due with no regard for any relationship between people. Friends, on the other hand, *willingly* render to each other services, without paying heed to who owes whom what; thus friends “have no need of justice”, because “friends hold all things in common”. In this way, **philia** both completes and goes beyond justice.

Friends help us be virtuous in three ways: not only is it with friends that our virtues are actualized, but they also help us acquire virtue, since they provide “a certain training in excellence”, and **philia** “helps the young, too, to keep them from error”. The actualization of virtue that our friends provide helps us to acquire virtue, since a virtuous character is only acquired through virtuous action. Finally, our friends heighten our awareness of our virtuous activity, since we are better able to “contemplate our neighbours

---

104 EN 1129b31-2. “τελεία μάλιστα ἀρετή, ὅτι τῆς τελείας ἀρετῆς χρήσις ἐστιν”.
105 EN 1129b28-9. “καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πολλάκις κρατιστή τῶν ἄρετῶν εἶναι δοκεῖ ἡ δικαιοσύνη, καὶ οὖθ᾽ ἐσπεροὶ οὖθ᾽ ἔργος ὡστε θαυμαστός”.
106 EN 1155a28. “καὶ τῶν δικαίων τὸ μάλιστα φιλικὸν δοκεῖ εἶναι”.
107 EN 1155b26. “φίλων μὲν ὑπὸν οὐδὲν δεῖ δικαιοσύνης”.
108 EN 1159b31. “κοινὰ τὰ φίλων”. This seems to be something of a proverb. Cf. Euripides, Orestes 735, “friends’ possessions are common” (κοινὰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν φίλων), and Andromache, 376-7, “friends have nothing private, but hold possessions in common” (φίλων γὰρ οὐδὲν ὑπὸν... ἄλλα κοινὰ χρήματα). It is also common in Plato: cf. Lysis 207c “friends have everything in common, as the saying goes” (κοινὰ κοινὰ τὰ γε φίλων λέγεται), Gorgias, 507c “where there’s no partnership, there’s no friendship” (ὅπως δὲ μὴ ἔννοι κοινωνία, φίλω πάντα ὑπὸ εἶναι), and Phaedra, 279c, “friends have things in common,” “(κοινὰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν φίλων). Translations all my own.
109 EN 1170a11. “ἀσκησις τις τῆς ἀρετῆς”.
110 EN 1155a13-5. “καὶ νέοις δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἀναμάρτητον ἡ ποθεῖνα”. 
better than ourselves and their actions better than our own”.\textsuperscript{111} Keeping in mind that “people tend to notice faults in others that they overlook in themselves; and they are equally inclined to attribute to themselves nonexistent virtues”,\textsuperscript{112} Cooper comments on this passage that it is plausible to suggest, as our text does, that mistakes of this kind are not so apt to occur where one is observing another person and his life ... [perfect-friendship] could well serve as the needed bridge by which to convert objectivity about others into objectivity about oneself.\textsuperscript{113} It is hard to be sure of all the contingent circumstances of an act, but with the help of our friends we may be more secure in our knowledge that we are acting virtuously.

Unanswered, however, is the question of why it is “nobler to help friends than strangers”.\textsuperscript{114} To Aristotle and his audience, it seemed to be perhaps self-evident, and he never gives an account of partiality. The answer, however, seems to lie in Aristotle’s statement that “we ought to render to each [person] what is appropriate and becoming”.\textsuperscript{115} This is why Euthyphro’s prosecution of his father for murder, as portrayed in Plato’s \textit{Euthyphro}, is so shocking to Socrates and Euthyphro’s family. Piety is a certain kind of care for the gods and one’s parents; our superiors demand a certain kind of respect and obedience. So too is it with \textit{philia}: having entered into such a relationship with someone, we are bound to do good things to and for them. Thus Euthyphro is obliged to care for his father—and not prosecute him—and friends are required to help their friends.

\textsuperscript{111} EN 1169b35. “θεωρεῖν δὲ μᾶλλον τῶς πέλας δυνάμεθα ἢ ἑαυτούς καὶ τὰς ἐκείνων πράξεις ἢ τὰς ὀλχεῖς”.
\textsuperscript{113} Cooper, “Friendship and the Good,” 342.
\textsuperscript{114} EN 1169b12. “κάλλιον δ’ εὖ ποιεῖν φίλους οἰκείων”.
\textsuperscript{115} EN 1165a17. “ἐκάστοις τὰ ὀλχεῖα καὶ τὰ ἁμόσττοντα ἀπονεμητέον”. 26
The virtuous man will need friends, not only because *philia* is a virtue in itself, but also because it is the means by which he can best actualize his virtuous nature. It will help keep him on the primrose path of virtue, by helping him be sure of the goodness of his actions. Furthermore, it is at all times better to exercise the virtues towards friends: it is more glorious to die for your friends than for strangers, better to drink moderately and be chaste with your intimate companions, and better to give wealth and honours to your closest friends. Finally, *philia* even removes the need for justice, since it provides a stronger and truer equality. It is through acting virtuously with friends that humans lead the most flourishing lives. We may now turn to the necessity of *philia* for the contemplative life.
CHAPTER 3:
Contemplation as Philia with God\textsuperscript{116}

In *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.ix, Aristotle poses the question whether the happy man will need friends or not.\textsuperscript{117} Kosman correctly identifies this question as asking not whether friends are necessary in order to achieve *eudaimonia*, but “why we require friends even when we are happy”;\textsuperscript{118} the question is not why we need friends to *become* happy, but why we need friends when we *are* happy, since the *eudaimones* must be self-sufficient. As we saw in Chapter 2, *philia* is required for the flourishing of the life of *practical* virtue; Aristotle’s solution to the aporia here, however, points to the requirement of friendships even for the philosopher, in his life of *theoretical* virtue. *Philia* perfects our own *theōria*, making it more God-like, and through this divine activity we become *philoi* to God. This is because *philia* expands the sphere of our being: we move from an ‘I’ to a ‘we’: to put this in other words, we can contemplate a slightly larger part of the cosmos as belonging to us.\textsuperscript{119} This expansion of our sphere of contemplation allows us to better imitate the divine self-contemplation, which has as its object the entire cosmos: to put this in other words, since God, as *cause* of the being of everything that exists, in a sense *is* everything, and so God’s self-contemplation is a contemplation of the entire cosmos. Furthermore, *theōria* is how we become *philoi* to God, in the sense that the good man honours and obeys *nous*—which is divine. Thus *philia* is not only absolutely required for practical, but also contemplative, *eudaimonia*.

\textsuperscript{116} Certain parts of this chapter have been adapted from a paper originally written for a seminar on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. I would like to thank my colleagues for their invaluable aid in understanding that recondite text, especially *Metaphysics* XII, as well as Eli Diamond and Bryan Heystee for their comments on that essay. The original paper is published as “ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΤΕ ΕΙΔΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΥΛΗΣ: On Form and Matter: It’s All Good,” *Pseudo-Dionysius* XVI (2014): 63-8.

\textsuperscript{117} At 1169b4.

\textsuperscript{118} Kosman, “Desirability,” 135.

\textsuperscript{119} This move is also found in Plato’s *Symposium*: what Aristophanes’ globular beings desire is to be forever one with their other half: they want nothing more than for Hephaestus to come and weld them together eternally (192d-e). It is this desire for the other person as *individual*, lost in Diotima’s account, which Aristophanes wants to object to after Socrates’ speech (212c).
The relation between *philia* and *theoria* is even less well treated by scholars than that between *philia* and the life of *praxis*. Aristotle’s solution to the aporia in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.ix is opaque, and the corresponding passage in *Endeiman Ethics* VII.xii is scarcely better. Aristotle gives few, but telling, hints about the importance of *philia* for the philosophic life. At the opening of *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, Aristotle quotes from Homer’s *Iliad*: *philia* “stimulates [men] to noble actions—‘two going together’—for with friends men are more able both to think (*νοησις*) and to act (*πραξις*)”. Although Aristotle only quotes half of the line, the surrounding context is suggestive:

But if some other man might follow me,
He a comfort, and the expedition more audacious, will be.
And when two men together go, one knows (*ἐνόησεν*) before the other,
How some advantage might be gained; alone he would come to it (*νοησῇ*) as well,
But his mind (*νόος*) is slower, and his thinking (*μῆτις*) weakened.  

Gauthier and Jolif explain the surrounding context:

*Aristote apparemment ne dit pas plus: il se contente d’approver Homère dont il conserve même le mot (*νοησις*); cependant il est permis de deviner chez lui une arrière-pensée: la vue que l’amitié favorise, ce n’est pas seulement le coup d’œil que prépare l’action, c’est la contemplation même du sage.*

The *Iliad* quotation here suggests that not only courageous and heroic deeds, but also contemplation is enhanced by the addition of companions, and Aristotle himself tells us that friends are required for both the practical and the theoretical sides of human life.

---

120 EN 1155a15-17. “πρὸς τὰς καλὰς πράξεις· σὺν τῷ δὲ ἐργομένῳ· καὶ γὰρ νοῆσαι καὶ πραξιν ἑυκριττέρως·”.
“ἀλλὰ ἐν τίς μοι ἀνήρ ἢν ἐποίητο καὶ ἄλλος μᾶλλον θαλπώρη καὶ ἑφισσαλιστέρεον ἑσται. σὺν τῷ δὲ ἐργομένῳ καὶ τῷ πρὸ ὁ τοῦ ἐνόησεν ὅπως κέρδος ἐγένετο· μοῦνος δ’ ἐν πέρε νοῆσῃ ἀλλὰ τῷ βράσσων τῷ νόος· λεπτὴ δὲ τῇ μῆτις·”.
Aristotle’s claim that the life of theoria is most self-sufficient has been taken at face value by scholars, who assume therefore that friends are not required for contemplative activity. “A wise man”, Aristotle writes,

as well as a just man and the rest, needs the necessaries of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case, but the wise man, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is.\textsuperscript{123}

The received interpretation is that fellow philosophers might help, but are not really necessary. The Scholiast Michael of Ephesus suggests that friends are really only necessary to secure the necessities of life, but provide no help for contemplation.\textsuperscript{124} Sparshott notes “how Aristotle shows himself conscious of having gone overboard in explaining how the philosopher needs no colleagues. Immediately he retracts – of course, it is better to have colleagues, he says, but one doesn’t actually need them”.\textsuperscript{125} But on the other hand, Aristotle tells us that the philosopher “can perhaps [contemplate] better if he has fellow-workers”.\textsuperscript{126}

Thus Gauthier and Jolif comment that friends, such as the members of philosophical schools like the Academy and the Lyceum “sont une aide les uns pour les autres: on pense alors avec d’autres; mais aussi les élèves sont une aide pour le professeur: on pense alors pour d’autres, ce que est plus facile que de penser pour soi”.\textsuperscript{127} While it is more self-sufficient than the life of virtue, which is essentially relational, the philosopher’s life of contemplation is nevertheless enriched and perfected with the addition of friends. Theoria does not need

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{123}{\textit{EN} 1177a28-34. “τῶν μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τὸ ζήτημα ἀναγκαῖον καὶ σοφὸς καὶ δίκαιος καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ δέονται, τοῦτος δὲ τοιοῦτος ἰχαῖος κεχορηγημένον ὁ μὲν δίκαιος δεῖται πρὸς οὓς δικαιοπραγήσει καὶ μεθ’ ὧν, ὡμολογεῖ δὲ καὶ ὁ σωφρός καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἔκαστος, ὁ δὲ σοφὸς καὶ καλὸς 


\footnotetext{125}{Sparshott, \textit{Taking Life Seriously}, 339.}

\footnotetext{126}{\textit{EN} 1177a34. “βέλτιον δὲ ίσως συνεργοῦς ἐχειν”.

\footnotetext{127}{Gauthier and Jolif, \textit{L’Éthique}, 882-3.}}
another human as object, as the virtuous man needs people with whom to exercise his virtue; but just as a man can be courageous on his own; with a companion the two can together face more terrible things, as Diomedes can better raid the Trojan camp when Odysseus helps him. It is this point that I want to stress: while we can philosophize on our own, we do it better and more perfectly with friends, both to become wise and as an imitation of the divine; the philosopher perhaps needs friends less than the politician, but he still needs them. Precisely what friends add to our contemplation we shall see below.

Not only can we contemplate better with friends, we shall see that contemplation is in fact *philia* with God. Crouse argues that this friendship is man’s highest aspiration:

there is a still higher form of love for Aristotle, beyond the common good of the polis, beyond political friendship: the perfect and self-sufficient possession of the good in the life of contemplation, “for this activity alone would seem to be loved for its own sake.” (N.E. X, 7, 1177b). Thus man seeks divine life, divine friendship … yet, for Aristotle, [this] is a despairing aspiration: … [for] “such a life would be too high for man; … (X, 7, 1177b). Thus, the divine life, friendship with God, is the highest form of *philia*; but it remains forever beyond us, as the object of our unceasing aspiration. That is the tragic conclusion of the Hellenic doctrine of *philia*. Crouse then shows how Christ redeemed humanity by crossing the otherwise unbridgeable divide between God and man. This reading of Aristotle is intriguing, and as a commentary on the Gospels enlightening, but Crouse neglects to demonstrate how contemplation might be thought of as a striving for *philia* with God.

Eli Diamond, taking Crouse’s article as a jumping-off point, argues that *philia* is not a tragic striving for what is ultimately inaccessible; rather, in contemplation we are *philoi* to God. Diamond highlights the possibility of unequal friendships, such as those between king and subject, father and son:

in stressing the possibility of friendship between a ruling cause or source and what it produces and sustains, is Aristotle not here suggesting the possibility of a religious

---

piety towards a generous divinity which might unite the most asymmetrical of relations, that is, between god and human? He goes on to explain that God’s condescension, as archē of the cosmos, constitutes just such a friendship. As the cause of all being and intelligibility, God does not hold contemplation for itself: it “is by its essence a friend”. The complete asymmetry in the relation between God and man, however, seems to preclude this relation being properly called philia: all philia requires some equalization. Between father and son, or king and subject, there is the possibility of equalization through affection returned: “in all friendships implying inequality the love also should be proportional … for when the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is held to be characteristic of friendship”. Diamond argues that it is through the cosmos’ intelligibility, and through our striving to know it, that we enter into philia with God, because through contemplation we can in some way equalize the relationship.

Andra Striowski asserts that philia with other individuals provides a bridge to philosophy, akin to Diotima’s ‘ladder of loves’ in Symposium. There, our love of beauty, first instantiated in a particular person, brings us to love the Form of beauty. This move is mirrored in Aristotle. Humans first come together in the family, since “man is first of all a pairing creature (συνδύαστικον), Aristotle notes, as the impulse to bear children is a

---

130 On the other hand, at EE 1244b8-10, Aristotle states that God will not have any friends, “for it is clear that God, since he lacks nothing, will not be in want of a friend, nor will there be one for God since God lacks nothing” (translation my own). The conclusion that God will not have a friend does not follow the premise given: God does not need a friend, but that does not preclude his having one. Similarly, one might—many wise men and women have—wonder why anything but God exists. Aristotle’s answer to that question is that God’s activity, thinking thinking thinking, creates the world. See my paper, “On Form and Matter”.
132 EN 1158b24-8. “ἀνάλογον δ’ ἐν πάσαις ταῖς καθ’ ὑπεροχήν υόσαις φιλίαις καὶ τὴν φίλησιν δεῖ γίνεσθαι … ἰδαν γὰρ κατ’ ἄξιον ἡ φίλησις γίγνεται, τότε γίγνεται πως ἴσοτες, ὃ δὴ τῆς φιλίας εἶναι δοκεῖ”. 32
universal trait observed among all animals”. But although “the bond of husband and wife is grounded in biological necessity … it also can be ethical insofar as the union of marriage involves προαθέσις”; because it is a rational choice between two individuals. Just as several oikoi forming a village come together as a polis for the sake of the good life, humans also come together not only through the bonds of spousal and fraternal affection, but also through the bond of politikē philia. To both the highest good on Diotima’s ladder and the most final end of human life, theoria, however, the domain of philia does not extend. Although humans can reach the heights of theoria, Striowski agrees with Crouse and Aristotle that “such a life is too high for man”. Though we cannot reach the “first … god-like” happiness of theoria, we can reach a “second [kind of life, which] is a knowing and perceiving which must occur in each soul, but, unlike God’s knowing … requires a relation to another knowing soul”. Thus for Striowski, the properly human telos of life that is practical virtue, life lived according to nous is actualized in philia: “the human good stands on its own two feet and does not merely pass into that one divine Good”, because philia is the reconciliation in man of “both sides of the divine actuality: that which knows itself in itself, and that which knows itself in natural necessity. It makes man able to know and love himself as good, and know others as not merely external to his being”. Thus the happy man is like Socrates in the Symposium: equally at home in contemplation and in the life of practical virtue; philia is what allows us to reconcile the practical and theoretical sides of our humanity.

134 Striowski, “Plato and Aristotle,” 78.
135 EN 1177b27-8. “δ' ἐπὶ τοιχώτος ἄν εἴη βίος κρείττων ἦ κατ' ἀνθρώπου”.
136 Striowski, “Plato and Aristotle,” 84.
137 Striowski, “Plato and Aristotle,” 86.
138 Striowski, “Plato and Aristotle,” 90.
Finally, René Gauthier proposes that *philia* is required for contemplation precisely because it enables us to better mimic the divine self-thinking thought. “Dieu, pensée qui se pense elle-même, est pure conscience,” he writes, and it is

*précisément parce qu’il est pure conscience que Dieu se suffit à lui même et n’a pas d’amis. Nous croyons qu’il est bien plus juste de dire que, si nous avons besoin d’amis, c’est, non pas parce que nous possédons la conscience, mais parce que nous ne la possédons qu’à un état imparfait. Ce pouvoir de réflexion, et en quelque sorte de dédoublement, qu’est la conscience n’est pas en nous assez fort pour que le sentiment même que nous éprouvons envers nous-mêmes soit de l’amitié, et il n’est pas assez fort pour que nous puissions pleinement jouir de notre vie; ce que nous apporte l’amitié, c’est précisément un dédoublement de notre moi qui nous permet de prendre pleinement conscience de nous-mêmes, parce qu’il y a dès lors un moi contemplant - nous - et un moi contemple - cet autre nous-mêmes qu’est notre ami - et donc à jouir pleinement de notre vie.”

This interpretation suggests that only through a friend are we able to properly contemplate ourselves, since a friend is another self and therefore reflects our self like a mirror. Our interpretations differ, however, in that while Gauthier’s interpretation of Met. XII.9 yields a narcissistic God thinking only upon itself, I shall argue that God’s thinking reaches out to the cosmos, which it takes as the object of its thought, and that this reaching out should be thought of as the divine side of our friendship with God. Since we are relational beings, we cannot, in Gauthier’s view, be both thinking-subject and thought-object at the same time.

II

I shall demonstrate that the relationship between two individual humans mirrors God’s self-relation, and therefore that perfect-friendship is the highest form of activity available to humans, one that brings us into a better relation with God. Diamond notices this, writing

> we can see how, in the best kind of friendship, a good person loving another good person for their character, something of the divine principle, where the best thing in the world thinks the best thing in the world—God as self-thinking thought—is reflected in the summit of human relationships. The perfectly single, simple, and self-related activity of divine self-thinking is in some sense present in our friendships.

---

In order to discover precisely what self-relation perfect-friendship is imitating, let us turn to the *Metaphysics* to see what Aristotle has to say there about God.

In *Metaphysics* XII.7, we first learn that the prime mover—God—is “eternal, substance, and actuality”. Aristotle expands on the nature of God:

> on such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And it is a life such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time … and thinking in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thinking in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense.\(^{141}\)

God’s activity is thinking; this is never proven; Aristotle seems to take it as self-evident.\(^{142}\) In *Metaphysics* XII.9, however, we learn that “there are some aporiae concerning thought”.\(^{143}\) The aporiae are as follows: (i) thinking must have *something* for an object, for if it thought of nothing, it could scarcely be the best thing; (ii) but if it thinks of something, then the object of thought would be more worthy than God; (iii) God cannot think of something base, for then thinking would hardly be the best thing. To overcome these problems, Aristotle posits the following: “therefore it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks (since it is the most excellent of things), and its thinking is a thinking on thinking”.\(^{144}\)

The idea that the activity of God is “thinking thinking thinking” has led some commentators to believe that God’s thought has no object other than itself, i.e. that God only thinks about God. Instead, thinking is self-reflexive in that it becomes the object thought, for

---

\(^{141}\) *Met.* 1072b13-18. “ἐκ τοιαύτης ἀρχῆς ἔκτηται ὁ οὐρανός καὶ ἡ φύσις, διαγωγή δ’ ἐστιν οἷα ἡ ἀριστή μετρον γρόνον ἡμῖν. οὕτω γὰρ ζεῖ ἔκεινο (ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἀδύνατον) … ἦ δὲ νόησις ἦ καθ’ αὐτὴν τοῦ καθ’ αὐτὸ ἀρίστου, καὶ ἡ μάλιστα τοῦ μάλιστα’.

\(^{142}\) The chapter begins by merely identifying the prime mover as the object of thought. Over the course of the chapter we learn that the prime mover is the active possession of the object of thought. That this principle is God comes like a *deus ex machina*: “therefore, the possession rather than the receptivity is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder” (*Met.* 1072b22-5). The prime mover must be the best thing in the cosmos; therefore it must be God.


\(^{144}\) *Met.* 1074b33-5. “οὐκ ἂν εἶ ὁ ἀριστότον ἡ νόησις, αὐτὸν ἂρα νοεῖ, εἰπερ ἐστί τὸ ἄριστον, καὶ ἐστιν ἡ νόησις γοήσεως νόησις’.
in the theoretical sciences the definition or the act of thinking is the object. Since, then, thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter, thought and its object will be the same, i.e. the thinking will be one with the object of its thought.\footnote{Met. 1075a2-5. “ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν θεωρητικῶν ὁ λόγος τὸ πράγμα καὶ ἡ νόησις οὐχ ἐτέρου οὖν ὄντος τοῦ νοομένου καὶ τῶν νο̣ίων, διὰ μὴ οὐκ ἔχει τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστιν, καὶ ἡ νόησις τῶν νοομένων μία”} This is to say that all thought thinks upon itself. For example, when I think ‘oak tree’, my \textit{nous}, which is nothing in itself before I thought, takes on the form of oak tree.\footnote{146 In Aristotle’s psychological theory, we—in a sense—become the object of whatever power we exercise. The nutritive soul displays this power: when I eat an apple, I become, \textit{qua} eater, an apple, and the apple, \textit{qua} food, becomes me. In perception, the eye, which is \textit{in potentia} indefinite, in that it can take on the form of anything visible, becomes, when actively perceiving, the thing seen: “a sense is … what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter” (\textit{DA} 424a17. “ἡ μὲν αἰσθησίς ἐστιν τὸ δεικτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδών ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑλῆς”). In taking on the form of what is visible, the eye changes from indefinite (for it has the power to take on any visible form) to definite. While, on the one hand, the nutritive soul can only display this power of becoming determinate, of becoming its object, in a very limited sense, in that it can only become what is specific: food, and perception, while more indeterminate in itself, can only become what is potentially visible, mind, on the other hand, “is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing;” (\textit{DA} 429a31 “ὥ νος ἐστι ἐντελεχεία οὐδεν, πρὸν ἄν νοῆ”) it is entirely indeterminate.} Thus, as Kosman argues,

\begin{quote}
thought thinking itself signifies merely the activity of thinking, independent of the nature of its object and solely in terms of its central defining feature: that self-presence of the subject which is a condition of its consciousness. Aristotle thus means to offer a description of thought as a cognitive reaching out that grasps the world in active awareness; for indeed, all cognitive awareness, if it is to grasp the world, must do so by virtue primarily of the self-presence paradigmatically exemplified in the pure act of thinking.\footnote{147 Kosman, “Divine Thought,” 323.}
\end{quote}


The object of this divine thinking is nothing other than the entire cosmos. As in form, where \textit{energeia} is what causes the being of a sensible \textit{ousia}, it must also be the \textit{energeia} of God that causes the cosmos to be. This \textit{energeia} is thinking, which has the world for its object. Rather than itself narcissistically, God thinks the entire cosmos; its thinking “reaches
out toward a world other than itself which it posits as its object”. 149 This is what I take Aristotle’s phrase “the actuality of thought is life”150 to mean. The world of physis, in as much as it is quickened by the divine, is divine. Just as in a sensible ousia, form provides everything that the thing is,151 God is the sole cause of what the cosmos is; matter contributes nothing to the being of a thing. Therefore the celestial spheres, since they are composed of a better element, are able to be always in the same circular, perfect motion:

the fulfillment of the whole heaven, the fulfillment which includes all time and infinity, is ‘duration’ – a name based on the fact that it is always – duration immortal and divine. From it derive the being and life which other things, some more or less articulately but others feebly, enjoy.152

In the sub-lunar realm, living things strive after and attain divinity in a less perfect way:

the most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible.153

All things are indeed in the best state possible: in a sense we can say that the cosmos is God:

All things are ordered together somehow, but not all alike—both fishes and fowls and plants; and the world is nothing such that one thing has nothing to do with another, but they are connected . . . for this [i.e. the common good] is the sort of principle that constitutes the nature of each. I mean, for instance, that all must at least come to be dissolved into their elements, and there are other functions similarly, in which all share for the good of the whole.154

150 Met. 1072b-27. “ἡ γὰρ νῦν ἐνέργεια ζωῆς”.
151 Cf. Met. 1041b27-8: “but it would seem that this ‘other’ [i.e. form] is something, and not an element, and that it is the cause which makes this flesh and that a syllable. And similarly in all other cases. And this is the substance of each thing (for this is the primary cause of its being).
152 De Caelo 279a25-30. “οὐ τοῦ παντὸς ὡφρανοῦ τέλος καὶ τὸ τὸν πάντα χρόνον καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν περιέγον τέλος αὐξέν. ἀκτὶ τοις άικλείς εἰκῆς τὴν ἐπονομαία, ἀθανατοί καὶ θείας, ὅπερ καὶ τοῦ ἄλλους διήρησαν, τοὺς μὲν ἄριστον τοὺς δ’ ἀμαξωμένα, τό εἰναι τε καὶ ἔραγ.”
153 D.A 415a26-b2. “φυσικότατον γὰρ τῶν ἑργῶν τοὺς ζωῆς, ὅσα τε περίμετα ἀτὶ τὴν γένεσιν αὐσμάτων ἐμεί, τὸ ποιέσθαι ἑπερον οὐκ ἀριτα, ξύλον μὲν ξύλων, χρύς οὐκ χρυσάν, ὅπερ δὲ χρυσόν, ἕνα τοῦ ἄιτο τοῦ θείου μετέχον ἦ ὅπερ του τοῦ θείου μετέχον ἦ, δύνανται· πάντα γὰρ ἐκεῖνον δρέγεται, καὶ ἐκεῖνον ἐνακ πράττει ὅσα πράττει κατὰ φύσιν.”
154 Met. 1075a-25. “πάντα δὲ συνετταίησαν πως, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἐμοίως, καὶ πλοῦτα καὶ πετρά καὶ φυτὰ· καὶ οὐκ οὕτως ἐμείς ὅπερ καὶ θατέρου πρὸς θάτερον μήδεν, ἀλλ’ ἐστι τι ... τοιαύτη γὰρ ἁργὴ ἐκαστοῦ ὑπὸν ἡ φύσις ἐστίν, λέγει δ’ οἶν έτε γε το διακρίθηκεν ἀνάγκη ἄπασιν ἐλθεῖν, καὶ ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἐστίν ἄν κοινοις ἑπάντα έτε το ὑπόν”.

37
Apart from matter, everything is God, and everything is good.

It is this relation that we strive to imitate when we are friends. God’s activity is self-thinking thought: but this is not simply mind reflecting on the power of thinking, nor is it mind reflecting on what it already knows. Rather, the divine mind thinks the cosmos: a world which is other than it, in so far as everything is composed as a compound of form and matter, but a world in which God is immanent to all things as the ultimate cause. Just as in a sensible ousia, where the form, as efficient, formal, and final causes, is whatever a thing is, so too is God the efficient, final, and formal cause of the cosmos: the cosmos is God. In our friendships, we strive, as much as we are able, to expand our sphere of being, to be able to identify more and more of the world with ourselves. We can never achieve God’s complete diffusion throughout the entire cosmos, but we nevertheless can attempt to closer approximate such a relation. We possess an imperfect and partial nous, but in our desire to know the whole as perfectly as possible we strive after the divine, perfect nous. It is through philia that we can best imitate divine self-thinking thought.

III

In this section, I shall argue that perfect-friendship models, between two individuals, the self-relation of God described above. When a friendship is formed, there is no longer two separate ‘I’s who act independently. Instead, there is a single ‘we’: synaisisthēsis, syngnōrizein, and syzēn, perceiving together, thinking together, and living together: these are the characteristics of philia. Aryeh Kosman argues that the reason we desire friends, even when we are happy, is because they allow the self to be “amplified in the formation of a communal consciousness: the community of shared intention, plan, thought, regard, discourse, the whirl of co-activity
that is friendship, polity, culture”.  

Kosman highlights these practical implications of *philia*, but, as I shall argue, it is the theoretical implications this enlargement and amplification of our being that is the best imitation of the divine. The argument (both Aristotle’s and Kosman’s exegesis of it) is long and difficult, and so it is worthwhile to examine it closely.

In both *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.9 and *Eudemian Ethics* VII.12, Aristotle explores the following aporia: will the happy man need friends or not? On the one hand, the happiest men will be *autarkestatos*; “for they have the things that are good, and therefore being self-sufficient they need nothing further while a friend, being another self, furnishes what a man cannot provide by his own effort”.

“This is most plain,” Aristotle writes in the *Eudemian Ethics*, “in the case of a god; for it is clear that, needing nothing, he will not need a friend, nor have one”. On the other hand, we shrink from the idea that one could call a man without friends ‘happy’. As is no surprise to seasoned readers of Aristotle, the truth is some sort of reconciliation of the two positions. Aristotle continues:

we must investigate this aporia, to see if, we have partially spoken well, but also missed something in our explanation. It will be clear if we ascertain what is life in its active sense and as end. Clearly, it is perception and knowledge, and therefore to live together is co-perception and co-knowing. And what is most desirable for each is that *he himself* perceive and that *he himself* know, and it is because of this that the desire for living is natural to everyone.

---

156 *EN* 1169b5-8. “ὑπάρχειν γὰρ αὐτῶς τάγαθα· αὐτάρκειας ὅντας υπάρχει νομικὸς προσδεύσθαι, τὸν δὲ φίλου, ἔτερον αὐτὸν ὄντα, πορεῖν ἥ δεῖ αὐτὸν ἀδυνατεῖν”.
157 *EE* 1244b8-10. “μάλιστα δὲ τῶτῳ φανερὸν ἔπι θεοῦ· ὅλον γὰρ Ͻγενὸς προσδεόμενος ύδη φιλουδεηθεται, ὃθ’ ἔσται αὐτῷ ό γε μηθ’ ἐνδείχθης ποτε”.
158 *EE* 1244b21-28. Italics my own. “περὶ δὲ τῆς ἁπορίας ταύτῃς σκέπτεσθαι, μή ποτε τὸ μὲν τι λέγεται καλῶς, τὸ δὲ λαθώμεθα διὰ τῆς παραβολῆς, διδόν δὲ λαθώμεθα τὸ ᾿ζην τὸ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ὡς τέλος, φανερὸν ὃ.Marshal ν ὅτι τὸ αἰτιθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ γνωρίζειν, ὡστε καὶ τὸ συζῆν τὸ συναίσθανεσθαι καὶ τὸ ςυγγνωρίζειν ἵκατιν, ἐστὶ δὲ τὸ αὐτὸν πλαιθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ αὐτὸν γνωρίζειν ἀμετάκτητον ἐκάστῳ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τοῦ ᾿ζην πάσιν ἐμφύτους ᾿ Zeus ἀρετῆς”. This reading, suggested by Kosman, is an emendation of the text. The printed text in the OCT at 1244b26-7, which is already a choice between confusing manuscripts, is as follows: τὸ αὐτῶν πλαιθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ αὐτῶν γνωρίζειν. See Kosman, “Desirability,” 137-8 for a further discussion of the emendation.
Kosman takes this section to be a further elaboration of the aporia, rather than a solution. If it were a solution, we would be equally pleased by someone else’s perceiving and knowing, since a friend is another self, and a friend’s self-perception is therefore a good to me.

Instead, we further see that we only desire our own consciousness: why, therefore, do we need friends?

We find the solution to this aporia a little further in the chapter. Aristotle writes,

we must take two things into consideration, that life is desirable and also that the good is, and thence that it is desirable that such a nature should belong to oneself as it belongs to them. If then, of such a pair of corresponding series there is always one series of the desirable, and the known and the perceived are in general constituted by their participation in the nature of the determined, so that to wish to perceive one’s self is to wish oneself to be of a certain definite character,—since, then we are not in ourselves possessed of each such characters, but only in participation in these qualities in perceiving and knowing—for the perceiver becomes perceived in that way in respect in which he first perceives, and according to the way in which and the object which he perceives; and the knower becomes known in the same way—therefore it is for this reason that one always desires to live, because one always desires to know; and this is because he himself wishes to be the object known.\textsuperscript{159}

What we desire is to actively live, to actively use the faculties—perceiving and knowing—that make us human, which is to actively become determined by the object of perception or knowledge. Recall Aristotle’s psychic theory, that our minds, when at rest, are indeterminate; but when actively thinking become determinate, become the object of which we think.\textsuperscript{160} This is what makes life pleasant: actively perceiving and thinking, and therefore being determinate.

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{EE} 1244\textsuperscript{b}34-1245\textsuperscript{a}10. ὁ λόγος ἡμᾶς συνθέειται δύο ἐν τῷ λόγῳ, ὥστε τὸ ἐξίπου [καὶ] αἰρετόν, καὶ ὅτι τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἐκ τοῦτον ὡς τὸ ἀνατολικόν, ὧν ὁ οὗτος ὡς ἐπάρχειν τὴν τοιαύτην φύσιν, εἰ ἦν ἐστιν ἔκ τῆς τοιαύτης συστοιχίας ἢ ἔτερον ἐν τῷ τοῦ αἰρετοῦ τάξει, καὶ τὸ γνωστόν καὶ τὸ ἀληθητὸν ἐστιν ὡς ὃς ἐπέκτειν τῷ κοινωνεῖ τῆς ὁρισμένης φύσεως ὥστε τὸ αὐτόν βουλεύεται αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτόν εἶναί τιναν βούλευεσθαι ἐστίν. ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐ καὶ ἀντί αὐτῶν ἐσμέν ἐκακον τούτων, ἄλλα κατά μετάφρασιν τῶν δυνάμεων ἐν τῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἢ γνωρίζειν (ἀληθινόν μέν γὰρ αἰσθητός γίνεται τοῦτο καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο, καθά προτεροναθλήσαντει, καὶ ἢ καὶ οὐ, γνωστός δὲ γνώσεις)—όστε δύο τοῦτο καὶ ἐξίπου ἀεὶ βούλευται, ἢ βούλευται ἐκακον ἀεὶ γνωρίζειν, τοῦτο δὲ ἢτο αὐτὸς εἶναι τὸ γνωστόν”.

\textsuperscript{160} See above, page 36.
Friendship helps us accomplish this better than we could alone. What friends offer us—*synaisthēsis* and *syngnōrizēsis*—is not something analogous to self-consciousness or self-knowledge; rather it offers an enlargement of our being and our determinateness:

surely it is obviously so [that we need friends], and all of us find greater pleasure in sharing good things with friends as far as these come to each—I mean the greatest good one can share; but to some it falls to share in bodily delights, to others in artistic contemplation, to others in philosophy.\(^\text{161}\)

Friendship is desirable, as Kosman writes,

in so far as [a friend] enables the enlargement of my being, not in so far as he replicates and objectifies it. Since my friend is like me but separate, we are able to constitute a community of shared activity that goes beyond and amplifies the experience of each of us separately.\(^\text{162}\)

An obvious example of this is dialectic: conversation is not merely two people soliloquizing in the same room, but rather “there emerges between interlocutors a richer object of discourse; what they are talking about is enlarged and enriched by the synergy”.\(^\text{163}\) We join in shared *praxis*—indeed, *philia* is *synergein*.\(^\text{164}\)

Kosman is not clear what he means by *philia* providing us with an “expanded sphere of being”. There seems to be two possible interpretations: one interpretation is that friends could offer us an expanded range of contemplated objects. For instance, in a seminar on the *Metaphysics*, one student might be familiar with Homer and be able to identify implicit references to the *Iliad or Odyssey*, while another might be more familiar with the philosophical tradition of later antiquity, and might be able to see later developments of Aristotle’s thought. Thus together they can better contemplate the nuances of the *Nicomachean Ethics* because each has knowledge that the other lacks. The second interpretation is that friends

\(^{161}\) *EE* 1245\(^{b}\)18-22. “ἀλλὰ μὴν φαίνεται γε, καὶ πάντες ἔδιναν τῷ ἀγαθῷ μετὰ τῶν φίλων κοινονόμεν, καὶ ὀδὸν ἐπιβάλλει ἐκάστῳ καὶ ὁ δύναται ἄρσεν, ἀλλὰ τούτων τῷ μὲν ἔδον θέσσαλων σωματικῶς, τῷ δὲ θεωρίας μουσικῶς, τῷ δὲ φιλοσοφίας.”


\(^{163}\) Kosman, “Desirability,” 152.

\(^{164}\) *EE* 1245\(^{b}\)3.
offer us an expanded consciousness and expanded sense of self. An example of this is a relay
team. Each runner could individually run the race, but running the race together as a team,
there are no longer four individual runners, each competing for himself, but rather they are
one team. They work together for an end that none of them individually could achieve. The
Jamaican 4x100m relay team, for instance, can finish the 400m relay in less than 38 seconds,
5 seconds faster than the 400m world record. Each of the runners on the relay can say that
they ran 38 seconds for 400m, as part of the team. This is what I think Kosman means by an
“expanded sphere of being”: the range of things that I can call my own and can myself do is
expanded by friends. When friends sužei, they each participate in what the other is doing; in
the example above, the friends on the relay team identify with their teammates’ race: Asafa
Powell can say that Usain Bolt’s leg of the relay is his own, since they were running the race
together. In a perfect-friendship, friends share everything and spend almost all their time
together; in such friendships the friends identify with everything their friend does, such that
the sphere of what one friend thinks of as their own is expanded to include everything that
their friend is and does.

Kosman seems to suggest that the benefits of philia are essentially related only to man’s
practical life; although he notices an implication of this theory of friendship, namely that it
results in “Stoic doctrine of oikeiosis, the thought that the sage may come to see more and
more of the world as identical to himself”. philia can also be seen to represent an imitation
of the divine mind. God’s thinking, and therefore its being, encompasses the entire cosmos.
Aristotle seems implicitly aware of this comparison. Indeed, in the beginning of the aporia,
he points to God as a clear indication of the problem: “this is most plain in the case of a god;

for it is clear that, needing nothing, he will not need a friend, nor have one”.\(^{166}\) It is just this comparison, however, that causes the aporia: in the solution, Aristotle writes that “to wish to perceive one’s self is to wish oneself to be of a certain definite character,—\(\textit{since, then, we are not in ourselves possessed of each of such characters}\)”.\(^{167}\) We ourselves are not definite in our own nature; God, on the other hand, is. Recall that we learned in the \textit{Metaphysics} that divine self-thinking thought is co-extensive with the cosmos; God thinks all things at all times, for active mind, as Aristotle tells us in \textit{De Anima} is “what it is by virtue of making all things”.\(^{168}\) So while we are certainly capable of contemplating by ourselves, contemplation with friends—which is “realized in [friends’] living together and sharing in discussion and thought”\(^{169}\)—is a more perfect imitation of divine thought. God does not think itself narcissistically, but thinks itself through thinking the cosmos, which is both other and self. Equally, our contemplation of our shared life with our friends is a contemplation of ourselves mediated through an other. \textit{Philia} enables us to best imitate divine thought.

Kosman bases this defense of the value of \textit{philia} on the text of the \textit{Eudemian Ethics}; we must investigate whether and how the \textit{Nicomachean} version is different. Essentially, the argument is the same in both texts. There is a greater focus, however, in the \textit{Nicomachean} version on the human: there is no comparison of the virtuous man to God; rather the case that the happy do not need friends is based on merely on self-sufficient as humans i.e. they have all the external goods they need. Some extra considerations are added in the \textit{Nicomachean} version, such as the ability to be continuously active with friends, and the fact

\(^{166}\) \textit{EE} 1244b8-10. “\(\mu \lambda \lambda \varepsilon \sigma \tau \alpha \delta e \tau o t o \ \phi a n e r o n \ \epsilon p i \ \theta e o u \ \delta \dot{e} \mu \lambda \nu o \ \gamma \chi r \ \alpha s \ \omega u \delta e n o v \ \pi r o s d e \delta e m e n o v \ \omega u \delta e \ \phi i l o u \delta e \delta e s e t e i o u \ \epsilon \sigma t a i \ a u t o u \ \epsilon \gamma \eta \ \epsilon \nu \ \epsilon d e \epsilon \chi \nu \ \pi o t e \).”

\(^{167}\) \textit{EE} 1245a4-5. Italics my own. “\(\omega \tau e t o \ \alpha \omega t o u \ \beta o u l e s t h i a \ \alpha i o t h a n e t h i a \ \tau o \ \alpha u t o u \ \epsilon i n a i \ \tau o i o n n \ \beta o u l e s t h i a \ \epsilon \sigma t i n \).”

\(^{168}\) \textit{DA} 430a15-6. “\(\delta e \ \tau \omega \pi \alpha \tau \tau a \ \pi o i e i n \)”. However, \textit{De Anima} III.5 is notoriously obscure; for a discussion of this passage, see R. D. Hicks, \textit{Aristotle De Anima: with Translation, Introduction, and Notes}, (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 498-510.

\(^{169}\) \textit{EN} 1170b12-13. “\(\tau o t o t o \ \delta e \ \gamma \acute{e} \nu o i t \ \acute{e} n \ \tau o \ \sigma u \dot{e} \gamma \dot{e} n \ \kappa \alpha i \ \kappa o l o w o n e i n \ \lambda o g o n \ \kappa a i \ \delta i a n o i k a z \).”
that activities of our virtuous friends are a pleasure to us. But when “we look deeper into the nature of things, a virtuous friend seems to be naturally desirable for a virtuous man”. Life for man is to perceive and to think, and so to actively do those things, and be aware of this activity, makes life pleasant:

For to [good men] life is most desirable, and their existence is the most blessed; and if he who sees perceives that he sees, and he who hears, that he hears, and he who walks, that he walks, and in the case of all other activities similarly there is something which perceives that we are active, so that if we perceive, we perceive that we perceive, and if we think, that we think; and if to perceive that we perceive or think is to perceive that we exist (for existence was defined as perceiving or thinking); and if perceiving that one lives is one of the things that are pleasant in themselves (for life is by nature good, and to perceive what is good present in oneself is pleasant); if life is desirable, and particularly so for good men, because to them existence is good and pleasant (for they are pleased at the consciousness of what is in itself good); and if as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self):—then as his own existence is desirable for each man, so, or almost so, is that of his friend.

To put this succinctly, the active use of our powers of perception and thinking (i.e. becoming determined by an object) are pleasant because through them we are aware of our consciousness, which is itself a pleasant thing, at least for virtuous people. Therefore, we need friends because “if as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self):—then as his own existence is desirable for each man, so, or almost so, is that of his friend”. This conclusion has led some scholars to presume that a friend is...

---

170 EN 1170-13.4, “φυσικωτέρον δ’ ἐπισκοποῦσιν ἐσικεῖν ὁ σπουδάζων φίλος τῷ σπουδάζῳ τῇ φύσει αἰρέτος εἶναι”.
171 EN 1170-27.18, “τοῦτος τοῖς μακαρίοις γὰρ ὁ βίος αἰρέτωτατος, καὶ ἡ τούτων μακαριωτάτη ζωή, ὁ δ’ ὅρων ὅτι ὁ θρόνος αἰθητάνεται καὶ ὁ ἀκούων ὅτι ἀκούει καὶ ὁ βαδίζοντος γredd τι βαδίζει, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ἄλλον ὄμολος ἔστιν τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ὅτι ἐνεργεῖται, ὅστε τὸν αἰσθανόμεθα, ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα, καὶ νοῦμεν, ὅτι νοοῦμεν, τὸ δ’ ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα ἡ νοούμεν, ὅτι ἐσμέν (τὸ γὰρ εἶναι ἡ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἡ νοεῖν) τὸ δ’ αἰσθάνεσθαι ὅτι ζῆν τῶν ἢδεων καὶ συντό, γράψι τοῖς αἰσθανόμεθα ἡ ἤδη, αἰρέτον δὲ τῷ ζῆν καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς αἰσθάνοις, ὅτι τὸ εἶναι αἰσθάνον ἔστιν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἤδη, καὶ συνασθανόμενον γὰρ τῷ καὶ τῷ ἂν ἄγαθών ἢμολται, ὡς ὑπὸ πρὸς ἐμπνευσθεὶς ὦ ὁ σπουδάζων, καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον ἔτερον γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ φίλος ἔστιν’. καὶ ἀνθέρ οὖν τὸ κύτων εἶναι αἰρέτον ἐστίν ἐκάστῳ, ἀνθέρ καὶ τὸν φίλον, ἔτερον ἀνθέρισεν”.
172 EN 1170-6.8, “ὡς δ’ ἐπὶ πρὸς ἐμπνευσθεὶς ὦ ὁ σπουδάζων, καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον ἔτερον γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ φίλος ἔστιν’, καὶ ἀνθέρα τὸν κύτων εἶναι αἰρέτον ἐστίν ἐκάστῳ, ἀνθέρ καὶ τὸν φίλον, ἔτερον ἀνθέρισεν”.

44
merely a mirror in which we see ourselves. But what is going on here is different: our
perception of our friend is constituted not by mere propinquity, but instead it is “realized in
their living together and sharing in discussion and thought”.¹⁷⁴ It is through two friends’
common enterprise of not only practical considerations, but also of philosophy, that the
importance of philia shows itself; this expanded sphere of theoretical activity is only possible
through the addition of a friend. This conclusion is the same as we find in the Eudemian
Ethics.

Thus it is through philia with other humans that we reach the summit of human life. In
our relationships with our fellow man, we are no longer solitary individuals, but rather we
become part of a group: be it two philosophical friends, or an entire polis.¹⁷⁵ This move from
an ‘I’ to a ‘we’ makes us more like God, because our sphere of what is proper to us, what is
our own, is expanded; while we can never attain God’s encompassment of the totality of
being, we can nevertheless better imitate it. What is more, however, is that through this
expansion of our being, through contemplation, we can rightly be said to be philoi to God.

IV

Both Crouse and Diamond suggest the possibility of philia with God: certainly, any relation
between God and man is only philia in a qualified sense, since Aristotle is clearly investigating
philia as a distinctly human phenomenon, but, if we look at Plato’s treatment of philia in the
Lysis, we see the possibility of philia with the Good side-by-side with human relations. We
shall find in Aristotle that contemplation can be thought of as philia with God, because while

¹⁷³ See, for instance Stern-Gillet, Philosophy of Friendship, 37-58.
¹⁷⁴ EN 1170b12-13. “κατὰ τὸ δὲ γένοιτ’ ἐν τῷ συζύγῳ καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας”. Italics my
own.
¹⁷⁵ For the importance of politikē philia see Chapter 4.
such a friendship might be one-sided, that does not preclude it from being properly called

philia.

Discussing Aristotle’s conception of philia, Gauthier and Jolif state the case that it
cannot be between man and God; for while

un dieu pourra donc peut-être se laisser aimer; il ne pourra pas aimer, rendre à un homme amour
pour amour, ce qui est propre de l’amitié. Mais, à son tour, l’homme peut-il vraiment aimer un
dieu? Oui, certes, s’il s’agit de l’amour-désir, de l’éroès, et nous savons assez que c’est, dans la
méthaphysique d’Aristote, cet éroès qui est le moteur suprême par où s’expliquent non seulement les
actions des hommes, mais le mouvement tout entier de l’univers.\(^\text{176}\)

There is no philia between man and God because there is no sense of reciprocity, no way in
which we can have affection from God. Although there is, as Gauthier and Jolif see, for
Aristotle asymmetrical philia between other vastly separated people, when the separation is to
too great a degree, “as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases”\(^\text{177}\). All we can have, in
Gauthier and Jolif’s opinion, is erōs for God. The terms erōs and philia, however, have no
stark semantic distinctions between them.\(^\text{178}\) In the Lysis, both our relation to the Good itself
and our interpersonal relations are spoken of in terms of philia. Plato uses erōs and philia as
synonyms with only slight differences in shade of meaning; Aristotle teases apart their
separate meanings a little further. He writes that while the God is the cause of movement in
the cosmos by being loved\(^\text{179}\) there is no philia towards God because there is no possibility of
reciprocation and equalization, which are necessary for a relation to be called philia. We can
see in Aristotle’s philosophy, however, that even this semantic difference can be overcome.

The Lysis is apparently an aporetic dialogue; Socrates closes the dialogue by saying,

now we’ve done it, Lysis and Mnexenus—made fools of ourselves, I, an old man,
and you as well. These people here will go away saying that we are friends of one

\(^{176}\) Gauthier and Jolif, L’Éthique, 692.
\(^{177}\) EN 1159a5. “πολὺ δὲ γαρ ὑπὲρ τὴν λέιτυς, ὦν τῷ θεῷ, ὀξέτω.”
\(^{178}\) Gauthier and Jolif maintain distinctions between the different kinds of Greek ‘love’: “L’amitié n’est ni l’amour-
don qu’est l’agapê, ni l’amour-désir qu’est l’éroès, elle est un amour-échange s’épanouissant en intimité” (L’Éthique, 691).
\(^{179}\) Met. 1172b3. “ὡς ἐρώτευον”. 46
another—for I count myself in with you—but what a friend is we have not yet been able to find out.\textsuperscript{180}

If we look, however, at the pieces of the argument that remain unrefuted, we shall be able to come to some sort of positive characterization of the dialogue. The conclusions of the dialogue may be—very briefly—summed up as follows. What is desired, loved, and a friend is something \textit{oikeion} that has been taken away.\textsuperscript{181} Although this line of reasoning is never pursued in the dialogue, Socrates suggests that perhaps: “the good belongs to everyone, while the bad is alien”;\textsuperscript{182} this possibility is left behind by the interlocutors but contains the seeds of a positive result. Gonzalez qualifies the assertion that the good is akin to that which is neither good nor bad (for it would be absurd for the good to be akin to the bad, and if the good is akin to the good, kinship is reduced to mere likeness).\textsuperscript{183} Thus we come to a tentative positive result from the dialogue: “we who are neither bad nor good desire that ultimately loved good of which we are in want, but belongs to us, while we hate that evil which is present in us, but yet alien to us”.\textsuperscript{184}

This conclusion allows us to see how there are two senses of \textit{philia}: first, and foremost, a non-reciprocal desire for the \textit{prōton philon}. We are constituted such that the Good is akin to us, but we do not possess it; we pursue it zealously because we aware of the absence of something proper to us. In other words, we philosophize. But there is another sense of \textit{philia}; we have reciprocal friendship with fellow philosophers. Gonzalez writes:

Socrates and the boys can establish a reciprocal friendship by seeking together that good that belongs to all of them [sc. wisdom] but of which all of them are deprived. It is in this way that reciprocal friendship is to be reconciled with a non-reciprocal

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{180} \textit{Lysis} 223b. “\textit{ώς} οὖν μὲν, ἢ \textit{δ} ἐγὼ, \textit{δ} Λύσι \\ τε καὶ \textit{Μενέξενε, καταγέλαστοι γεγόναμεν ἐγώ τε, γέρων ἀνήρ, καὶ ὑμεῖς. ἐροῦσι γὰρ οἴδαι ἄπιστες ὡς οἶδαμεν ἡμεῖς ὑλησίων φίλου εἶναι—καὶ ἔμε γὰρ ἐν ἰμίν τίθημι—οὕτω δὲ ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ φίλος οὗτος τῷ ἐγνώμεθα ἔξεμφρον”.
\item \textsuperscript{181} \textit{Lysis} 221c.
\item \textsuperscript{182} \textit{Lysis}, 222c. “πότερον οὖν καὶ τάγαθον οἰκεῖον θέσομεν πάντι”.
\item Gonzalez, “Philosophical Kinship,” 82.
\end{itemize}
love of the good: in loving and seeking the good that belongs to all of us we can love and belong to each other.

Now, as Gonzalez makes clear, Plato’s characterization of *philia* between humans is quite different from Aristotle’s in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. We find within the *Nicomachean Ethics* as secondary what Plato characterizes as primary: a sense in which we may have non-reciprocal *philia* for God.

In the dialogue *Alcibiades*, Plato articulates the view that we can only know ourselves and God through friendships with our fellow man. Just as the eye must look at another eye to see itself, “if the soul … is to know itself, it must look at a soul, and especially at that region in which what makes a soul good, wisdom, occurs, and at anything else which is similar to it”. This view is identical to that found in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Magna Moralia*: we desire *philia* because it affords us self-knowledage. The key point of the *Alcibiades*, however, is that it is through contemplating God and the most divine part of the human soul we can come to know ourselves; this suggests that *philia* with God is possible.

In Plato’s *Symposium*, we find a similar conception of the relation between mortal and divine; this time, however, the relation is discussed in terms of *erōs* instead of *philia*. As Diotima explains to Socrates, all human *erōs* is really a desire for the Beautiful itself (i.e. the Good itself). Even our basest desire for sex with a beautiful person is really a desire for the principle of everything:

this is what it is to go aright, or be led by another, into the mystery of Love: one goes always upwards for the sake of this Beauty, starting out from beautiful things and using them like rising stairs: from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things, and from these lessons he arrives in the end at this lesson,

---

187 At 1213*13ff.
188 Plato, *Alcibiades*, 133c8-16
which is learning of this very Beauty, so that in the end he comes to know just what it is to be beautiful.\footnote{\textit{Symposium} 211b-d. “τῶτο γὰρ δῆ ἐστι τὸ ὑστὸς ἐπὶ τὰ ἐρωτικὰ λέον τῇ ὑπ’ ἄλλου ἄγεσθαι, ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶν τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἐνεκα τὸ καλὸν ζει ἐπικείειναι, ὅπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς γρομενον, ἀπὸ ἕνας ἐπὶ δύο καὶ ἀπὸ δυοῦ ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ καλὰ σώματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ σώματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπὶ ἑκείνο τὸ μάθημα τελευτήσῃ, ὅ ἐστιν ὁμίχλου ἡ αὐτοῦ ἑκείνου τὸ καλός μάθημα, ἕνα γωνίαν ὁτι τὸ τελευταῖον ἐστὶ καλὸν”. Reading τελευτήσῃ for τελευτάσῃ at c7.}

This is the same conception of love we see in the \textit{Lysis}, merely phrased in a different way. Our inter-personal relationships are grounded in a prior love for the divine. We can enter into a relationship with God. Having seen Plato’s treatment of \textit{philia} as something that can be between humans and God, let us turn to Aristotle, in order to see how in the \textit{Eudemian Ethics} and \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} too there is the possibility of \textit{philia} with the divine.

We can find in the text of the \textit{Nicomachean} and \textit{Eudemian Ethics} traces that the distinction between \textit{erōs} and \textit{philia} is not as stark as Gauthier and Jolif make it out to be. At various points throughout \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} VIII and IX Aristotle calls the relationship between \textit{erastēs} and \textit{erōmenon}—clearly an \textit{erōs} relationship—‘\textit{philia}’, albeit a lesser sense of the word: “friendships are most permanent when the friends get the same thing from each other (e.g. pleasure), and not only that but also from the same source, as happens between ready-witted people, not as happens between lover and loved”.\footnote{EN 1157b-3-7. “μάλιστα δὲ καὶ ἐν τούτωι αἱ φιλίαι διεμένουσιν ὅταν τὸ στό τὸ γίγνεται παρ’ ἀλλήλων, ὅλον ἑδονή, καὶ μὴ μόνον ὀφέλος ἄλλα καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅλον τοῖς ἑυτραπέλοις, καὶ μὴ ἀς ἐραστή καὶ ἐρωμένω.” Cf. also \textit{EN} 1159b15ff.} More importantly, however, Aristotle at some points claims that unilateral relationships are true \textit{philiai}. Not only is the philosopher, as Diamond mentions in his article, termed \textit{theophilestatos},\footnote{EN 1179a-24.} which seems to overturn, or at least problematize Aristotle’s denial of \textit{philia} with the gods, but a mother’s love can be entirely one-sided, and yet it is still \textit{philia}. For the cause of \textit{philia} “seems to lie in loving rather than being loved ... [and mothers] love them [sc. their children] and do not seek to be loved in return (if they cannot have both), but seem to be satisfied if they see them
prospering; and they themselves love their children even if these owing to their ignorance give them nothing of a mother’s due”. Therefore in Aristotle even a relationship without any possibility of reciprocation or equalization can be called philia.

We constitute this philia with God through our contemplative activity. As in the relationship between parents and children, where “when children render to parents what they ought to render to those who brought them into the world, and parents render what they should to their children, the friendship of such persons will be lasting and excellent”, when we render unto God what piety we can, such a philia too will be lasting and excellent. This piety is precisely the pursuit of philosophy. “It would perhaps be thought to be better,” Aristotle writes, “indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers or lovers of wisdom; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends”. Piety requires that we philosophize and pursue truth (i.e. knowledge of God); indeed we are to prefer this knowledge to even our own friends. Through this pious action, by philosophizing, we can constitute philia with God.

In Aristotle’s discussion of self-love, we can see how man might be philos to God. If we recall that in Nicomachean Ethics X.7 Aristotle writes that “for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so [i.e. in contemplation], but in so far as something divine is present in

---

192 EN 1159a27-33. “δοσεῖ δ’ ἐν τῷ φιλεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τῷ φιλεῖσθαι εἶναι ... καὶ αὐτὰ [αἱ μητέρες] φιλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς [τοὺς τέκνους], κἀγὼ ἐκεῖνοι μηδὲν ὅμως μητρὲ προσήκει ἀπονέμωσι διὰ τὴν ἄγνωσθαν”.

193 EN 1158b21-3. “ἀκάθαρτος μὲν τέκνικα ἀπονέμῃς ἢ δὲ τοὺς γεννήσασιν, γονεῖς δὲ ἀληθεῖας διὰ τοὺς τέκνους; μόνεμος ἢ τῶν τοιούτων καὶ ἐπικεφής ἡ γένεσις φιλία”.

194 EN 1096b13-7. “ἀλλαὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀληθείας καὶ τὰ ὁμολογεῖται ἀναφερεῖν, ἀλλὰ τὰ καί φιλοσόφους ἄντικες ἄλλοι διὰ τὸν ἄλλον φιλον ἄλλου προτειμάν τὴν ἄληθείαν”.

50
him”, we know that nous is not properly a part of man, but something separate and divine.

A man who is 
always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the excellences … is more than the other a lover of self; at all events he assigns to himself the things that are noblest and best, and gratifies the most authoritative element in himself.

Such a man, more than any other, is a lover of nous. The man who lives his life according to nous is most of all a friend to nous; but this nous is both his true self, and yet something that is separate and other from himself, because it is divine. To live life according to nous, to both live virtuously and to philosophize is therefore to be a friend to God. That God cannot reciprocate in such a philia does not disqualify us from calling it such, merely by our loving and honouring nous we constitute a friendship.

V

An aporia, however, now rears its ugly head. Although we have established the importance of philia for the most complete contemplative life, how do we reconcile this with Aristotle’s stated position in Nicomachean Ethics X that the life of theoria is most self-sufficient, and, more importantly, his silence on the importance of philia for contemplation? Sparshott offers one possible interpretation:

We may note how Aristotle shows himself conscious of having gone overboard in explaining how the philosopher needs no colleagues. Immediately he retracts - of course, it is better to have colleagues, he says, but one doesn’t actually need them. We are free to reflect, if we will, on his lonely years on Lesbos, and on his supposed remark that ‘the lonelier and more isolated I am, the fonder I become of stories’

196 EN 1168b25-31. “εἴ γάρ τις ἄλλη σπουδάζει τὰ δίκαια πράττειν κύττας μάλιστα πάντων ἢ τὰ σώφρων ἢ ὑποκοινών ἄλλα τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἁρετὰς, καὶ ὅλως ἄρα τὸ καλὸν ἐστὶν περιποιηθεῖν, … δόξεις δ’ ἂν οὗ τουτός μᾶλλον εἶναι φιλόσοφος· ἀπονέμει γάρ ἑαυτῷ τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ μάλιστ' ἀγαθά, καὶ χαριζεῖται ἑαυτῷ τὸ κυριεύτω, καὶ πάντα τούτω πελάθεται”.
197 EN 1177a28ff.
(fragment 668 Rose) - a person of solitary temperament, then, but not unaware that for Plato and his circle philosophy was a communal enterprise.\textsuperscript{198}

It seems a bit distasteful to explain this remark away as one made by a lonely, curmudgeonly old man, especially in light of the importance of \textit{philia} in his ethical philosophy (an importance, which I shall note, Sparshott overlooks)\textsuperscript{199}. Instead, I want to suggest that it is because of the nature of the discussion in \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} X that Aristotle does not treat the importance of \textit{philia} for philosophy; this is a treatise on practical matters; and therefore serious discussion of the theoretical is not germane to it.

In the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, we are looking for the end of “every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice”, and this turns out to be political science, since “the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good of man”.\textsuperscript{200} This science, however, deals with \textit{practical} matters; as such,

we must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premisses to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premisses of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better … it is evidently foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician demonstrative proofs.\textsuperscript{201}

\textit{The\oe ria}, however, does not contemplate the practical, because wisdom is concerned with the highest objects, and “it would be strange to think that the art of politics, or practical wisdom, is the best knowledge, since man is not the best thing in the world”.\textsuperscript{202} It seems reasonable, therefore, that Aristotle omitted a treatment of the importance of \textit{philia} for the

\textsuperscript{198} Sparshott, \textit{Taking Life Seriously}, 339.
\textsuperscript{199} Note his opening remark to his discussion of \textit{EN} VIII and IX: “the massive discussion of ‘friendship’ (\textit{philia}) appears as an anomaly in the scheme of the Ethics” (264).
\textsuperscript{200} \textit{EN} 1094\textsuperscript{b}7-8 “τὸ ταύτης [ἐπιστημῆς] τέλος περιέχει ἃν τὰ τῶν ἄλλων· ὡστε τούτ’ ἂν εἴη ταύτωθι τῶν ἄγαθῶν”.
\textsuperscript{201} \textit{EN} 1094\textsuperscript{b}19-28. “Ἀγαπητόν οὖν περὶ τοιούτων καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων λέγοντας παραλάβω καὶ τύπω τάκηθες ἐνδείκνυσθαι, καὶ περὶ τῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων λέγοντας τοιούτα καὶ συμπεραίνεσθαι … παραπλησίου γὰρ φαίνεται μαθηματικόν τε πιθανολογοῦντος ἀποδείξθαι καὶ ἐπιτευχθεῖσιν ἀποδείξεις ἀπαιτεῖν”.
\textsuperscript{202} \textit{EN} 1141\textsuperscript{a}20-2. “ἀτροπον γὰρ εἰ τις τὴν πολιτικὴν ἢ τὴν φρόνησιν σπουδαιότατην οἶδε ταῦτα εἶναι, εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀριστον τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀνθρωπός ἐστιν”.

52
contemplative life in the *Nicomachean Ethics*; this is a treatise on practical philosophy: therefore we see how *philia* is important for man’s practical life, but there are only hints of its importance for contemplation.\(^{203}\)

If, however, we look elsewhere in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, we can see that we cannot alone come to wisdom or contemplate, but need *philia* and fellow-workers. In *Metaphysics* II Aristotle explains the need for fellow-workers to come to know, for

> the investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, while, on the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but every one says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed.\(^{204}\)

The pursuit of wisdom, i.e. philosophy, is not a solo pursuit, but rather one in which philosophers, either working together in person or separated not only by space but also by time, are engaged in *together*; this shared project constitutes a friendship among them. This is precisely the sort of interaction that constitutes *philia*, which is “realized in [friends’] living together and sharing in discussion and thought”.\(^{205}\) Since we cannot attain the truth by ourselves but only through the shared activity of fellow-workers, *philia*, which is constituted by just such a shared activity, *is* necessary for the theoretical life. Aristotle does not discuss it in the *Nicomachean Ethics* because *philia* is investigated here in its practical dimension.

---

\(^{203}\) The discussion of *theoria* at the end of EN X comes in because although this is a treatise of practical matters, we are investigating the best life for man, and so the theoretical side of human life cannot be completely ignored.

\(^{204}\) *Met.* 993\(a\)30-33, “οὔτε ἢ περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας θεωρεῖν τῇ μὲν γαλατῇ τῇ δὲ φαδία. σημεῖον δὲ τὸ μῆτ’ ἄξιος μηδένα δύνασθαι τυγχάνει αὐτῆς μήτε πάντας ἀποτυγχάνειν, ἀλλ’ ἐκαστὸν λέγειν τι περὶ τῆς φύσεως, καὶ καθ’ ἔναν μὲν ἢ μηδὲν ἢ μικρὸν ἐπιβάλλειν κύτταρον ἐκ πάντων δὲ συναθροίσας γίγνεσθαι τι μεγεθοῦς”. This is also evident from Aristotle’s dialectical method. After citing the commonly held opinions about a given question, he then proceeds to show how the truth is a reconciliation of the truth in each position. This truth can only emerge through a conversation between philosophers, both living and dead. There is truth in each position and all are necessary. It is only through synthesizing the positions that we possess a complete grasp on the matter.

\(^{205}\) *EN* 1170\(b\)11-2. “χίνων’ ἄν ἐν τῷ συζήτειν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ δικαιολογεῖν”. 53
We have now seen the importance of *philia* not only for our practical lives of virtue, but also for the life of *theoria*. Through our friendships, we become more than we alone can be; we take a small step from our limited and narrow particularity towards the all-encompassing universality of God. Moreover, contemplation, which is the highest and most blessed life of man, *is philia* with God. *Philia* is thus indispensable for *eudaimonia*, not merely because it perfects the life of practical virtue, but even opens up the divine sphere for humans. From the heights of theoretical contemplation in *Nicomachean Ethics* X, Aristotle then moves to discuss politics, since it is the laws of the *polis* that raise virtuous citizens. Let us follow Aristotle’s and turn to see how *politikē philia* is crucial in holding *poleis*, another instance of the expansion of our sphere of being, together.
The ideal of civic friendship (politikē philia) shows how philia is not only important for the private life of virtue and for the life of the philosopher, but is also required for the flourishing of that highest, best, and most complete of human koinōniai: the polis. Through the activity of the virtuous lawgiver, all the citizens in the polis may be made virtuous; through a common education, and consequently shared virtue, the citizens of this ideal polis can move beyond civic friendship as a kind of mere utility-friendship. Instead, in such a polis civic friendship more closely resembles perfect-friendship. Through this insight into civic friendship, we will see how philia, now in the context of fellow-citizens, supplants justice as the crown of the virtues and the cement of the state, and provides a firmer and more stable bond between the citizens of a polis. Furthermore, civic friendship is what enables the endaimonia of all the citizens in a polis. For these reasons, civic friendship too is vital to Aristotle’s thought on the question of how we are to best live our lives.

Scholars are divided on the question of the role played by civic friendship in Aristotle’s political and ethical philosophy. Julia Annas argues that “Aristotle is not especially interested in civic friendships”. On her reading, there is no way that philia could extend to all citizens:

there is no sense in which one “lives with” all one’s fellow-citizens or shares in their joys and sorrows which can form the basis for φιλία of the kind Aristotle is concerned with in the [Nicomachean] Ethics: to stretch and extend this notion is to destroy it.

Anna suggests that “friendship is vital in civic life because the life of a city depends in many ways on the flourishing of smaller institutions - families, religious groups, and interest groups

---

207 Annas, “Comments,” 244.
of varying kinds”;208 it is fostering philia among these groups that lawmakers care for more than justice, rather than among the all the citizens taken together qua citizens.

Among scholars who give civic friendship due weight, there is significant disagreement over where it fits into Aristotle’s classification of friendships. Richard Bodéüs argues that “l’amitié politique ... n’est au mieux qu’une sorte d’analogie de l’amitié au sens fondamental du terme”;209 civic friendship is merely incidental friendship because citizens have no eunoia for one another and interact merely inasmuch as they are useful to each other. Civic friendship, however, does resemble perfect-friendship: “elle unit, sur le plan politique, tous ceux qui pourraient faire, par ailleurs, des paires d’amis”;210 “ceux qu’elle rassemble ne sont pas proprement des amis, mais des justes, ceux qui possède la vertu complète, jusqu’en les rapports avec autrui”.211 Elena Irrera situates civic friendship as something ‘between advantage and virtue’. She sees that civic friendship is a kind of utility-friendship, but one “where the search for utility does not prevent people from displaying ‘other-regarding’ qualities like cooperation, trust and loyalty, that are typical of friendship according to virtuous individuals”.212 Anthony Price argues that civic friendship is, rather than a kind of utility-friendship, actually an extension of perfect-friendship, because it is only within the structures of the polis that man can achieve eudaimonia. Since the telos of the polis is not mere living (i.e. utility) but rather living well (i.e. virtue and eudaimonia) it is necessary, if a city is to flourish that its members should value the general well-being for its own sake, in short that they should have goodwill towards one another; and goodwill presupposes a belief that the other has (or can develop) the virtues required for

208 Annas, “Comments,” 246.
210 Bodéüs, La Véritable Politique, 162.
211 Bodéüs, La Véritable Politique, 162.
eudaimonia. Thus the foundation of a flourishing city must be a kind of friendship on account of virtue.\textsuperscript{213}

Given the wide range of opinions about what sort of thing civic friendship is, Suzanne Stern-Gillet’s distinction, that civic friendship “is but the reflection, in the lives of individuals, of the constitution of the state[,] considered in itself, civic friendship is neither noble nor pettily contractual, neither disinterested nor manipulative, neither stable nor unstable”,\textsuperscript{214} is crucial. A good constitution will create among the citizens a regard for each other’s virtue. \textit{Poleis} must aim not merely at self-sufficiency but also at virtue: “excellence must be the care of the state which is truly so called, and not merely enjoys the name: for without this end the community becomes a mere alliance which differs only in place from alliances of which the members live apart”.\textsuperscript{215} This is the key to seeing how civic friendship is akin to perfect-friendship: when the state is properly aligned, inculcating virtue among the citizens, the citizens will share virtues. Consequently, the citizens, even if they do not personally know each other, may be confident that their fellow citizens are virtuous: civic friendship will resemble perfect friendship. A bad constitution, on the other hand, will fail to foster virtuous \textit{philia} among the citizens. Under a bad constitution, the state will not have the ‘good life’ as its \textit{telos} and its citizens will expect from each other merely self-sufficiency. In such a \textit{polis} civic friendship will resemble utility-friendship.

Aristotle’s treatments of civic friendship in the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} and \textit{Eudemian Ethics} are fairly short, but from these brief discussions we can learn something of what Aristotle means by ‘civic friendship’. \textit{Philia} and justice are the bond of every \textit{koinê}: “for in every

\textsuperscript{213} Price, \textit{Love and Friendship}, 197.
\textsuperscript{215} \textit{Pol.} 1280\textsuperscript{b}6-10.
community there is thought to be some form of justice, and friendship too”. The term, ‘koinónia’, widely used in Aristotle’s political treatises, is nowhere defined. Gauthier and Jolif identify three characteristics of koinónia: a koinónia is a (i) group of people, who (ii) all have the same end in mind, and (iii) come together to work together (to koinon ergon) towards that end. Thus the Canadian Olympic women’s hockey team is an example of a modern-day koinónia: they work together, striving for the same end (gold medals); the various people in a park on a sunny spring day do not form a koinónia, for even if they all came to the park for the same end—enjoying the beautiful weather—they are not working together for that end, but rather enjoying it severally. The polis is the highest of all koinónia, since all other koinónia “seem to be parts of the political community”, because all the several koinónia in a city “aim at some particular advantage”, while the polis as a whole encompasses all the other koinónia and aims at the advantage of all the members. The koinon ergon of the polis is twofold: self-sufficiency and the good life—i.e. moral virtue and eudaimonia. Therefore, civic friendship is the kind of philia which holds together the highest of koinónia, the polis, and all the citizens will be working together towards the life of virtue and true human happiness.

In the Politics, Aristotle does not discuss civic friendship as a separate topic, but there are three references to philia. While two of these references do not lead to any insight, the

---

216 EN 1159b26-7. “ἐν ἀπάση γὰρ κοινωνίᾳ δοκεῖ τι δίκαιον εἶναι, καὶ φιλία δὲ”.
217 Gauthier and Jolif, L’Éthique, 696-7.
218 EN 1160a29. “πάσαι δὴ φαίνονται αἱ κοινωνίαι μόρια τῆς πολιτικῆς εἴναι”.
219 EN 1160a14-5. “αἱ μὲν οὖν ἔλλατι κοινωνίαι κατὰ μέρη τοῦ συμφεροντος ἐφεξῆς ταῖς εἴναι”.
220 Pol. 1252b30.
221 The first use is at Pol. 1262a5ff, where Aristotle criticizes Plato’s view, expressed in Republic, that the citizens in the ideal state would hold women and children in common, each child calling every adult of their parents’ generation ‘father’ or ‘mother’, all children born at the same time ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ and so on (461d-e). Aristotle rejects this view, arguing that this would dilute the family to such an extent that meanings of the words we use to describe our familial relations would lose their meaning. I think it is highly likely that Aristotle’s discussion of civic friendship is meant to improve on Plato’s view: while we cannot call everyone else ‘father’ or ‘sister’, and we cannot even extend personal friendship to all our fellow citizens, civic friendship nonetheless unites all the citizens of a polis. The other use of the word philia is in passing at 1287b31ff, where Aristotle discusses a problem with monarchy. This reference does not give us any insight into civic friendship, however.
other one is highly suggestive. This reference is at *Politics* 1295b21-4:

thus arises a city, not of freemen, but of masters and slaves, the one despising, the other envying; and nothing can be more fatal to [civic?] friendship and good fellowship in states than this: for good fellowship springs from friendship; when men are at enmity with one another, they would rather not even share the same path.\(^{222}\)

While there is some debate over whether this passage actually contains the phrase ‘civic friendship’,\(^ {223}\) whichever way we take Aristotle’s meaning, we can see the necessity for *philia* in *poleis*. This state of enmity and faction within a *polis* is most destructive to the political community. With those whom one hates, one does not wish to share anything, not even the road that one presumably must travel. In the absence of *philia*, the *koinonia* of the *polis* breaks down; the citizens are unable to work together either towards the ‘good life’ or self-sufficiency. Civic friendship is required to hold *poleis* together; without it cities cannot function.

Taking the evidence from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, we can define civic friendship: it is bond among members of the *polis* based on the fact that they share something—they all work together to achieve the *telos* of the *polis*. This bond can either resemble perfect-friendship, if the *polis* rightly aims at virtue and *eudaimonia*; or it can resemble utility-friendship, if the sole aim of the *polis* is the acquisition of material goods. Without it, the citizens cannot at all work together to whatever end they have. Now that we

\(^{222}\) John Cooper argues that it does: “the run of the argument seems to go best if *poltitikh* is taken with both *philia* and *koinonia*. Aristotle’s point is that it is important to avoid the enmity that exists when a contemptuous rich class rule [sic] over an envious mass of poor people. Aristotle is clearly conceiving of this contempt and envy as being felt by the individual rich and poor persons for the members of the other group *en masse*: he has in mind a class phenomenon. So, therefore, the *philia* that Aristotle says such feelings preclude, but implies would be achievable if the middle class had power…, can only be *poltitikh philia*—a friendship felt by each citizen for the other citizens *en masse*, and the only kind of friendship Aristotle recognizes that can be felt quasi-anonymously for a whole group of people” (“Political Animals,” 369 n.16).
have seen what civic friendship is, we can look more closely at the relationship between civic and perfect-friendship in a eunomic *polis*.

II

Aristotle tells us that civic friendship is a kind of utility-friendship; nevertheless, in a well-governed city the friendship between citizens will more closely resemble perfect-friendship. We can see that in the ideal state, the citizens will be bound together by civic friendship which has the marks of perfect friendship: the citizens recognize the virtue in other citizens, as inculcated by their shared education; by their participation in the institutions of political life citizens *suzōi*; the bond between citizens under a good constitution will be lasting rather than easily dissolved; they wish well their fellow-citizens well for their own sake and will act for their sakes; and they will even grieve and rejoice together. This similarity between civic and perfect-friendship shows that civic friendship is not merely an incidental kind of friendship, but another important facet of the virtuous man’s life.

An important caveat should be noted before we proceed further. While I shall show that civic friendship and perfect-friendship are very closely related, they nevertheless *are* different. For it is not possible to be intimate friends with all one’s fellow citizens; it was impossible in an Athens of roughly 30 000 citizens, and it is impossible in the modern state, comprised of millions of citizens. Aristotle tells us as much, in his discussion of the appropriate number of friends: “those who have many friends and mix intimately with them all are thought to be no one’s friend, *except in the way proper to fellow-citizens*”. Annas argues that this passage shows that *philia* cannot extend to all citizens. If civic friendship were a kind of *philia*, it would be

---

224 EE 1242b22.
225 EN 1171a16-17. Emphasis my own. “οἱ δὲ πολὺ φιλοί καὶ πᾶσιν οἷκεῖος ἐντυγχάνοντες οὐκένι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι φίλοι (πλὴν πολιτικῶς)”.
a relation where one wishes the other person well for their own sake and tries to achieve this as best one can ... this is a personal concern, and extending it or anything with its central feature to all one’s fellow-citizens removes the conditions that give sense to its application.226

But this view is a misreading of Aristotle’s text; by this very statement, Aristotle suggests that civic friendship can extend to all one’s fellow citizens. You cannot be everyone’s friend in the strict sense, but you can politically.227 Civic friendship differs from inter-personal philia in that it lacks the requirement for intimate knowledge; the distance between civic friends notwithstanding, however, civic friendship will still bear the marks of perfect-friendship.

The first mark of perfect-friendship is that friends suzōσi. While in utility-friendships, the friends do not enjoy spending time together, for “such people do not live much with each other either; for sometimes they do not even find each other pleasant”;228 in perfect-friendships friends characteristically do things together.229 Irrera denies that civic friends suzōσi: “civic friendship resembles this [sc. utility] kind of relationship insofar as people do not live together in the community except in a broad sense”.230 It is true that in some ways a city more closely resembles a herd of cattle, since in modern cities people frequently do not even know their neighbours. Rather, as Aristotle tells us, living together for humans means “sharing in discussion and thought”.231 Pace Annas, there is a “sense in which one ‘lives with’ all one’s fellow-citizens”:232 by active participation in the public institutions of the polis,
citizens do live together, and they share in discussion and thought. A citizen is defined by Aristotle as he who “shares in the administration of justice and in offices.” Recall that *suzēn* does not mean to merely spend time together, but to be actively engaged in an activity, together. Sitting on juries, listening to debates in the assembly, voting in elections—in a word, participation in common political institutions—all these activities are done together by the citizens of the *polis*. Even if we take citizen in the broader sense of the term, as all those to the advantage of whom the rulers rule, all the citizens can be said to *suzēn* through their diverse work towards the common end of the *polis*. Civic friends therefore spend their time together and act together, just as personal friends do.

Unlike friendships based on utility, which are easily dissolved, civic friendship will be lasting. Utility friendships are easily dissolved because “the useful is not permanent but is always changing”; perfect friendships are lasting and will not end, because the good are always like themselves. Civic friendships, under a good constitution, will be permanent and lasting. Instead, “the friendship at the basis of a political organization gets dissolved only when the reciprocal relationships among the citizens hinge on an extremely low degree of justice”, i.e. only when a state has a very bad constitution. A state will be safe from revolution whenever the constitution preserves proportional equality among its citizens, and therefore justice, since justice is equality. Whether in an oligarchy, with the criterion for equality of wealth, or in a democracy, with the criterion of freedom, equality between merit and power is the ideal. In the ideal state, all the citizens are truly equal (i.e. in virtue, rather than in wealth or birth), and in turn both rule and are ruled; such a state will be most of all

---

233 Pol. 1275b20-1. *πολίτης δ’ ἀφίλχος οἰδάνι ... ἕ τῷ μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχής*.
236 Irrera, “Between Advantage and Virtue,” 580.
proof against revolutions. The bond of civic friendship in such a state will not be easily dissolved.

Civic friendship is also based on the shared virtue of citizens. Although Aristotle tells us that “excellence must be the care of a state which is truly so called, and not merely enjoys the name [of state],” Irerra accepts that civic friendship cannot resemble perfect friendship because while perfect-friendship must be based on the recognition of shared virtue, “in political communities it is not always possible to recognize any fellow-citizen as similar to oneself, especially because not every individual can be good in a community.” Through education, however, at least in a just state, the good legislator can make all the citizens virtuous. Since virtuous states of character stem from virtuous activities, “it makes no small difference, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.” This habituation, however, comes about through obedience to the laws:

it is difficult to get from youth up a right training for excellence if one has not been brought up under right laws; for to live temperately and hardly is not pleasant to most people, especially when they are young ...but it is surely not enough that when they are young they should get the right nurture and attention; since they must, even when they are grown up, practice and be habituated to them, we shall need laws for this as well, and generally speaking to cover the whole of life; for most people obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than what is noble.

If a city has good laws, the citizens will, through obedience to those laws and through education, become virtuous themselves. As much as the polis inculcates virtue among the

---

237 Pol. 1280b6-7. “ὅ, καὶ φανερὸν ὅτι δεῖ περὶ ἄρετής ἐπιμελεῖς εἶναι τῇ γ’ ἄρ τῆς ἴληθῶς ὑπομαζομένη πόλει, μὴ λόγου χαίρειν.”
239 EN 1103b23-5. “ὁ ὑμεῖς ὄν ἀποφέρει τό ὡς ἡ ἑρᾶτος εὖθες ἐκ νέων ἑθικεῖται, ἀλλὰ πάμπολο, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ πάν”.
240 EN 1179b32-80a5. “ἐκ νέου δ’ ἀγωγῆς ἡ ἄρης τυγχὲν πρὸς ἄρετήν καὶ καρτερίας ὑπ’ ὅν ἔδει τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἀλλὰ τοις καὶ νέοις. διὸ νόμως δεῖ τετάχθαι τῷ τροπῇ καὶ τῷ ἐπιτηδεῦσεται ὑπάκουεσθαι γὰρ λυπηρά συνήθεις γενόμενα, ὡς ἔκακόν δ’ ὅσις νέος ὄντας τροφής καὶ ἐπιμελείας τυγχέν ὄρθης, ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ ἀνδρόθεντας δεῖ ἐπιτηθεῦσειν κύτα καὶ ἐθικεῖται, καὶ περὶ τάτα δειμένθ’ ἄν νόμων, καὶ ἔδει πρὸς πάντα τόν βίον· οἱ γὰρ πολλοὶ ἀνάγκης μᾶλλον ἢ λόγῳ πείθομεν καὶ ξεμίσεις ἢ τῷ καλῷ.”
citizens, the citizens will be able to recognize and know the virtue of their fellow-citizens.\textsuperscript{241}

Even in modern states, we love our fellow countrymen because of the virtues we, as a country, pride ourselves on. For instance, I can say that I love other Canadians because I can count on them to be friendly, well-mannered, and polite. This recognition of virtue means that civic-friendship, as an ideal, will be closer to perfect-friendship than to utility-friendship.

Citizens of a \textit{polis} animated by civic-friendship will bear as well the other two marks of perfect-friendship: they will wish each other well for their own sakes, and grieve and rejoice with one another. Necessarily, they will not do these as two perfect-friends, for whom everything is common, would, but rather in as much as they \textit{do} share something in common, i.e. citizenship. Because civic friendship lacks the complete knowledge of the other, \textit{eunoia} and sympathy will be limited, but they will nevertheless be present. A clear example of this is the patriotism inspired by the Olympic Games. People, across the country, who normally have no interest in sports, cheer on their country’s athletes, for no other reason than they represent their country. I personally know not a single member of the Canadian Bobsled team, but nevertheless I want them to triumph for their own sake. Similarly, when Canada wins a gold medal, we all rejoice in that victory, and if Canada were to lose in Hockey—heaven forfend!—the nation would grieve together. But this is not limited to the world of sports, for in general we are more likely to help our fellow citizens, to wish them well, because they are one of our own. Civic friendship in this respect mirrors perfect-friendship because we genuinely feel \textit{eunoia} for our fellow countrymen.\textsuperscript{242}

\textsuperscript{241} This is especially true if we accept Cooper’s argument in his article “Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship” that perfect-friendship need not rest on \textit{perfect} virtue, but can rest on incomplete virtue. I can, for instance, my friend and I can be friends on account of courage, even if after a battle we act completely intemperately. In Cooper’s view, Aristotle would still see us as friends on account of virtue, because we are friends with each other for our courage.

\textsuperscript{242} Cooper compares this kind of friendship with a family. Since the \textit{polis} is a natural development from the family, such a comparison is instructive. He writes, “in a family … the good fortune or success or good character of one member is \textit{experienced} by the others as somehow part of their own good as well, and in fact we
Civic friends bear all the marks of perfect-friendship, when the civic bond is strong. Civic friends live together by participation in the day-to-day running of the polis and through working towards the common end of the polis, the good life. They are concerned with the kind of people their compatriots are, because, as Cooper argues, they feel “that what their fellow-citizens are like, for better or worse, somehow reflects on themselves”; civic friends share a common moral upbringing, so a fellow-citizen’s failure is in a sense one’s own. As such, civic friendship is based on the virtues of one’s countrymen. Civic friends also feel goodwill for and rejoice and grieve with each other. Finally, such a friendship, since a well-ordered polis is not liable to split into faction or suffer revolution, the civic bond will be rarely broken. Thus, civic-friendship in a well-ordered state is a kind of perfect-, not utility-, friendship.

III

Since we have seen that civic friendship, in a good state, is actually a kind of perfect-friendship, I want to spend some time considering what the implications of this are. First, the final conception of happiness must include reference to civic friendship, since a man’s endaimonia cannot be assessed on his life alone, but also of the lives of his relations. Civic friendship also replaces justice as the bond of the city. Just as personal philia replaces justice in the universal sense, so that friends willingly perform virtuous actions for their friends out of affection, civic friendship does this among all the citizens of a eunomic polis, providing the surest foundation for virtuous action. Finally, through participation in the order and the koinon ergon of the polis, all the citizens, not only those blessed by nature with souls capable of philosophy and moral excellence, participate in those best activities. Civic friendship is thus a

---

powerful force, not something to be discounted as something with which Aristotle is unconcerned.

The happy man will need to live in a good *polis*, because civic friendship must be reckoned as part of his *eudaimonia*. Just as “the man who is to be happy will … need virtuous friends” as an external good, he too will need civic friends. Aristotle tells us as much in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: even though the happy man must be self-sufficient, since “with us welfare involves something beyond us”, self-sufficiency cannot be thought of as “that which is sufficient for a man by himself [i.e.] for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is sociable by nature”. Price notices this, writing that “the civic life not only facilitates an old *eudaimonia*, but also makes possible a new one, must imply that the living well that each citizen pursues is not merely his own (which every man desires), but also the city’s (which he desires *qua* citizen)”. On Price’s view, however, this is merely an additional external good, not one required to call a man happy, such that “the man without a city might be at a practical disadvantage, but he would not be cut off from his own true character like an isolated piece in draughts”. Price, as we have seen, the virtuous man must live in a good *polis* in order to achieve *eudaimonia*. “Man is by nature a political animal”; his happiness cannot be achieved without a *polis*. And the perfection of the political life is intimately tied up with civic friendship: the most perfect state is not held together by justice

244 EN 1070¹⁷-18. “δεύτερη ἰδαν τῷ εὐδαιμονήσοντι φίλων σπουδαίων”.
245 EE 1245¹⁸. “ὑμῖν μὲν τὸ ὑπὸ καθῆς ἔτερον”.
246 EN 1097⁸-11. “τὸ δ’ ὁπρὸνες λέγομεν ὡς κυτῳ μόνῳ, τῷ γὰρ βίον μονώτητι, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονεύσι καὶ τέκνοις καὶ γυναικί καὶ ὅλως τοῖς φίλοις καὶ πολιτικάς, ἐπειδὴ φύσει πολιτικόν ὁ ἄνθρωπος”.
249 Pol. 1253⁴-3. “ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ὑπὸν”.
but by friendship. We must therefore include in our discussion of the *eudaimon* both interpersonal *philia* and *politikē philia*.

Furthermore, just as *philia* replaces justice as the chief of the virtues between individuals, *politikē philia* replaces justice as the bond of the state, which is why legislators “care for [*philia*] more than justice”. 250 Sybil Schwarzenbach has argued that “a society not animated by civic friendship can never be a truly just one. Friendly civic relations are a necessary component or constitutive element of a genuinely just society”, 251 because without a climate of genuine trust and concern for one’s fellow citizens, “citizens may still perceive themselves to be unjustly treated even if they are in fact are not so—even if justice, or ‘proportionate equality,’ is strictly being adhered to”. 252 True justice does require civic friendship; but just as interpersonal *philia* replaces justice between friends, civic friendship replaces justice as the bond between citizens because, whereas justice, in the universal sense, is merely doing what the law commands, citizens who feel civic friendship for one another will act virtuously towards one another willingly and obligingly. Irerra notices this, commenting that while virtuous people will have for each other “some form of legal, virtuous respect”, those “who are not equipped with a suitable level of ethical excellence may act simply by subscribing to the norms of justice imposed by external prescription”. 253 This analysis misses the full import of the bond of civic friendship. Since civic friendship is more akin to perfect-friendship, all the citizens will have a concern for the moral behaviour of one another. Just as intimate, personal friends keep each other on the primrose path, those who are less virtuous too will reap these benefits of friendship; they will be spurred on to virtue not simply from the compulsion of the law, but because they want to emulate the virtue of

---

253 Irerra, “Between Advantage and Virtue,” 571.
their civic friends and moral betters. In this way civic friendship is a loftier goal than mere universal justice in a *polis*, and is the true care of politicians.

Finally, civic friendship ties all the citizens of a *polis* together and enables them all to share in *eudaimonia*. Cooper argues that through civic friendship, *all* the citizens (in the widest sense of the term, i.e. those to whose advantage the rulers rule, not merely those who participate in the administration of justice) participate in the *eudaimonia* of the best citizens:

> when civic friendship animates the life of a community … each citizen participates in *all* aspects of the good achieved through the common activity that constitutes civic life. This means that even those who are less well endowed for the excellences of mind and character share in the exercise of the excellences of the better-endowed citizens. In this way, all the citizens of a successful city achieve, either directly through their own individual activities, or at second remove through participation in the city’s good of which these activities are a prime element, an active, perfected, self-sufficient life.²⁵⁴

On this view, civic friendship is a powerful force that unites all the citizens. Each citizen, through their diverse work—be it fishing and farming, or be it governing—contributes to the self-sufficient end of the *polis*: living well. But when the *polis* is held together by civic friendship, the citizens are not merely separate individuals, but in a sense are one city,²⁵⁵ and so the *eudaimonia* of the best philosopher-kings and exceptionally virtuous men is the *eudaimonia* of all the citizens. As in personal friendship, all those united under civic friendship are in a sense no longer separate ‘I’s but a ‘we’. It is not that the farmers are farming and the philosophers theorizing with nothing joining the two; rather all the citizens, *together*, are living the ‘good life’, participating in different ways but all contributing to the *koinon ergon* of the *polis*.

---

²⁵⁴ Cooper, “Political Animals,” 375.
²⁵⁵ See Kosman, “Desirability,” *passim*. While two individual friends, through living together become a ‘we’ instead of two separate ‘I’s, the *polis* is perhaps an even greater expression of the movement to a more universal standpoint.
IV

The importance of civic friendship in Aristotle’s thought is now evident. Civic friendship, in a well-ordered polis, is not merely a kind of utility-friendship, but rather is a kind of perfect-friendship, since citizens of such a polis bear all the marks of perfect friendship: they recognize, through their common education, their shared virtue; they live together, sharing in discussion and thought through political institutions; they wish each other well and rejoice and grieve together; and such a city will not disintegrate, so such a friendship will be lasting. On such a basis, we can see that civic friendship forms an important part of the virtuous man’s life, as an important facet of his eudaimonia. Furthermore, civic friendship is both the grounds for civic justice, and yet goes beyond it. Finally, through sharing in the koinōnia of the polis through civic friendship, all members of the koinōnia can participate and share in the best human activities and the happiness that goes along with it. Civic friendship is a critically important part of Aristotle’s ethical philosophy.
CHAPTER 5:
Conclusion

The importance of *Philia* in Aristotle’s ethical thought is now clear. *Philia* is necessary in the practical sphere of man’s activity because it is both a virtue and implies virtue. In the particular sense of *philia*, it is the mean amount of *philesis*, neither excessive as in pleasure-friendship nor insufficient as in utility-friendship. *Philia* implies virtue since the truest and best expression of each of the virtues is found in the context of *philia* between two virtuous individuals. Without friends, the virtuous man has difficulty exercising his virtuous character, since opportunities worthy of his excellence are few and far between. With friends, however, opportunities become more common, since not only it is *kallion* to be magnificent or courageous towards friends, but also since with friends it is easier to perform virtuous actions. *Philia* even supplants justice as the ‘crown of the virtues’: *philia* comprehends the activity of all the virtues, just like justice does, but between friends justice becomes a non-issue. *Philia* is required for *eudaimonia* because it is only through our friendships that we can fully actualize virtuous characters.

*Philia* not only completes man’s practical side, it also perfects our contemplation. *Philia* provides an ‘expanded sphere of being’: two separate ‘I’s become a single ‘we’. This brings us closer to the divine perspective, where God’s activity of self-thinking thought reaches out to a cosmos that is not other than itself. Similarly, the union of two friends’ lives enables them to see a larger portion of the cosmos as not other than themselves. Through *philia* our contemplation is perfected.

Furthermore, there is a sense in which we can see that *theoria* is a kind of *philia* with God. Just as in Plato’s dialogues we find *philia* between first principles and humans, so too in Aristotle. The virtuous man, because he is most of all a lover of self, is most of all a lover of *nous*, which is something divine yet present in man. Although this *philia* is one-sided, since there is no possibility of reciprocation
from God, it can still qualify as *philia* “seems to lie in loving rather than being loved”. Philia is thus required also for theoretical *eudaimonia*.

*Philia* is also what best holds together the ideal *polis*. Under an ideal constitution, civic friendship will be most similar to perfect-friendship, since such a eunomic *polis* will, through education, make its citizens virtuous. Such a bond between citizens supplants justice as the bond of the state: a *polis* united by civic friendship will be least likely to suffer revolution or corruption of its regime. Finally, civic friendship unites all the citizens of a *polis* enabling them all to share, to whatever extent they are able, in the *eudaimonia* of the best citizens.

A thread running through these three ideas is the requirement for otherness: humans are essentially relational beings that require each other to complete themselves. We require friends who can help us perform virtuous actions, to theorize, and to build self-sufficient political communities. While God is determinate and self-sufficient of its own accord, “we are not in ourselves possessed of each such characters”. Humans are by nature political animals who require relationships with others in order to be fully actualized and to achieve *eudaimonia*. On the other hand, even God requires otherness, in the form of the material cosmos, to achieve its own determinacy—the requirement for otherness extends even the the divine, albeit differently. This is why *philia* plays such an important role in Aristotle’s conception of the good life: it is only with friends that we can best live our lives.

---

256 EN 1159a27. “δοκεῖ δ' ἐν τῷ φιλεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τῷ φιλεῖσθαι εἶναι”.
257 EE 1245a5. “οὗν οὐ κατ' ἄυτοὺς ἐσμὲν ἐκαστὸν τούτων”.

71
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Works


Translations


Secondary Works


