

Aristotle on *Philia*

by

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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

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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

<i>De Anima</i>	<i>DA</i>
<i>Eudemian Ethics</i>	<i>EE</i>
<i>Metaphysics</i>	<i>Met.</i>
<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	<i>EN</i>
<i>Politics</i>	<i>Pol.</i>

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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

¹ Francis Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 264.

² Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, 264.

³ EN 1155a14-6. "τοῦς τ' ἐν ἀκμῇ πρὸς τὰς καλὰς πράξεις· 'σύν τε δὲ' ἐρχομένω'. καὶ γὰρ νοῆσαι καὶ πράξαι δυνατώτεροι".

“friendship too seems to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice”.⁴ *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*”.⁵ 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”.⁶ 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.⁷ 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.⁸

⁴ EN 1155^a22-4. “ἔοικε δὲ καὶ τὰς πόλεις συνέχειν ἢ φιλία, καὶ οἱ νομοθέται μᾶλλον περὶ αὐτὴν σπουδάζειν ἢ τὴν δικαιοσύνην”.

⁵ Aspasius, “Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII,” in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 19, ed. Gustav Heylbut, Berlin: George Reimer, 1892: 135^v11-2). “περὶ φιλίας οικειότατόν ἐστιν διελθεῖν τῶ περὶ ἡθῶν καὶ ἀρετῶν ἐπισκοποῦντι”.

⁶ Aspasius, “Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII,” 135^v24-5. “ἢ τε γὰρ δικαιοσύνη ἰσότης τις ἐστὶν ἀπονεμητική καὶ ἢ φιλία τοῖς φίλοις ἰσότητα παρέχει”

⁷ Heliodorus, “Paraphrase of *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII,” in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 19, ed. Gustav Heylbut, Berlin: George Reimer, 1892: 294 8-13). “ἔστι γὰρ ἡ φιλία ἀρετὴ τις ἣ ἔπεται τῇ ἀρετῇ”.

⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. C. I. Litzinger, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 703.

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 Nicomaque*, seem to take Aristotle at his word that *philia* is "a certain kind of virtue or involves virtue".⁹ 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".¹⁰ 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".¹¹ 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.¹² Cooper identifies two reasons why friends are necessary for *eudaimonia*—which justify the inclusion of two books on the subject in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

⁹ EN 1155^a4. "[φιλία] ἔστι γὰρ ἀρετὴ τις ἢ μετ' ἀρετῆς". My own translation.

¹⁰ Gauthier and Jolif, *L'Éthique à Nicomaque*, (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1959), 51*-2*

¹¹ Gauthier and Jolif, *L'Éthique*, 660.

¹² These articles, "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle," and "Political Animals and Civic Friendship," are all published in *Reason and Emotion*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

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".¹³

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".¹⁴ 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".¹⁵ *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.¹⁶

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.

¹⁵ Suzanne Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995): 4.

¹⁶ Stern-Gillet, *Philosophy of Friendship*, 172.

Aristotle's answer is that friends offer us *synaisthēsis* and *synnōrixis*—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,¹⁷ 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”.¹⁸ 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

¹⁷ Aryeh Kosman, “Aristotle on the Desirability of Friends,” *Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2004): 135-54.

¹⁸ *Pol.* 1253^a29 “ἢ θηρότερον ἢ θεός”.

of virtue, or involves virtue”.¹⁹ *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”.²⁰ *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 *eudaimōn* 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 *theōria* 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”.²¹ In other words, to pursue philosophy is to be a *philos* of God.

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

¹⁹ EN 1155^a4. “[φιλία] ἔστι γὰρ ἀρετὴ τις ἢ μετ’ ἀρετῆς”. My own translation.

²⁰ EN 1155^a26-7. “μᾶλλον περὶ αὐτὴν σπουδάζειν ἢ τὴν δικαιοσύνην”.

²¹ EN 1177^b27-8. “οὐ γὰρ ἡ ἀνθρωπὸς ἐστὶν οὕτω βιώσεται, ἀλλ’ ἡ θεῖόν τι ἐν αὐτῷ 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 petty contractual, neither disinterested nor manipulative, neither stable nor unstable”.²² 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 (*suzein*) 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”²³ 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.²⁴ 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 Aspasia, as

²² Stern-Gillet, *Philosophy of Friendship*, 153-4.

²³ EN 1155^a24. “μᾶλλον ... ἢ τὴν 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.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*.

²⁵ Anthony Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), *passim*.

CHAPTER 2: The Virtue of *Philia*

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 *eudaimōn* 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 1155^a4. “[φιλία] ἔστι γὰρ ἀρετὴ τις ἢ μετ’ ἀρετῆς”. My own translation.

²⁷ EN 1124^b24-5. “καὶ ἀργὸν εἶναι καὶ μελλητηνὸν ἀλλ’ ἢ ὅπου τιμὴ μεγάλη ἢ ἔργον καὶ ὀλίγων μὲν πρακτικόν”.

²⁸ EN 1159^b31. “κοινὰ τὰ φίλων”.

I

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".²⁹ Paul Schollmeier also argues³⁰ 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*.³¹ 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 other³² at IV.6, where this virtue is unnamed, "though it most resembles friendship";³³ 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*".³⁴ Francis Sparshott agrees with Percival's interpretation, arguing that *philia* in

²⁹ Robert Crouse, "Aristotle's Doctrine of *Philia*," *Anglican Free Press* 19.4 (2002): 17. Emphasis my own.

³⁰ See Paul Schollmeier, *Other Selves*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 35-52.

³¹ See René Antoine Gauthier and Jean Yves Jolif, 681.

³² *EN* 1108^a23-31.

³³ *EN* 1126^b20.

³⁴ Geoffery Percival, *Aristotle on Friendship: Being an expanded translation of the Nicomachean Ethics Books VIII and IX*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 1. The italicized text is Percival's expansion of Aristotle's lecture notes.

Nicomachean Ethics VIII and IX is not the virtue discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* II and IV.³⁵

Lorraine Pangle contends that *philia* is “like a virtue”, and “resembles the virtues”, but nevertheless thinks that “Aristotle acknowledges at 1157^b5-7, 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”.³⁶

Commentators seem to resist treating *philia* as a virtue because, whereas *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 *philia* is a mean, a feeling which is simply a function of interaction and not a ‘disposition to choose, lying on a mean’”.³⁷ What Sparshott and others who hold this opinion miss is that there are two different, but clearly related, senses of *philia* at work here. Like justice, which has a particular sense as well as a universal sense,³⁸ *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 *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 *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.³⁹ Further, (v) all the

³⁵ Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, 272.

³⁶ Lorraine Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54. I shall note in passing that the passage, allegedly discounting *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.

³⁷ Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, 272.

³⁸ EN 1129^b3ff.

³⁹ EN 1106^b36-1107^a2.

virtues come into being and are maintained by their active use,⁴⁰ and (vi) all the virtues are done for the sake of the *kalon*.⁴¹ Now, to discover whether *philia* conforms to these characteristics of virtue, we must look to perfect-friendship,⁴² 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.⁴³ 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”.⁴⁴ While we can easily have an attraction to inanimate objects, such as wine,⁴⁵ *philia* is something deeper than an emotion. As Crouse writes, “*philia* involves the passage from a passion (*pathos*) to a stable disposition of character (*hexis*); that is, from a sensitive stimulation, passive and immediate, to a rational appetite, freely willed”.⁴⁶ Our dispositions are “the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions”.⁴⁷ 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* 1103^b12-17.

⁴¹ Aristotle nowhere states this explicitly, but it is clear from his treatment of the virtues in *EN* III-V. See especially *EN* 1115^b13: “[ὁ ἀνδρεῖος] φοβήσεται μὲν οὖν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ... τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα”.

⁴² What I shall refer to as perfect-friendship Aristotle terms *philia teleia* (*EN* 1156^b8). It is also referred to as character-friendship or primary friendship in the scholarly literature.

⁴³ Cf. *EE* 1236^a17-20: “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 we speak of a medical soul, body, instrument, or act, but properly the name belongs to that primarily so called”.

⁴⁴ *EN* 1157^b29-30. My own translation. “ἔοικε δ’ ἡ μὲν φίλησις πάθει, ἡ δὲ φιλία ἕξει”.

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 *philiai* are grounded in our common pursuit and non-reciprocal *philia* for the Good.

⁴⁶ Crouse, “Aristotle’s Doctrine,” 16.

⁴⁷ *EN* 1105^b26. “καθ’ ὅς πρὸς τὰ πάθη ἔχομεν εὖ ἢ κακῶς”.

to us. This is what it means to ‘stand well’ with reference to the passion of *philēsis*.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

(ii) Likewise, *philia* springs from choice, which “is the characteristic thing in a friend”.⁵⁰

All friendships start with *eunoia*, which is termed “inactive friendship”⁵¹ and is similar to *philēsis*. 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”;⁵² 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”.⁵³ Though they start with *eunoia*,⁵⁴ 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, *suzēn*, not just living, but actively doing things;⁵⁵ as Aristotle tells us in the *Eudemian Ethics*, *philia* is the reciprocal choice of acting

⁴⁸ For the difference between *philia* and *philēsis*, see the glossary.

⁴⁹ EN 1156^b7ff.

⁵⁰ EN 1164^b1. “αὕτη [ἡ προαίρεσις] γὰρ τοῦ φίλου καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς”.

⁵¹ EN 1167^a11. “αὐτὴν [sc. εὐνοῖα] ἀργὴν εἶναι φιλίαν”.

⁵² EN 1167^a9-10. “βούλονται γὰρ μόνον τὰγατὰ οἷς εἰσὶν εὖνοι, συμπράττειν δ' ἂν οὐθέν οὐδ' ὀχληθεῖεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν”.

⁵³ EN 1156^b26-30. “ἔτι δὲ προσδεῖται χρόνου καὶ συνηθείας ... οὐδ' ἀποδέξασθαι δὴ πρότερον οὐδ' εἶναι φίλους, πρὶν ἂν ἑκάτερος ἑκατέρῳ φανῆ φιλητὸς καὶ πιστευθῆ”.

⁵⁴ EN 1167^a4. “[εὐνοῖα] ἔοικε δὴ ἀρχὴ φιλίας εἶναι”.

⁵⁵ See David K. O'Connor, “Two Ideals of Friendship,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7.2 (1990): 109-22 for a discussion of the import of *suzēn*. Also Cf. *Lysis*, where Lysis and Menexenus are friends because they wrestle

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

together (207c), Socrates and the boys become friends because together they seek to know what *philia* is (223b), but Hippothales is not a friend to Lysis, because he cannot even speak to him (205b-c).

⁵⁶ EE 1237^a31. “ἡ φιλία ἢ πρώτη ἀντιπροαίρεσις τῶν ἀπλῶς ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἡδέων”.

⁵⁷ EN 1158^b28. “ἰσότης ... δὴ τῆς φιλίας εἶναι δοκεῖ”.

⁵⁸ Schollmeier, *Other Selves*, 45.

⁵⁹ EN 1158^b12ff.

⁶⁰ EN 1158^b27-9. “ὅταν γὰρ κατ' ἀξίαν ἢ φίλησις γίγνηται, τότε γίγνεται πῶς ἰσότης”.

⁶¹ EN 1158^b20-24. My own emphasis. “ὅταν δὲ γονεῦσι μὲν τέκνα ἀπονέμη ἃ δεῖ τοῖς γεννήσασι, γονεῖς δὲ υἱέσιν ἃ δεῖ τοῖς τέκνοις, μόνιμος ἢ τῶν τοιούτων καὶ ἐπιεικὴς ἔσται φιλία”.

⁶² EN 1159^a3-5. “ἀκριβῆς μὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις οὐκ ἔστιν ὀρμισμός ἕως τίνος φίλοι, πολλῶν γὰρ ἀφαιρουμένων ἔτι μένει· πολὺ δὲ χωροσθέντος, οἷον τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐκέτι”.

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”;⁶³ 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”;⁶⁴ *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”.⁶⁵ *Philia* therefore lies on a mean.

⁶³ EN 1158^a7-10 “φίλοι δ' οὐ πάνυ εἰσὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ συνημερεύειν μηδὲ χαίρειν ἀλλήλοις, ἃ δὴ μάλιστα εἶναι δοκεῖ φιλικά”.

⁶⁴ EN 1158^a12-3. “[ἔρωσ] ἔοικε γὰρ ὑπερβολῇ”. 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 1158^a18-20. “τούτων δὲ μᾶλλον ἔοικε φιλικῇ ἢ διὰ τὸ ἡδύ, ὅταν ταῦτ' ἀπ' ἀμφοῖν γίγνηται καὶ χαίρωσιν ἀλλήλοις ἢ τοῖς αὐτοῖς”.

(iv) For *philia* to be a virtue, it must also be “determined by reason, as a prudent man would determine it”.⁶⁶ 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 *philia* requires

*précisément une intervention de l'intellect décidant, 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.*⁶⁷

This is to say that our *response* to the emotion of *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”.⁶⁸ 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”.⁶⁹ But when the friends no longer spend time together, their friendship withers on account of inactivity, and can even be

⁶⁶ EN 1107^a1-2. “ὄρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν”.

⁶⁷ Gauthier and Jolif, *L'Éthique*, 681.

⁶⁸ EN 1105^b9-11. “εὖ οὖν λέγεται ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ τὰ δίκαια πράττειν ὁ δίκαιος γίνεταί καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τὰ σώφρονα ὁ σώφρων· ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μὴ πράττειν ταῦτα οὐδεὶς ἂν οὐδὲ μελλήσειε γίνεσθαι ἀγαθός”.

⁶⁹ EN 1157^b6-7. “οἱ μὲν γὰρ συζῶντες χαίρουσιν ἀλλήλους καὶ πορίζουσι τὰγαθὰ”.

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’”.⁷⁰ 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”,⁷¹ 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.⁷² 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 1157^b12. Translation of the proverb is by H. Rackham. “οἱ γὰρ τόποι οὐ διαλύουσι τὴν φιλίαν ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν. Ἐὰν δὲ χρόνιος ἢ ἀπουσία γίνηται, καὶ τῆς φιλίας δοκεῖ λήθην ποιεῖν· ὅθεν ἔρηται ‘πολλὰς δὲ φιλίας ἀπροσηγορία διέλευσεν’”.

⁷¹ *Op. Cit. Classical Philology* 105.4 (2010): 355.

⁷² Aryeh Kosman, “Beauty and the Good: Situating the *Kalon*,” *Classical Philology* 105.4 (2010): 355.

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*: 1155^a29, 1162^b36, 1168^b30.

⁷⁴ *Pol.* 1252^a30. “φυσικὸν τὸ ἐφίεσθαι, ὅσον αὐτό, τοιοῦτον καταλιπῶν ἕτερον”.

⁷⁵ *Pol.* 1252^b16. “χρήσεως ἕνεκεν μὴ ἐφημέρου”.

⁷⁶ *Pol.* 1252^b29-30. “[ἡ πόλις] γινομένη μὲν τοῦ ζῆν ἕνεκεν, ὅσα δὲ τοῦ εὔ ζῆν”

⁷⁷ *Pol.* 1253^a2-3. “ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῶν”.

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”.⁷⁹

Furthermore,

parent seems by nature to feel [*philia*] for offspring and offspring for parent ... [*philia*] 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.⁸⁰

It is clear, then that *philia* is *by nature* something proper to humans. Thus perfect-friendship is *kalon*, since it is the best form of *philia* among men, the best expression of man’s nature as a gregarious animal.

Philia 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 *kalon*. 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”,⁸¹ 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,⁸² perhaps even an interpolation. Rather, *philia*, as discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII and IX is the virtue mentioned in books II and IV.

⁷⁹ EN 1162^a24-7. “καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ φιλίᾳ. εἴη δ’ ἂν καὶ δι’ ἀρετῆν, εἰ ἐπιεικεῖς εἶεν· ἔστι γὰρ ἐκατέρου ἀρετῆ, καὶ χαίρουεν ἂν τῷ τοιούτῳ”.

⁸⁰ EN 1155^a16-21. “φύσει τ’ ἐνυπάρχειν ἔοικε πρὸς τὸ γεγεννημένον τῷ γεννήσαντι καὶ πρὸς τὸ γεννήσαν τῷ γεννηθέντι. ... καὶ τοῖς ὁμοειδέσι πρὸς ἄλληλα, καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ὅθεν τοὺς φιλανθρώπους ἐπαινοῦμεν ἴδιοι δ’ ἂν τις καὶ ἐν ταῖς πλάναις ὡς οἰκεῖον ἅπας ἄνθρωπος ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ φίλον”. For a discussion of the development of the idea of *philia*, 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 ΦΙΛΙΑ Radically Transformed,” *Classical Philology* 95.4 (2000): 379-98. Aristotle seems to both affirm the traditional view, that *philia* is based upon blood-kinship, and the new conception that it rests on similarity by *physis*.

⁸¹ Gauthier and Jolif, *L’Éthique*, 660.

⁸² Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, 272.

II

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".⁸³ 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 virtue⁸⁴, 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".⁸⁵ 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

⁸³ Crouse, "Aristotle's Doctrine," 16.

⁸⁴ Magnanimity "seems to be a sort of crown of the excellences; for it makes them greater, and is not found without them" EN 1124^a1-3: (ἔοικε μὲν οὖν ἡ μεγαλοψυχία οἷον κόσμος τις εἶναι τῶν ἀρετῶν· μείζους γὰρ αὐτὰς ποιεῖ, καὶ οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ ἐκείνων).

⁸⁵ EN 1124^b24-5. "καὶ ἀργὸν εἶναι καὶ μελλητηνὴν ἀλλ' ἢ ὅπου τιμὴ μεγάλη ἢ ἔργον καὶ ὀλίγων μὲν πρακτικόν".

are crowned but those who compete”.⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷ 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”.⁸⁸ To give money is in itself *kálon*; but to give to a friend is *kállion*. 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, *suζen*, the “most characteristic thing” in friendship,⁸⁹ should be translated not as “living together” but rather “acting together”.⁹⁰ 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”,⁹¹ 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 ἀνάγκης, καὶ εὖ πράξει. ὥσπερ δ’ Ὀλυμπίασιν οὐχ οἱ κάλλιστοι καὶ ἰσχυρότατοι στεφανοῦνται ἀλλ’ οἱ ἀγωνιζόμενοι”.

⁸⁷ EN 1095b32.

⁸⁸ EN 1169b12-3. “κάλλιον δ’ εὖ ποιεῖν φίλους ὀθνείων, τῶν εὖ πεισομένων δεήσεται ὁ σπουδαῖος”. See page 26 for a discussion of partiality.

⁸⁹ EN 1157b19. “οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως ἐστὶ φίλων ὡς τὸ συζῆν”.

⁹⁰ O’Connor, “Two Ideals”, *passim*.

⁹¹ 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.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 *Eudemian Ethics*, *suζēn* is equated with doing things together (*sunergein*).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 *kalon* death, that in battle.⁹⁴ But how does courage find its actuality in *philia*? All of the virtues stem from a proper love of self. We are to rate *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”.⁹⁵ The courageous man will sacrifice his own life in order to save his friend, if that is what *nous* dictates: he “does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies

⁹² EN 1272^a1-8. “καὶ ὅ τι ποτ' ἐστὶν ἕκαστοις τὸ εἶναι ἢ οὐ χάριν αἰροῦνται τὸ ζῆν, ἐν τούτῳ μετὰ τῶν φίλων βούλονται διάγειν· διόπερ οἱ μὲν συμπίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ συγκυβεύουσιν, ἄλλοι δὲ συγγυμνάζονται καὶ συγκυνηγοῦσιν ἢ συμφιλοσοφοῦσιν, ἕκαστοι ἐν τούτῳ συνημερεύοντες ὅ τί περ μάλιστα ἀγαπῶσι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ· συζῆν γὰρ βουλόμενοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ταῦτα ποιοῦσι καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦσιν ὡς οἷόν τε [συζῆν]”.

⁹³ EE 1245^b3.

⁹⁴ EN 1115^a26-30.

⁹⁵ EN 1168^b29-31. “ἀπονέμει γοῦν ἑαυτῷ τὰ καλλίστα καὶ μάλιστ' ἀγαθὰ, καὶ χαρίζεται ἑαυτοῦ τῷ κυριωτάτῳ, καὶ πάντα τούτῳ πείθεται”.

for them . . . gaining for himself nobility”.⁹⁶ It is not hard to imagine such a circumstance when *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 *polis*, which is held together by what Aristotle terms “civic friendship”.⁹⁷

The other virtues find their actuality in *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 *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”,⁹⁸ and it would seem preposterous, in Aristotle’s world, to endow a *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.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 *philia* and justice, *philia* even supplanting justice as the best relation between people. Aristotle says that friends “have no

⁹⁶ EN 1169^a18-9. “ἀληθές δὲ περὶ τοῦ σπουδαίου καὶ τὸ τῶν φίλων ἔνεκα πολλὰ πράττειν καὶ τῆς πατρίδος”.

⁹⁷ EE 1242^a1-2. “φιλία ... πολιτική”. For an extended discussion of civic friendship, see below, Chapter 4.

⁹⁸ EN 1169^b12. “ἀλλίον δ' εὖ ποιεῖν φίλους ὀθνεύων”.

⁹⁹ EN 1169^a20. “προήσεται γὰρ καὶ χρήματα καὶ τιμὰς”.

need of justice ... and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality”,¹⁰⁰ and “friendship and justice seem ... to be concerned with the same objects”.¹⁰¹ *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”.¹⁰² 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”.¹⁰³ *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

¹⁰⁰ EN 1155^a26-8. “φίλων μὲν ὄντων οὐδὲν δεῖ δικαιοσύνης ... τῶν δικαίων τὸ μάλιστα φιλικὸν εἶναι δοκεῖ”.

¹⁰¹ EN 1159^b25-6. “δίκαιοι δ' ὄντες προσδέονται φιλίας”.

¹⁰² EN 1158^b29-32. “ἔστι γὰρ ἐν μὲν τοῖς δικαίοις ἴσον πρῶτως τὸ κατ' ἀξίαν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ ποσὸν δευτέρως, ἐν δὲ τῇ φιλίᾳ τὸ μὲν κατὰ ποσὸν πρῶτως, τὸ δὲ κατ' ἀξίαν δευτέρως”.

¹⁰³ EN 1158^b26-9. “ὅταν γὰρ κατ' ἀξίαν ἢ φίλησις γίγνηται, τότε γίγνεται πῶς ἰσότης, ὃ δὲ τῆς φιλίας εἶναι δοκεῖ”.

sense, because it is the actual exercise of complete excellence”.¹⁰⁴ It is for this reason that it is said that justice is “the greatest of the excellences and ‘neither evening nor morning star’ is so wonderful [as justice]”.¹⁰⁵ 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”.¹⁰⁶ 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”,¹⁰⁷ because “friends hold all things in common”.¹⁰⁸ 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”,¹⁰⁹ and *philia* “helps the young, too, to keep them from error”.¹¹⁰ 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 1129^b31-2. “τελεία μάλιστα ἀρετή, ὅτι τῆς τελείας ἀρετῆς χρῆσις ἐστίν”.

¹⁰⁵ EN 1129^b28-9. “καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πολλάκις κρατίστη τῶν ἀρετῶν εἶναι δοκεῖ ἡ δικαιοσύνη, καὶ οὔθ’ ἔσπερος οὔθ’ ἐῤῥος οὔτω θαυμαστός”.

¹⁰⁶ EN 1155^a28. “καὶ τῶν δικαίων τὸ μάλιστα φιλικὸν δοκεῖ εἶναι”.

¹⁰⁷ EN 1155^a26. “φίλων μὲν ὄντων οὐδὲν δεῖ δικαιοσύνης”.

¹⁰⁸ EN 1159^b31. “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 ἴδιον.../ ἀλλὰ κοινὰ χρήματα). It is also common in Plato: cf. *Lysis* 207c “friends have everything in common, as the saying goes” (οὐκοῦν κοινὰ τὰ γε φίλων λέγεται), *Gorgias*, 507e “where there’s no partnership, there’s no friendship” (ὅτω δὲ μὴ ἐνὶ κοινωνία, φιλία οὐκ ἂν εἴη), and *Phaedrus*, 279c, “friends have things in common,” “(κοινὰ γὰρ τὰ τῶν φίλων). Translations all my own.

¹⁰⁹ EN 1170^a11. “ἀσκησίς τις τῆς ἀρετῆς”.

¹¹⁰ EN 1155^a13-5. “καὶ νέοις δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἀναμάρτητον ... βοήθεια”.

better than ourselves and their actions better than our own”.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”,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.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”.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”.¹¹⁵ This is why Euthyphro’s prosecution of his father for murder, as portrayed in Plato’s *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 *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.

¹¹¹ EN 1169^b35. “θεωρεῖν δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς πέλας δυνάμεθα ἢ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ τὰς ἐκείνων πράξεις ἢ τὰς οἰκειάς”.

¹¹² John Cooper, “Friendship and the Good,” in *Reason and Emotion*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 342.

¹¹³ Cooper, “Friendship and the Good,” 342.

¹¹⁴ EN 1169^b12. “κάλλιον δ’ εἶ ποιεῖν φίλους ὀθνείων”.

¹¹⁵ EN 1165^a17. “ἑκάστοις τὰ οἰκεῖα καὶ τὰ ἀρμόττοντα ἀπονεμητέον”.

III

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 God¹¹⁶

In *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.ix, Aristotle poses the question whether the happy man will need friends or not.¹¹⁷ Kosman correctly identifies this question as asking not whether friends are necessary in order to achieve *endaimonia*, but “why we require friends even when we are happy”;¹¹⁸ the question is not why we need friends to *become* happy, but why we need friends when we *are* happy, since the *endaimones* 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 *philoī* 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.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 *philoī* 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, *endaimonia*.

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.

¹¹⁷ At 1169^b4.

¹¹⁸ Kosman, “Desirability,” 135.

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 *theōria* 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 *Eudemian 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 (νοῆσαι) and to act (πραῖξαι)”.¹²⁰ 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 (νοήσῃ) as well,
But his mind (νόος) is slower, and his thinking (μητις) weakened.¹²¹

Gauthier and Jolif explain the surrounding context:

*Aristote apparemment ne dit pas plus: il se contente d’approuver Homère dont il conserve même le mot (νοῆσαι); 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.*¹²²

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 1155^a15-17. “πρὸς τὰς καλὰς πράξεις—σύν τε δὴ ἐρχομένω—καὶ γὰρ νοῆσαι καὶ πραῖξαι δυνατώτεροι”.

¹²¹ Homer, *Iliad*, X.222-6. Translation my own.

“ἀλλ’ εἴ τις μοι ἀνὴρ ἅμ’ ἔποιτο καὶ ἄλλος
μᾶλλον θαλπωρὴ καὶ θαρσαλεώτερον ἔσται.
σύν τε δὴ ἐρχομένω καὶ τε πρὸ ὃ τοῦ ἐνόησεν
ὄππως κέρδος ἔη: μῦνος δ’ εἴ πέρ τε νοήσῃ
ἀλλὰ τέ οἱ βράσσων τε νόος, λεπτή δέ τε μητις”.

¹²² Gauthier and Jolif, *L’Éthique*, 661.

Aristotle's claim that the life of *theōria* 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 necessities 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.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.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".¹²⁵ But on the other hand, Aristotle tells us that the philosopher "can perhaps [contemplate] better if he has fellow-workers".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".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. *Theōria* does not need

¹²³ EN 1177a28-34. "τῶν μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τὸ ζῆν ἀναγκαίων καὶ σοφὸς καὶ δίκαιος καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ δέονται, τοῖς δὲ τοιούτοις ἰκανῶς κεχορηγημένων ὁ μὲν δίκαιος δεῖται πρὸς οὓς δικαιοπράγησει καὶ μεθ' ὧν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ σώφρων καὶ ὁ ἀνδρεῖος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστος, ὁ δὲ σοφὸς καὶ καθ' αὐτὸν ὧν δύναται θεωρεῖν, καὶ ὅσῳ ἂν σοφώτερος ᾖ μᾶλλον".

¹²⁴ Michael of Ephesus, "Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* X," in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 20, ed. Gustav Heylbut, Berlin: George Reimer, 1892: 179-29ff).

¹²⁵ Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, 339.

¹²⁶ EN 1177a34. "βέλτιον δ' ἔσως συνεργοὺς ἔχων".

¹²⁷ Gauthier and Jolif, *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*.¹²⁸

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 *philo*i 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

¹²⁸ Crouse, "Aristotle's Doctrine," 17-8.

piety towards a generous divinity which might unite the most asymmetrical of relations, that is, between god and human?¹²⁹

He goes on to explain that God's condescension, as *archē* of the cosmos, constitutes just such a friendship.¹³⁰ As the cause of all being and intelligibility, God does not hold contemplation for itself: it "is by its essence a friend".¹³¹ 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".¹³² 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 (*συνδυάστικον*), Aristotle notes, as the impulse to bear children is a

¹²⁹ Eli Diamond, "Robert Crouse's Tragic Reading of Aristotelian Friendship," *Dionysius* 30 (2012): 92.

¹³⁰ On the other hand, at *EE* 1244^b8-10, 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".

¹³¹ Diamond, "Aristotelian Friendship," 92.

¹³² *EN* 1158^b24-8. "ἀνάλογον δ' ἐν πάσαις ταῖς καθ' ὑπεροχὴν οὐσαις φιλίαις καὶ τὴν φίλησιν δεῖ γίνεσθαι ... ὅταν γὰρ κατ' ἀξίαν ἢ φίλησις γίγνηται, τότε γίγνεται πῶς ἰσότης, ὃ δὴ τῆς φιλίας εἶναι δοκεῖ".

universal trait observed among all animals”.¹³³ 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 προαιρέσις”; because it is a rational choice between two individuals.¹³⁴ 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, *theōria*, however, the domain of *philia* does not extend.

Although humans can reach the heights of *theōria*, Striowski agrees with Crouse and Aristotle that “such a life is too high for man”.¹³⁵ Though we cannot reach the “first ... god-like” happiness of *theōria*, 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”.¹³⁶ 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”,¹³⁷ 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”.¹³⁸ 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.

¹³³ Andra Striowski, “Plato and Aristotle on *Philia*,” M.A. Diss, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, 2008: 77-8.

¹³⁴ Striowski, “Plato and Aristotle,” 78.

¹³⁵ EN 1177^b27-8. “ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη βίος κρείττων ἢ κατ’ ἀνθρώπων”.

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 contemplé - cet autre nous-mêmes qu’est notre ami - et donc à jouir pleinement de notre vie.¹³⁹

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.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Gauthier, *La Morale d’Aristote*, 126-7.

¹⁴⁰ Diamond, “Aristotelian Friendship,” 90.

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 aporiæ concerning thought”.¹⁴³ The aporiæ 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.* 1072^b13-18. “ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀρχῆς ἡρτηται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις. διαγωγὴ δ’ ἐστὶν οἷα ἡ ἀρίστη μικρὸν χρόνον ἡμῖν. οὕτω γὰρ ἀεὶ ἐκεῖνο (ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἀδύνατον) ... ἡ δὲ νόησις ἡ 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.* 1072^b22-5). The prime mover must be the best thing in the cosmos; therefore it must be God.

¹⁴³ *Met.* 1074^b15. “τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας”. My own translation.

¹⁴⁴ *Met.* 1074^b33-5. “οὐκ ἂν εἴη τὸ ἀρίστον ἢ νόησις. αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἐστὶν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως 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.¹⁴⁵

This is to say that *all* thought thinks upon itself. For example, when I think ‘oak tree’, my *nous*, which is nothing in itself before I thought, takes on the form of oak tree.¹⁴⁶ Thus, as Kosman argues,

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.¹⁴⁷

Divine thought thinks itself because in thinking there is no difference between thinking-subject and thought-object; it is at the same time “both centered within itself and yet *outward-directed*”.¹⁴⁸

The object of this divine thinking is nothing other than the entire cosmos. As in form, where *energeia* is what causes the being of a sensible *ousia*, it must also be the *energeia* of God that causes the cosmos to be. This *energeia* is thinking, which has the world for its object. Rather than itself narcissistically, God thinks the entire cosmos; its thinking “reaches

¹⁴⁵ *Met.* 1075^a2-5. “ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν θεωρητικῶν ὁ λόγος τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ ἡ νόησις; οὐχ ἑτέρου οὖν ὄντος τοῦ νοουμένου καὶ τοῦ νοῦ, ὅσα μὴ ὕλην ἔχει, τὸ αὐτὸ ἔσται, καὶ ἡ νόησις τῷ νοουμένῳ μία”

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, *qua* eater, an apple, and the apple, *qua* food, becomes me. In perception, the eye, which is *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” (*DA* 424^a17. “ἡ μὲν αἴσθησις ἐστὶ τὸ δεκτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδῶν ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης”). 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;” (*DA* 429^a31 “[ὁ νοῦς ἐστὶ] ἐντελεχεία οὐδέν, πρὶν ἂν νοῆῃ”) it is entirely indeterminate.

¹⁴⁷ Kosman, “Divine Thought,” 323.

¹⁴⁸ Aryeh Kosman, “Metaphysics Λ 9: Divine Thought,” in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Book Lambda: Symposium Aristotelicum*, Eds. M. Frede, D. Owain, and M. Charles, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 322.

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 things 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

¹⁴⁹ Kosman, “Divine Thought,” 323.

¹⁵⁰ *Met.* 1072^b27. “ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή”.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *Met.* 1041^b25-8: “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* 279^a25-30. “ὁ τοῦ παντός οὐρανοῦ τέλος καὶ τὸν πάντα χρόνον καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν περιέχον τέλος αἰῶν ἐστίν, ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰεὶ εἶναι εἰληφώς τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν, ἀθανατος καὶ θεῖος. ὅθεν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐξήρηται, τοῖς μὲν ἀκριβέστερον τοῖς δ’ ἀμαυρῶς, τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ ζῆν”.

¹⁵³ *DA* 415^a26-b2. “φυσικώτατον γὰρ τῶν ἔργων τοῖς ζῶσιν, ὅσα τέεια καὶ μὴ πηρώματα ἢ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτομάτην ἔχει, τὸ ποιῆσαι ἕτερον οἷον αὐτό, ζῶον μὲν ζῶον, φυτὸν δὲ φυτόν, ἵνα τοῦ αἰεὶ τοῦ θείου μετέχωσιν ἢ δύνανται· πάντα γὰρ ἐκείνου ὀρέγεται, καὶ ἐκείνου ἕνεκα πράττει ὅσα πράττει κατὰ φύσιν”.

¹⁵⁴ *Met.* 1075^a16-25. “πάντα δὲ συντέτακται πως, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὁμοίως, καὶ πλωτὰ καὶ πτηνὰ καὶ φυτὰ· καὶ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει ὥστε μὴ εἶναι θατέρω πρὸς θάτερον μηδέν, ἀλλ’ ἔστι τι ... τοιαύτη γὰρ ἀρχὴ ἐκάστου αὐτῶν ἢ φύσις ἐστίν. λέγω δ’ οἷον εἷς γε τὸ διακριθῆναι ἀνάγκη ἅπασι ἐλθεῖν, καὶ ἄλλα οὕτως ἐστίν ὧν κοινωνεῖ ἅπαντα εἰς τὸ ὅλον”.

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': *synasisthēsis*, *syngnōrizēin*, 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”.¹⁵⁵ 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”.¹⁵⁶ “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”.¹⁵⁷ 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.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Kosman, “Desirability”, 154.

¹⁵⁶ *EN* 1169^b5-8. “ὑπάρχειν γὰρ αὐτοῖς τὰγαθὰ· αὐτάρκεις οὖν ὄντας οὐδενὸς προσδεῖσθαι, τὸν δὲ φίλον, ἕτερον αὐτὸν ὄντα, πορίζειν ἃ δεῖ αὐτοῦ ἀδυνατεῖ”.

¹⁵⁷ *EE* 1244^b8-10. “μάλιστα δὲ τοῦτο φανερόν ἐπὶ θεοῦ· δῆλον γὰρ ὡς οὐδενὸς προσδεόμενος οὐδὲ φίλου δεήσεται, οὐδ’ ἔσται αὐτῷ οὐ γέ μιν ἐνδεής ποτε”.

¹⁵⁸ *EE* 1244^b21-28. Italics my own. “περὶ δὲ τῆς ἀπορίας ταύτης σκεπτέον, μή ποτε τὸ μὲν τι λέγεται καλῶς, τὸ δὲ λανθάνω δοᾶ τὴν παραβολήν. δῆλον δὲ λαβοῦσι τί τὸ ζῆν τὸ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ὡς τέλος. φανερόν οὖν ὅτι τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ γνωρίζειν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ συζῆν τὸ συναισθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ συγγνωρίζειν ἐστίν. ἔστι δὲ τὸ αὐτὸν αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ αὐτὸν γνωρίζειν αἰρετώτατον ἐκάστω, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τοῦ ζῆν πᾶσιν ἔμφυτος ἡ ὄρεξις”. This reading, suggested by Kosman, is an emendation of the text. The printed text in the OCT at 1244^b26-7, which is already a choice between confusing manuscripts, is as follows: τὸ αὐτοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ αὐτὸν 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.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.¹⁶⁰ This is what makes life pleasant: actively perceiving and thinking, and therefore being determinate.

¹⁵⁹ EE 1244^b34-1245^a10. “δεῖ γὰρ ἅμα συνθεῖναι δύο ἐν τῷ λόγῳ, ὅτι τε τὸ ζῆν [καὶ] αἰρετόν, καὶ ὅτι τὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἐκ τούτων ὅτι τῷ αὐτῷ αὐτοῖς ὑπάρχειν τὴν τοιαύτην φύσιν. εἰ οὖν ἐστὶν αἰετὴ τῆς τοιαύτης συστοιχίας ἢ ἑτέρα ἐν τῇ τοῦ αἰρετοῦ τάξει, καὶ τὸ γνωστόν καὶ τὸ αἰσθητόν ἐστὶν ὡς ὅλως εἰπεῖν τῷ κοινωνεῖν τῆς ὀρισμένης φύσεως· ὥστε τὸ αὐτοῦ βούλεσθαι αἰσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι τοιοῦτον βούλεσθαι ἐστίν. ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐ κατ' αὐτούς ἐσμεν ἕκαστον τούτων, ἀλλὰ κατὰ μετέληψιν τῶν δυνάμεων ἐν τῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἢ γνωρίζειν (αἰσθανόμενος μὲν γὰρ αἰσθητὸς γίνεται ταύτη καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο, καθὰ πρότερον αἰσθάνεται, καὶ ἢ καὶ οὐ, γνωστὸς δὲ γινώσκων). ὥστε διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ζῆν αἰετὸν βούλεται, ὅτι βούλεται αἰετὸν γνωρίζειν, τοῦτο δὲ ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶναι τὸ γνωστόν”.

¹⁶⁰ See above, page 36.

Friendship helps us accomplish this better than we could alone. What friends offer us—*synaisthēsis* and *synnōrizeōsis*—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.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.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”.¹⁶³ We join in shared *praxis*—indeed, *philia* is *synergein*.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^a18-22. “ἀλλὰ μὴν φαίνεται γέ, καὶ πάντες ἥδιον τῶν ἀγαθῶν μετὰ τῶν φίλων κοινωνοῦμεν, καθ’ ὅσον ἐπιβάλλει ἐκάστῳ καὶ οὐ δύναται ἀρίστου, ἀλλὰ τούτων τῷ μὲν ἡδονῆς σωματικῆς, τῷ δὲ θεωρίας μουσικῆς, τῷ δὲ φιλοσοφίας”.

¹⁶² Kosman, “Desirability,” 148.

¹⁶³ Kosman, “Desirability,” 152.

¹⁶⁴ EE 1245^b3.

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 *suzēi*, 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”,¹⁶⁵ *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;

¹⁶⁵ Kosman, “Desirability,” 154.

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,—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 *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 *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. *Philia* enables us to best imitate divine thought.

Kosman bases this defense of the value of *philia* on the text of the *Eudemian Ethics*; we must investigate whether and how the *Nicomachean* version is different. Essentially, the argument is the same in both texts. There is a greater focus, however, in the *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 *Nicomachean* version, such as the ability to be continuously active with friends, and the fact

¹⁶⁶ *EE* 1244^b8-10. “μάλιστα δὲ τοῦτο φανερόν ἐπὶ θεοῦ· δῆλον γὰρ ὡς οὐδενὸς προσδεόμενος οὐδὲ φίλου δεήσεται, οὐδ' ἔσται αὐτῷ οὐ γέ μιν ἐνδεής ποτε”.

¹⁶⁷ *EE* 1245^a4-5. Italics my own. “ὥστε τὸ αὐτοῦ βούλεσθαι ἀσθάνεσθαι τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι τοιονδὲ βούλεσθαι ἐστίν. ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐ κατ' αὐτοῦς ἔσμεν ἕκαστον τούτων”.

¹⁶⁸ *DA* 430^a15-6. “ὁ δὲ τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν”. However, *De Anima* III.5 is notoriously obscure; for a discussion of this passage, see R. D. Hicks, *Aristotle De Anima: with Translation, Introduction, and Notes*, (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 498-510.

¹⁶⁹ *EN* 1170^b12-13. “τοῦτο δὲ γένοιτ' ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας”.

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”.¹⁷⁰ 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.¹⁷¹

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”.¹⁷² This conclusion has led some scholars¹⁷³ to presume that a friend is

¹⁷⁰ EN 1170^a13-4. “φυσικώτερον δ' ἐπισκοποῦσιν ἔοικεν ὁ σπουδαῖος φίλος τῷ σπουδαίῳ τῇ φύσει αἰρετὸς εἶναι”.

¹⁷¹ EN 1170^a27-b8. “τούτοις [τοῖς μακαρίοις] γὰρ ὁ βίος αἰρετώτατος, καὶ ἡ τούτων μακαριωτάτη ζωὴ, ὁ δ' ὁρῶν ὅτι ὁρᾷ αἰσθάνεται καὶ ὁ ἀκούων ὅτι ἀκούει καὶ ὁ βαδίζων ὅτι βαδίζει, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως ἔστι τι τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ὅτι ἐνεργοῦμεν, ὥστε ἂν αἰσθανώμεθ', ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα, καὶ ἂν νοῶμεν, ὅτι νοοῦμεν, τὸ δ' ὅτι αἰσθανόμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν, ὅτι ἐσμέν (τὸ γὰρ εἶναι ἢ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἢ νοεῖν) τὸ δ' αἰσθάνεσθαι ὅτι ζῆ τῶν ἡδέων καθ' αὐτό (φύσει γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ζωὴ, τὸ δ' ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἡδύ), αἰρετὸν δὲ τὸ ζῆν καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς, ὅτι τὸ εἶναι ἀγαθὸν ἔστιν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἡδύ· συναισθανόμενοι γὰρ τοῦ καθ' αὐτό ἀγαθοῦ ἡδοναί, ὡς δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχει ὁ σπουδαῖος, καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον ἕτερος γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ φίλος ἐστίν· καθάπερ οὖν τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι αἰρετὸν ἔστιν ἐκάστω, οὕτω καὶ τὸ τὸν φίλον, ἢ παραπλησίως”.

¹⁷² EN 1170^b6-8. “ὡς δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχει ὁ σπουδαῖος, καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον (ἕτερος γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ φίλος ἐστίν)· καθάπερ οὖν τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι αἰρετὸν ἔστιν ἐκάστω, οὕτω καὶ τὸ τὸν φίλον, ἢ παραπλησίως”.

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 *philo*i 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 1170^b12-13. “τοῦτο δὲ γένοιτ’ ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν 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'érōs, et nous savons assez que c'est, dans la métaphysique d'Aristote, cet érōs qui est le moteur suprême par où s'expliquent non seulement les actions des hommes, mais le mouvement tout entier de l'univers.*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 too great a degree, “as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases”.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.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 loved¹⁷⁹ 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 1159^a5. “πολύ δὲ χωρισθέντος, οἷον τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐκέτι”.

¹⁷⁸ Gauthier and Jolif maintain distinctions between the different kinds of Greek 'love': “L'amitié n'est ni l'amour-don qu'est l'agapè, ni l'amour-désir qu'est l'érōs, elle est un amour-échange s'épanouissant en intimité” (*L'Éthique*, 691).

¹⁷⁹ *Met.* 1172^b3. “ὡς ἐρώμενον”.

another—for I count myself in with you—but what a friend is we have not yet been able to find out.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 *oikeion* that has been taken away.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”;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).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”.¹⁸⁴

This conclusion allows us to see how there are two senses of *philia*: first, and foremost, a non-reciprocal desire for the *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 are aware of the absence of something proper to us. In other words, we philosophize. But there is another sense of *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

¹⁸⁰ *Lysis* 223b. “νῦν μὲν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὃ Λύσι τε καὶ Μενέξενε, καταγέλαστοι γεγόναμεν ἐγώ τε, γέρων ἀνὴρ, καὶ ὑμεῖς. ἐροῦσι γὰρ οἶδε ἀπιοντες ὡς οἴομεθα ἡμεῖς ἀλλήλων φίλοι εἶναι—καὶ ἐμὲ γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν τίθημι—οὐπω δὲ ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ φίλος οἷοί τε ἐγεγόμεθα ἐξευρῖν”.

¹⁸¹ *Lysis* 221e.

¹⁸² *Lysis*, 222c. “πότερον οὖν καὶ τὰγαθὸν οἰκεῖον θήσομεν πάντι”.

¹⁸³ Francisco J. Gonzalez, “Plato’s *Lysis*: An Enactment of Philosophical Kinship,” *Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1995): 82.

¹⁸⁴ Gonzalez, “Philosophical Kinship,” 82.

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*.¹⁸⁵ 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".¹⁸⁶ This view is identical to that found in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Magna Moralia*: we desire *philia* because it affords us self-knowledge.¹⁸⁷ 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;¹⁸⁸ 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,

¹⁸⁵ Gonzalez, "Philosophical Kinship," 87-8.

¹⁸⁶ Plato, *Alcibiades*, 133b.

¹⁸⁷ At 1213^a13ff.

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.¹⁸⁹

This is the same conception of love we see in the *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 *philia* as something that can be between humans and God, let us turn to Aristotle, in order to see how in the *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* too there is the possibility of *philia* with the divine.

We can find in the text of the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* traces that the distinction between *erōs* and *philia* is not as stark as Gauthier and Jolif make it out to be. At various points throughout *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII and IX Aristotle calls the relationship between *erastēs* and *erōmenon*—clearly an *erōs* relationship—'*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".¹⁹⁰ More importantly, however, Aristotle at some points claims that unilateral relationships *are* true *philiai*. Not only is the philosopher, as Diamond mentions in his article, termed *theophilestatos*,¹⁹¹ which seems to overturn, or at least problematize Aristotle's denial of *philia* with the gods, but a mother's love can be entirely one-sided, and yet it is still *philia*. For the cause of *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

¹⁸⁹ *Symposium* 211b-d. "τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ ἐστὶ τὸ ὀρθῶς ἐπὶ τὰ ἐρωτικά ἰέναι ἢ ὑπ' ἄλλου ἄγεσθαι, ἀρχόμενον ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν καλῶν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα τοῦ καλοῦ αἰεὶ ἐπανιέναι, ὥσπερ ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρώμενον, ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐπὶ δύο καὶ ἀπὸ δυοῖν ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ καλὰ σώματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιτηδεύματων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ μάθημα τελευτήσῃ, ὃ ἐστὶν οὐκ ἄλλου ἢ αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ μάθημα. ἵνα γὰρ αὐτὸ ὃ τελευτῶν ἐστὶ καλόν". Reading τελευτήσῃ for τελευτήσαι at c7.

¹⁹⁰ *EN* 1157^a3-7. "μάλιστα δὲ καὶ ἐν τούτοις αἱ φιλῖαι διαμένουσιν ὅταν τὸ αὐτὸ γίγνηται παρ' ἀλλήλων, οἷον ἡδονή, καὶ μὴ μόνον οὕτως ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ, οἷον τοῖς εὐτραπέλοις, καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐραστῇ καὶ ἐρωμένῳ". Cf. also *EN* 1159b15ff.

¹⁹¹ *EN* 1179^a24.

prospering; and they themselves love their children even if these owing to their ignorance give them nothing of a mother's due".¹⁹² 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",¹⁹³ 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".¹⁹⁴ 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 1159^a27-33. "δοκεῖ δ' ἐν τῷ φιλεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τῷ φιλεῖσθαι εἶναι ... καὶ αὐταὶ [αἱ μητέρες] φιλοῦσιν αὐτούς [τοὺς τέκνους], καὶ ἐκεῖνοι μὴδὲν ὧν μητρὶ προσήκει ἀπονέμωσι διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν".

¹⁹³ EN 1158^b21-3. "ὅταν δὲ γονεῦσι μὲν τέκνα ἀπονέμη ἃ δεῖ τοῖς γεννήσασι, γονεῖς δὲ ὕψισιν ἃ δεῖ τοῖς τέκνοις, μόνιμος ἢ τῶν τοιούτων καὶ ἐπιεκὴς ἔσται φιλία".

¹⁹⁴ EN 1096^a13-7. "δέξειε δ' ἂν ἴσως βέλτιον εἶναι, καὶ δεῖν ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ γε τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἀναιρεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ φιλοσόφους ὄντας· ἀμφοῖν γὰρ ὄντων φίλον ὅσιον προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀληθείαν".

him”,¹⁹⁵ 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.¹⁹⁶

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 *theōria* is most self-sufficient,¹⁹⁷ 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’

¹⁹⁵ *Op. cit.* 1177^b27-8. “ὁ δὲ τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη βίος κρείττων ἢ καθ’ ἄνθρωπον· οὐ γὰρ ἦ ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν οὕτω βιώσεται, ἀλλ’ ἢ θεῖόν τι ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει”.

¹⁹⁶ *EN* 1168^b25-31. “εἰ γὰρ τις ἀεὶ σπουδάζοι τὰ δίκαια πράττειν αὐτὸς μάλιστα πάντων ἢ τὰ σώφρονα ἢ ὅποια οὖν ἄλλα τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἀρετάς, καὶ ὅπως ἀεὶ τὸ καλὸν ἑαυτῷ περιποιῶτο, ... δόξειε δ’ ἂν ὁ τοιοῦτος μᾶλλον εἶναι φίλαυτος· ἀπονέμει γοῦν ἑαυτῷ τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ μάλιστ’ ἀγαθὰ, καὶ χαρίζεται ἑαυτοῦ τῷ κυριωτάτῳ, καὶ πάντα τούτῳ πείθεται”.

¹⁹⁷ *EN* 1177^a28ff.

(fragment 668 Rose) - a person of solitary temperament, then, but not unaware that for Plato and his circle philosophy was a communal enterprise.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 *philia* in his ethical philosophy (an importance, which I shall note, Sparshott overlooks)¹⁹⁹. Instead, I want to suggest that it is because of the nature of the discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics* X that Aristotle does not treat the importance of *philia* for philosophy; this is a treatise on practical matters' and therefore serious discussion of the theoretical is not germane to it.

In the *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”.²⁰⁰ This science, however, deals with *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.²⁰¹

Theoria, 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”.²⁰² It seems reasonable, therefore, that Aristotle omitted a treatment of the importance of *philia* for the

¹⁹⁸ Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, 339.

¹⁹⁹ Note his opening remark to his discussion of *EN* VIII and IX: “the massive discussion of ‘friendship’ (*philia*) appears as an anomaly in the scheme of the *Ethics*” (264).

²⁰⁰ *EN* 1094^b7-8 “τὸ ταύτης [ἐπιστημῆς] τέλος περιέχει ἂν τὰ τῶν ἄλλων· ὥστε τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη τὰνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν”.

²⁰¹ *EN* 1094^b19-28. “ἀγαπητὸν οὖν περὶ τοιούτων καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων λέγοντας παχυλῶς καὶ τύπῳ τᾶληθές ἐνδείκνυσθαι, καὶ περὶ τῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων λέγοντας τοιαῦτα καὶ συμπεραίνεισθαι ... παραπλήσιον γὰρ φαίνεται μαθηματικοῦ τε πιθανολογοῦντος ἀποδέχεσθαι καὶ ῥητορικὸν ἀποδείξεις ἀπαιτεῖν”.

²⁰² *EN* 1141^a20-2. “ἄτροπον γὰρ εἴ τις τὴν πολιτικὴν ἢ τὴν φρόνησιν σπουδαιοτάτην οἶεται εἶναι, εἰ μὴ τὸ ἄριστον τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀνθρωπός ἐστιν”.

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^a30-^b3. “ὅτι ἡ περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας θεωρία τῇ μὲν χαλεπὴ τῇ δὲ ῥαδία. σημεῖον δὲ τό μήτ' ἀξίως μηδένα δύνασθαι τυχεῖν αὐτῆς μήτε πάντας ἀποτυγχάνειν, ἀλλ' ἕκαστον λέγειν τι περὶ τῆς φύσεως, καὶ καθ' ἓνα μὲν ἢ μηθὲν ἢ μικρὸν ἐπιβάλλειν αὐτῇ, ἐκ πάντων δὲ συναθροισζομένων γίγνεσθαι τι μέγεθος”. 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^b11-2. “γίνονται ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας”.

VI

We have now seen the importance of *philia* not only for our practical lives of virtue, but also for the life of *theōria*. 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.

CHAPTER 4: Civic Friendship

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 *eudaimonia* 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".²⁰⁶ 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.²⁰⁷

Annas 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

²⁰⁶ Julia Annas, "Comments on J. Cooper," in *Aristoteles' Politik*, ed. Günther Patzig, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1990: 248.

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, jusque dans 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.

²⁰⁹ Richard Bodéüs, *La Véritable Politique et ses Vertus Selon Aristote*, Leuven-La-Neuve: Editions Peeters, 2004: 157-8.

²¹⁰ Bodéüs, *La Véritable Politique*, 162.

²¹¹ Bodéüs, *La Véritable Politique*, 162.

²¹² Elena Irrera, “Between Advantage and Virtue: Aristotle’s Theory of Political Friendship,” *History of Political Thought* 26.4 (2005): 567.

eudaimonia. Thus the foundation of a flourishing city must be a kind of friendship on account of virtue.²¹³

I

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 petty contractual, neither disinterested nor manipulative, neither stable nor unstable",²¹⁴ is crucial. A good constitution will create among the citizens a regard for each other's virtue. *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".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 *philia* among the citizens. Under a bad constitution, the state will not have the 'good life' as its *telos* and its citizens will expect from each other merely self-sufficiency. In such a *polis* civic friendship will resemble utility-friendship.

Aristotle's treatments of civic friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics* are fairly short, but from these brief discussions we can learn something of what Aristotle means by 'civic friendship'. *Philia* and justice are the bond of every *koinōnia*: "for in every

²¹³ Price, *Love and Friendship*, 197.

²¹⁴ Stern-Gillet, *Philosophy of Friendship*, 153-4.

²¹⁵ *Pol.* 1280^b6-10.

community there is thought to be some form of justice, and friendship too”.²¹⁶ The term, ‘*koinōnia*’, widely used in Aristotle’s political treatises, is nowhere defined. Gauthier and Jolif identify three characteristics of *koinōniai*: a *koinōnia* 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.²¹⁷ Thus the Canadian Olympic women’s hockey team is an example of a modern-day *koinōnia*: 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 *koinōnia*, 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 *koinōniai*, since all other *koinōniai* “seem to be parts of the political community”,²¹⁸ because all the several *koinōniai* in a city “aim at some particular advantage”,²¹⁹ while the *polis* as a whole encompasses all the other *koinōniai* 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*.²²⁰ Therefore, civic friendship is the kind of *philia* which holds together the highest of *koinōnia*, 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,²²¹ the

²¹⁶ EN 1159^b26-7. “ἐν ἀπάσῃ γὰρ κοινωνίᾳ δοκεῖ τι δίκαιον εἶναι, καὶ φιλία δέ”.

²¹⁷ Gauthier and Jolif, *L’Éthique*, 696-7.

²¹⁸ EN 1160^a29. “πᾶσαι δὴ φαίνονται αἱ κοινωνίαι μέρια τῆς πολιτικῆς εἶναι”.

²¹⁹ EN 1160^a14-5. “αἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλαι κοινωνίαι κατὰ μέρη τοῦ συμφεροντος ἐφίενται”.

²²⁰ Pol. 1252^b30.

²²¹ The first use is at *Pol.* 1262^b5ff, 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 1287^b31ff, 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* 1295^b21-4:

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 *koinōnia* 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 γίνεται οὖν δούλων καὶ δεσποτοῶν πόλις, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐλευθέρων, καὶ τῶν μὲν φθονούτων τῶν δὲ καταφρονούντων· ἃ πλεῖστον ἀπέχει φιλίας καὶ κοινωνίας πολιτικῆς· ἡ γὰρ κοινωνία φιλικόν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁδοῦ βούλεται κοινωνεῖν τοῖς ἐχθροῖς.

²²³ John Cooper argues that it does: “the run of the argument seems to go best if πολιτικῆς is taken with both φιλίας and κοινωνίας. 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 φιλία that Aristotle says such feelings preclude, but implies would be achievable if the middle class had power..., can only be πολιτικὴ φιλία—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;²²⁴ 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 *συζῶσι*; 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*".²²⁵ 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* 1242^b22.

²²⁵ *EN* 1171^a16-17. Emphasis my own. "οἱ δὲ πολὺφιλοὶ καὶ πᾶσιν οἰκείως ἐντυγχάνοντες οὐδενὶ 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 *συσχῶσι*. 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 *συσχῶσι*: "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*,

²²⁶ Annas, "Comments," 245.

²²⁷ Annas argues that civic friendship is important to the state not as something between all the citizens, but rather "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 of varying kinds" ("Comments," 246). This view represents a misreading of the nature of the *polis*. The *polis* is not something separate from families and villages, as the modern state is. Rather, as Aristotle tells us, "if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the *polis*, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end. For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family" (*Pol.* 1252^b31-1253^a1). Therefore, it is impossible for *philia* to exist within a family but not a *polis*. Civic friendship is, then, a true kind of *philia*.

²²⁸ *EN* 1156^a27-8. "οὐ πάνυ δ' οἱ τοιοῦτοι οὐδὲ συζῶσι μετ' ἀλλήλων· ἐνίοτε γὰρ οὐδ' εἰσὶν ἡδέεις".

²²⁹ See above, Chapter 2, page 21.

²³⁰ Irrera, "Between Advantage and Virtue," 581.

²³¹ *EN* 1170^b12. "κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας".

²³² Annas, "Comments," 244.

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”.²³³ Recall that *sunēn* 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,²³⁴ all the citizens can be said to *sunēn* 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.²³⁵ 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”,²³⁶ 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.* 1275^a20-1. πολίτης δ' ἀπλῶς οὐδενὶ ... ἢ τῷ μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχῆς”.

²³⁴ See Cooper, “Political Animals,” 364-5.

²³⁵ *EN* 1156^a21-2. “τὸ δὲ χρήσιμον οὐ διαμένει, ἀλλ' ἄλλοτε ἄλλο γίνεται”;

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]”,²³⁷ 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*”.²³⁸ 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”.²³⁹ 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 hardily 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.²⁴⁰

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.* 1280^b6-7. “ἢ καὶ φανερόν ὅτι δεῖ περὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελὲς εἶναι τῇ γ' ὡς ἀληθῶς ὀνομαζομένη πόλει, μὴ λόγου χάριν”.

²³⁸ Irerra, “Between Advantage and Virtue,” 583. Italics my own.

²³⁹ *EN* 1103^b23-5. “οὐ μικρὸν οὖν διαφέρει τὸ οὕτως ἢ τοῦτως εὐθύς ἐκ νέων ἐθίζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πάμπλου, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ πᾶν”.

²⁴⁰ *EN* 1179^b32-80^a5. “ἐκ νέου δ' ἀγωγῆς ὀρθῆς τυχεῖν πρὸς ἀρετὴν χαλεπὸν καὶ καρτερικῶς ζῆν οὐχ ἡδὺ τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἄλλως τε καὶ νέοις. διὸ νόμοις δεῖ τετάχθαι τὴν τροπὴν καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα· οὐκ ἔσται γὰρ λυπηρὰ συνήθη γενόμενα. οὐχ ἱκανὸν δ' ἴσως νέους ὄντας τροφῆς καὶ ἐπιμελείας τυχεῖν ὀρθῆς, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἀνδρωθέντας δεῖ ἐπιτηδεύειν αὐτὰ καὶ ἐθίζεσθαι, καὶ περὶ ταῦτα δεοίμεθ' ἂν νόμων, καὶ ὅλως δὴ περὶ πάντα τὸν βίον· οἱ γὰρ πολλοὶ ἀνάγκη μᾶλλον ἢ λόγῳ πειθαρχοῦσι καὶ ζημίαις ἢ τῷ καλῷ”.

citizens, the citizens will be able to recognize and know the virtue of their fellow-citizens.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 *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 *do* share something in common, i.e. citizenship. Because civic friendship lacks the complete knowledge of the other, *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 forbid!—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 *eunoia* for our fellow countrymen.²⁴²

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 *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.

²⁴² Cooper compares this kind of friendship with a family. Since the *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 *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”;²⁴³ 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 *eudaimonia* 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

do think it constitutes a contribution to the good of the other family-members... civic friendship is just an extension to a whole city of the kinds of psychological bonds that tie together a family and make possible this immediate participation by each family-member in the good of the others” (“Political Animals,” 371-2).

²⁴³ Cooper, “Political Animals,” 368.

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”²⁴⁴ 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”,²⁴⁵ 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”.²⁴⁶ 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)”.²⁴⁷ 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”.²⁴⁸ Pace 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”;²⁴⁹ 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 1070^b17-18. “δεήσει ἄρα τῷ εὐδαιμονήσοντι φίλων σπουδαίων”.

²⁴⁵ EE 1245^b18. “ἡμῖν μὲν τὸ εὖ καθ' ἕτερον”.

²⁴⁶ EN 1097^b8-11. “τὸ δ' αὐταρκες λέγομεν οὐκ αὐτῷ μόνω, τῷ ζῶντι βίον μονώτην, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονεῦσι καὶ τέκνοις καὶ γυναικῶν καὶ ὅλως τοῖς φίλοις καὶ πολίταις, ἐπειδὴ φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος”.

²⁴⁷ Price, *Love and Friendship*, 197.

²⁴⁸ Price, *Love and Friendship*, 197.

²⁴⁹ Pol. 1253^a3-4. “ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῶν”.

but by friendship. We must therefore include in our discussion of the *eudaimōn* 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

²⁵⁰ EN 1155*24. “οἱ νομοθέται μᾶλλον περὶ αὐτὴν [sc. φιλίαν] σπουδάζειν ἢ τὴν δικαιοσύνην”.

²⁵¹ Sibyl Schwarzenbach, “On Civic Friendship,” *Ethics* 107.1 (1996):106-7.

²⁵² Schwarzenbach, “On Civic Friendship,” 106.

²⁵³ Irerra, “Between Advantage and Virtue,” 571.

their civic friends and moral betterers. 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”.²⁵⁶ *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”.²⁵⁷ 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 to 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 1159^a27. “δοκεῖ δ' ἐν τῷ φιλεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τῷ φιλεῖσθαι εἶναι”.

²⁵⁷ EE 1245^a5. “οὐδ' οὐ κατ' αὐτούς ἐσμὲν ἕκαστον τούτων”.

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