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Taking Friendship Seriously

Aristotle on the Place(s) of *Philia* in Human Life

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For present-day readers, Aristotle's discussion of friendship (in Greek, *philia*)[1] is both intriguing and perplexing—intriguing because of his unique emphasis on friendship as an essential topic for moral and political theory, perplexing because his lengthy discussions of friendship do not result in any clear moral or political principles. Anyone coming to Aristotle from modern philosophy must wonder why he cares so much about friendship, devoting much more time and attention to it than any modern philosopher. Friendship is the topic of a large portion of both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian* versions of Aristotle's *Ethics* (books 8–9 of the *NE* and book 7 of the *EE*), and is central to the *Politics* (especially in book 3), the *Rhetoric* (book 2, ch. 4), and to his account of tragedy in the *Poetics* as well.[2] Our thoughts about friendship, shaped by the post-Aristotelian philosophical tradition, incline to the view that friendship should be treated as a relatively minor subject for philosophy,

either as a sub-philosophic afterthought (as in Kant),[3] or as super-philosophic transcendence (as in Montaigne and Rousseau),[4] or as both (as in Heidegger).[5] For us, to think philosophically about ethics and politics is first of all to reflect on the individual, the family, the political community, and then, if we inquire more deeply, to turn our attention to more universal ways of being together, to communities of all believers in a certain faith, or of all human beings or of all rational or all sentient beings. The job of practical philosophy, we generally think, is to bring these various identities to our attention and to supply us with solid and clear principles that will tell us how to understand and to weigh the diverse and often conflicting claims such identities make on us. Against the general expectations formed by this background, Aristotle, undoubtedly a philosopher,[6] is an odd duck in two respects: he asks us to pay serious attention to a kind of relationship that appears on the surface to be much less important or much less intelligible than others we can name, and at the same time he fails to provide a clear and precise definition of what friendship is or of the principles he thinks should govern our friendships.

Aristotle's stress on the problem of friendship is out of step not only with modernity but with some of the leading ideas of his own time. Like Plato, Aristotle is writing against both the philosophical and the political current of his day, against what he calls the *endoxa* or the most widespread and influential opinions. No other Greek philosopher comes close to foregrounding *philia* as Aristotle does. As for political *endoxa,* the central moral questions facing his fourth-century BCE audience are more like the ones posed by Glaucon and Adeimantus to Plato's Socrates about the best, most choiceworthy way of life: which should I choose, the life of the good and just citizen, or the life of the all-powerful tyrant? In the *Republic,* Socrates tries to reorient his interlocutors away from the choice between citizenship and tyranny and toward the cultivation of eros and the attempt to understand the universal good; similarly, in the *Ethics* and *Politics,* Aristotle's project is to reorient his readers and auditors away from a focus on the choice between pleasure or power seeking on the one hand and good citizenship on the other, and toward a concern with their own friendships and an accurate perception of the human good.[7] For Plato's Socrates in the *Apology,* the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being; the Aristotelian equivalent is the *prohairetic* life, the life marked by

thoughtful reflection on our goals and our ways of achieving them, a reflection that depends on an accurate conception of both the universal human species good and our own particular context.

Aristotle's substantive account of *philia* in particular is similarly counter- or transcultural. While his discussion does not follow in the footsteps of any previous philosopher, neither does he simply reflect or systematize standard non-philosophic Greek opinions about *philia.* As Lorraine Pangle notes, speaking of the Greek *endoxa* concerning friendship, "friendship was associated in the popular mind with courage, with republicanism, and with the spirited resistance to injustice and tyranny."[8] The standard endoxic characterizations of friendship included maxims like "the things of friends are in common" and "friendship is one soul in two bodies," both of which Aristotle disputes and revises, particularly by noting that true friends must be separate as well as other selves.[9] The typical Greek examples of great friendships are pairs of great male warriors or political heroes—Achilles and Patroclus, Hercules and Iolaus, Harmodius and Artistogeiton. But Aristotle associates this kind of friendship with spiritedness or *thumos,* with anger and yearning for revenge, and not with the desire for living prohairetically. The staunch preference for death over dishonor is central to the understanding of *philia* among Aristotle's contemporary Greeks, and it is something he wishes to open to critique in his *Ethics* and *Politics.* At the same time, it is the case that Aristotle seeks to preserve the "phenomena," the existing opinions about friendship, as much as he can, since it is no more his intention than it is Plato's to supply a new set of rules to replace those implicit in the culture. In particular, he wants to avoid clashing so much with the prevailing opinions that he will seem to be uttering paradoxes; his goal is to problematize the *endoxa,* not to overthrow them.[10]

For Aristotle, as for Plato, the goal and the task of practical philosophy is reorientation rather than systematic doctrine, an attempt to teach *questions* and a mode of inquiry rather than to supply definitive answers. While his emphasis on friendship is striking, it is equally striking that he gives us no separate treatise on friendship, no systematic account of what it is and of how friends should conduct themselves. But even though Aristotelian practical philosophy is not doctrinal or dogmatic, it would not be philosophy at all if he were not able to give good reasons for preferring the orientation he presents to others. We must ask why Aristotle

cares so much about friendship and what he is telling us about how to understand it. The argument of this essay is that Aristotle's central message is that we need to care more about our friendships, to take friendship more seriously, to move friendship from the margins to the center of our moral universe.

But why should we reorient our practical reasoning in that way? Why isn't it enough to take seriously the life of the family, or of politics and the virtues of action or praxis, or of theoretical/philosophical reflection, or of erotic love, whether human or divine, and to treat friendship as ancillary to these more obviously central aspects of life? Why shouldn't we care most about our individual identity, or our citizenship, or our humanity, and treat friendship as subordinate to these other, better articulated concerns? Aristotle, in effect, has to argue for the centrality of friendship to human life in relation to the powerful claims of these other activities and communities. This, incidentally, was as true relative to Aristotle's immediate Greek philosophic and practical context as it is to our own time. We, as did Aristotle's immediate audience, need to know not only *why* we should take friendship as seriously as Aristotle wants us to, but also *how* to do so.

The answer to both these questions lies in Aristotle's discussion of the human good and the best way of life—friendship should be a central (though by no means an exclusive) concern because of the problems we confront in becoming good human beings, and the way to take friendship seriously is by following Aristotle in thinking about friendship through the lens of a particular conception of the human good, one that leads us to see not only the value of friendship but also the insufficiency of the other phenomena that push friendship aside. But before examining what Aristotle has to say about friendship, I need to sketch a general position concerning both the style and the overall content of Aristotle's practical philosophy as a whole. This approach is one that I and others have argued for elsewhere.[11]

Style and Substance in Aristotle's Practical Philosophy

There are two major points to be made about Aristotle's overall procedure in the *NE* and the *Politics*. The first, which concerns style, is that

Aristotle's presentation of his practical philosophy (his *politikê*) is protreptic, rather than deductive or inductive: a movement from, as he says, what is known to us to what is knowable simply —from, that is, opinions about the best life that are widely shared by his audience to those opinions that Aristotle holds. His style is also aporetic, in the manner of the Platonic dialogues, in that he seeks to move his students to pose certain questions for themselves rather than to persuade them of the truth of any clear answer to the question of the best life. The second point modifies the first: there is indeed a non-aporetic substantive basis for this aporetic teaching, and that is Aristotle's species teleology, his account of what it means to be a human being, of the problems and possibilities that, in his view, define humanity. Aristotle's approach to teaching *politikê* as a whole is justified and in part determined by his own theoretical understanding of human nature and the human good. Within that whole, the task here is to try to understand why Aristotle thinks we need to be persuaded to rethink *philia* —how taking friendship seriously in this way might contribute to making our lives better.

As a liberal educator of young Greek men, Aristotle speaks to us indirectly. We are, as it were, eavesdroppers on his lectures to his Greek audience, lectures in which he aims to move that audience to a point outside their own tradition, to partially and subtly liberate them from their Greekness in the interest of making them better human beings. His texts are in this respect not unlike Plato's dialogues, written dialectically and rhetorically, rather than as systematic demonstrations or deductions of propositions he holds to be true: dialectically in that they engage in conversation or dialogue with the opinions of others (sometimes named, sometimes not) on the questions they consider; rhetorically in that they want to influence their particular audience in a particular direction, rather than trying to measure up to a universal standard of deductive validity. For Aristotle, as much as for Plato, philosophical writing cannot be precise and systematic without distorting our understanding of the things that are. This is true not only of Aristotle's "practical" writing, but of at least some of his metaphysical and natural scientific writing as well. Much of what we can understand about nature has a sort of "thick and vague" character, to employ the phrase Nussbaum uses to characterize Aristotle's conception of the human good.[12] We can indeed know the human good, but only in outline. This is not only because of our

difficulties in knowing relatively permanent and universal things, but because the good of composite beings, such as humans and other animals, will itself be less permanent and singular than the good of more fully actual beings, such as fixed stars and unmoved movers.

Aristotle's intention in the *NE* and the *Politics* is to move an audience that deeply honors public life, and that is interested in hearing that life celebrated, closer to the practice of philosophical inquiry about public life, understood as the repeated asking of questions that are never answerable once and for all.[13] He sometimes argues explicitly for the value of this shift (as at the end of book 6 of the *NE*); mainly, however, he tries to achieve his aim by guiding the audience of the *Ethics* and *Politics* on an extended tour of plausible answers—some endoxic, some more clearly his own—to the question of the most choiceworthy human life. One consequence of this way of reading Aristotle is that the meaning of any particular utterance in the text must be understood in terms of the intention of the whole work. Aristotle's lectures, like Plato's dialogues, must be read as wholes rather than as collections of self-standing systematic arguments or "proof texts" about a variety of ethical and political topics. To summarize the pedagogical movement of the *NE* briefly, prior to Aristotle's discussion of *philia* in books 8 and 9, Aristotle's survey of plausibly admirable lives provides "stops," in the *NE,* at the manly life (book 3), the great-souled life (book 4), the just life and the decent life (book 5), and the life of the *phronimos* (the practically wise person) and of *prohairesis* (thoughtful choice) as the most human of activities (book 6). Each of these ways of life involves an advance in human virtue beyond its predecessor, primarily an advance in the quality of the logos the way of life displays, logos having been specified in advance by Aristotle as the decisive human characteristic, the core of distinctively human virtue. Through book 6 of the *NE,* then, we are shown ever more comprehensive horizons of human excellence. Aristotle begins his survey of the virtues by praising the bravery *(andreia)* of the good soldier and the great-souled man *(megalopsuchos),* both of whom live within the horizon of honor, an aspiration that draws us toward virtue but at the cost of overreliance on public opinion. The life linked to the virtue of justice in book 5 overcomes this dependence by replacing the horizon of honor and opinion with that of law *(nomos).* But this horizon itself seems to demand a sacrifice of our *logos* capacity that is only partly remedied by

the deepening of justice that Aristotle names "decency" or "equity" *(epieikeia)*. This new virtue allows us to understand the law more actively and to apply it thoughtfully rather than mechanically, but without any clear sense of the standard in terms of which our laws are to be interpreted and applied.

That standard is supplied by the account of the human species good provided in book 6, which opens with Aristotle's announcement that his discussion of the moral virtues—the virtues of character, including justice and *epieikeia*, that mark the human good in action (praxis)—has proceeded with a key term left unexplained. Such virtues incline good human beings to "choose a mean" that is determined as if by "right reason" (*orthos logos*, 1138b20). But what is a right reason or correct logos? The beginning of the answer he provides in book 6 requires a term that is not part of the endoxic vocabulary: correct logos is not an external law determining our choices but an internal mixture of reason and desire *(orexis)* that he calls *prohairesis:* prohairesis is "either desirous *nous* or thoughtful *orexis* and such a beginning *(archê)* is a human being" (1139b4–5).[14] This represents a substantial advance beyond the teaching of the previous books of the *NE;* we now have a way of describing what a human being and hence, given Aristotle's species teleology, a good human being is—not simply the practitioner of a variety of moral virtues, but someone who leads a prohairetic life. *Prohairesis* gives us a standard that goes beyond and incorporates the earlier virtue-horizons of honor and justice properly understood, but at the same time book 6 goes on to problematize the prohairetic life to make it quite clear that it cannot be the ultimate standard or horizon. The book ends by noting that there is a further perspective, that of wisdom or theoretical reason, that goes beyond *prohairesis* and the standard of the human good by recognizing the limits of humanity when seen from the perspective of the relatively divine and unchanging beings. This serious reservation about the adequacy of *prohairesis* as a standard is picked up once more in book 10 of the *NE* and again in book 7 of the *Politics.* This problematization of *prohairesis*, however, no more eliminates the need for both it and practical reason than the standard of the human good eliminates the need for honor and nomos.

Book 7 provides yet another new beginning, and contains yet another way of problematizing *prohairesis*, this time by way of the argument that

true vice, as opposed to mere weakness of will or to incontinence, is also a product of thoughtful reflection (1151a6–7). Aristotle presents books 8 and 9, the books on friendship, as yet another new beginning. I argue in what follows that Aristotle's chief contention in these books is that *philia,* properly understood, is essential if we are to understand and enact a life of good prohairetic practice. In this respect, *philia*'s place in human life is, for Aristotle, similar to the role he ascribes to political practice and the life lived in accordance with *nomos* and justice in *Politics* 1 (1253a), that of shaping properly our inherited and quite plastic potential for logos in the direction of virtue rather than vice.[15] But not even the best or primary sense of *philia* can supply a perfectly sufficient solution to the human problem, and so the *NE* indicates certain internal perplexities of *philia* as well before moving to the discussion of the yet more-inclusive horizon of the theoretical life in chapters 6–8 of book 10. Yet this horizon too proves insufficient, and the *NE* concludes by announcing the need to supplement our thoughts about the superiority of philosophy to politics by a return to the horizon of laws and politics.

As a sequel to the *NE,* the *Politics* gives us critical accounts of a variety of ways of life: the master's life (book 1), the Spartan life (book 2), the life of the good male citizen (book 3), the life of the farmer of middling means (books 4–6), the theoretical life again (book 7), ending with consideration of the kind of political life that might accommodate recognition of the claims of the theoretical life (books 7 and 8). Aristotle uses this survey to demonstrate that *all* such univocal answers to the question of the human good are unstable and unsatisfactory, both theoretically and practically. But he supplies no approved formulation of just what human happiness really means to take their place. As a result, the *Ethics* and *Politics* are as aporetic, as perplexing, as any Platonic dialogue: they return us to the question with which we began. But like Plato's dialogues, these texts are not merely or aimlessly perplexing, but protreptic, designed to show that the question of the best life itself can be continually illuminating, if properly asked, in a variety of circumstances. Aristotle, like Plato, wants both to perplex his audience and to supply it with intellectual tools for capitalizing on the perplexity he hopes to induce. His primary goal in this educational project is not to turn his audience into either good citizens or good philoso-

phers, or even to reconcile citizens and philosophers, but to produce deeper, more reflective, more serious, more prohairetic people. In other words, Aristotle's goal is not to set out a universally true *politikê*, but to contribute to the formation of an educated public.

What philosophy supplies is not a discipline for mastering the passions, but a set of questions and a way of inquiry that enable each of us to take passions, and the things that happen to us in general, seriously as parts of the whole that is our individual life. That is, the non-aporetic basis for Aristotle's aporetic philosophizing is his belief that the best (or the most) human life—and hence the central criterion by which any person or polis must be judged—is one lived *kata prohairesin* (*Politics*, 3, 1280a34), where *prohairesis* itself is neither nature-transcending choice nor reason cleansed of desire, but a uniquely and definitively human product of the mixture of *nous* and *orexis*, of mind and longing: "*Prohairesis* is either *orektikos nous* or *orexis dianoêtikê*, and such a beginning *(archê)* is *anthrôpos*" (*NE*, 6, 1139b4–5). In a wonderful moment illustrating the beauty of small distinctions between prepositions, Aristotle sums up his view of the virtue of the thoughtful life by saying that such a life is lived not *kata logon*, according to logos, but *meta logou*, with logos (*NE* 6, 1144b26–30).

This proposition comes as close as any single statement to qualifying as Aristotle's categorical imperative[16]—and yet, even here, in the immediate sequel in book 7 he makes it quite clear that logos and *prohairesis* can be wrong as well as right, just as well as unjust, and that someone whose *prohairesis* has led them astray will be both vicious, and thus unhappy, and prohairetic (*NE*, 6, 1148a16–17; *NE*, 7, 1151a29–35). Book 6 has told us that human virtue is an interplay of human logos and human desire within the souls of good human individuals. Aristotle's discussion of incontinence in book 7 immediately makes it clear that such an interplay of logos and desire is also true of vice. Vice is not the absence of reason in our decisions to act; such absence is better called "incontinence" or "weakness." Virtue, similarly, is not the triumph of reason over strong and base desire; such a triumph is continence *(enkrateia)* or strength *(karteria)*, but it isn't virtue: "So if the continent person must have strong and base desires, then the moderate person *(sophrôn)* will not be continent, nor the continent person moderate, for the moderate person has neither excessive nor base desires" (1146a9–12).

Let us pause here to note how remarkably at odds Aristotle is with both Hobbes and Kant, and perhaps with modern notions of virtue generally. A good Kantian is someone whose commitment to moral reason defeats the power of natural fears and temptations; a good Hobbesian's calculations of long-run advantage blunt the force of immediate desires and aversions. For both Hobbes and Kant, the work of either calculating (Hobbesian) or legislating (Kantian) reason is to protect the free self against the destructive consequences of naturally occurring pleasures and pains. For Aristotle, the practical work of logos is to reflect on our desires, to transform them from biologically inherited impulses to parts of a mature personality that we, along with the *nomoi* and the mentors of our childhood and—as he will argue in books 8 and 9—our friends, construct. Unlike the moderns, Aristotle acknowledges that there is no guarantee of success, even if fortune smiles, because vice, in this case immoderation, as well as virtue is "according to deliberative decision *(kata tên prohairesin)*" (1151a6–7)[17]—even though Aristotle has just said in book 6 that action based on the prohairetic interplay of logos and desire is what makes us human beings (1139b4–5), and even though he will say in book 3 of the *Politics* that human eudaimonia can almost be defined as living *kata tên prohairesin*, according to deliberative choice (1280a33–34). For Aristotle, serious reflection on what sort of life we want to lead may or may not result in a right *(orthê)* decision (1150b29–36), in spite of the fact that the central recommendation of the *Ethics* is that we take life seriously.

With friendship as with other topics, the project of Aristotle's practical philosophy seems to be paradoxical or contradictory: to clarify and make more accurate the endoxic view of *x* while at the same time complicating the endoxic view of *x*. His great enemy seems to be the idea that the path to clarification lies through simplification or reduction of differences to a single uniform and self-consistent thing. An aspect of this is his attempt to get us to hold more than one idea at a time about the subject at hand. For example, he wants to show his readers and auditors that the familiar idea of *nomos* embodies a paradox: it is both force against nature (as in the discussion of slavery in *Politics* 1) and nous without desire (in *Politics,* 3), something that completes and perfects nature understood as our biological inheritance.

Aristotle's project throughout his practical philosophy is not to set out systematic doctrine—either doctrine he derives from his under-

standing of nature or being, or doctrine that he systematizes out of the unsystematic raw material supplied by his culture, or the *endoxa*. Instead, his aim is to argue that in order to live as well as we possibly can as human beings,[18] we must treat certain questions and problems as central to our lives. His method is to *begin* with the *endoxa* or the tradition of what we would call his culture, but to take familiar concepts (like *philia* or friendship) and propositions (such as "the things of friends are in common") and subject them to a new and critical light, the light provided by what he takes to be his accurate and novel conception of reality, of the nature of the cosmos. His practical philosophy is thus in one way metaphysical or scientific, yet in another way not: that is, his goal is to show us that familiar concepts like justice and friendship take on a new meaning when seen from the perspective of nature and especially human nature, but he never claims that traditional moral and political concepts and ideas can be replaced by ones that are deduced from metaphysical starting points. His aim is not to legislate new principles of morals and politics, but to initiate a critique of morals and politics that prepares the way for context-sensitive practical reason.

Aristotelian Friendship and the Prohairetic Life

In *NE,* 8–9, Aristotle first expands and then immediately narrows, or rather organizes, the semantic range of *philia.* He begins by saying that *philia* applies to all instances of living together that involve some degree of reciprocity, enough equality to make reciprocity possible (master and slave qua master and slave cannot be friends, though qua human beings they can be), and some degree of *prohairesis,* which includes a measure of self-consciousness (*NE* 1155b34–1156a2). *Philia* thus includes relationships for mutual pleasure or mutual advantage, or for our mutual good (*NE* 1155b20), as distinct from pleasure and advantage. Thus understood, *philia* can include political, business, family, and many other forms of being together. But Aristotle immediately structures this broad range of meanings by saying that all the various kinds of *philia* take their meaning as forms of human living together from the paradigmatic or "perfect" or "complete" kind of friendship, the friendship of good people that aims at sustaining their virtues throughout the course of their lives (*NE,* 1156b7 ff.). What is the difference between "perfect"

(teleia) friendship and the imperfect kinds, and what can Aristotle mean in saying that pleasure and advantage friendships *depend on* perfect friendship for their meaning? His point here is not that there is a single elevated standard of perfection that the best friendships achieve while the others fall short—it is not that "virtue" belongs to a higher order of being than pleasure or advantage. That would be Kant, not Aristotle. The key to Aristotle's claim about a "primary" sense of friendship is his distinction (that flows from his biology) between the *parts* or events that make up the life of any organism and its life as a *whole.* Friendships for mutual pleasure or advantage are partial friendships; they concern particular aspects of our life. What virtue friendships have that partial friendships do not is that they take seriously the problem of a life as a whole. Why, for Aristotle, are these friendships "primary" or perfect? Because, on biological or theoretical grounds, the whole of a life is more than the sum of its parts. The practical implication of his theoretical distinction between perfect and partial friendships is that we need friends to help us take seriously the problem of living a good life, a problem that is unique to human beings.[19]

Within this overall theoretical project, Aristotle treats friendship for the most part not as a virtue, but as a mode of human being together or interaction, similar to the polity or the family/household. [20] Friendship is a distinctly human mode of connection, as are, for example, political or family life—neither nonhuman animals nor gods can practice *philia;* nor do these other kinds of beings need to practice *philia* to achieve the goods proper to their kinds.[21] Aristotelian *philia* is various enough to include a variety of interactions, but it is not simply a synonym for human interaction, since not all human interactions involve *prohairesis* and mutuality. All of Aristotle's substantial accounts of the defining marks of *philia* (see *NE,* 8.2 and 9.4; *EE,* 7.2; *Rhetoric,* 2.4) stress mutuality and reciprocity as essential characteristics of true *philia.* Friendship is, in the language of the *Rhetoric,* "loving and being loved in return"—each person, in contrast to normal Greek erotic practice, is both the active and the passive partner in a relationship of true *philia*: "*philos d'estin ho philôn kai antiphiloumenos*" (*Rhetoric,* 1381a1–2). What interactions do not fit under *philia?* All those that lack any trace of self-conscious reciprocity, that do not require the partners to consider one another as separate selves toward whom they feel goodwill;

exploitative relationships are not instances of *philia*, and those human beings who are incapable of treating other selves with good will are incapable of *philia* at all.[22] Thus bad people, he says, cannot be friends because their badness is always driven by a *pleonexia*, a ceaseless and boundless desire for more and more instrumental goods that makes lasting good will to another self impossible (*NE*, 1167b9–16). The same is true for many old people who are driven by fear, as well as the young who are driven by unreflective affection, and also perhaps for both the very poor and the very rich who, because of their economic situation, are incapable of this kind of concern for others, or even for seeing others as separate selves at all, but only as potential or actual slaves or masters (*Politics* 4, ch. 11).

In speaking of *philia* in this way, Aristotle is not reporting facts about how Greek speakers use that word, any more than his definition of "polis" as a community of equals who rule and are ruled in turn with an eye to the laws in *Politics*, 1 is a report on ordinary or endoxic usage of that word. Rather, it is an evaluative and normative theoretical claim, telling us how we should conceive and use the term—but "should" relative to what? As with many of his normative definitions in the *Ethics* and *Politics*, it is not a categorical command, but one that presupposes a prior commitment, so that his claim is, in effect, "If you want to live well as a human being, then it is best to think about and use *philia* in this way." Aristotle's task is to redescribe and reconceive a familiar term in such a way that we understand it differently, and live better lives as a result—"better lives" meaning those that are better as *human* lives, not in terms of any other subjective or objective criterion. Aristotle's account of *philia* reflects his attempt to see this familiar relationship in the light of his teleological understanding of human nature. Given the unusually prominent position he gives *philia*, it is clear that part of what he wants to do in this account is to move *philia* from the margins to the center of Greek moral and political discourse.

All friendships, that is, all these relationships among separate selves who are aware of both their separateness and their similarity—advantage and pleasure friendships as well as virtue ones—emerge from self-interest. But once formed, they are no longer reducible to the self-interested motives from which they indispensably spring. In this respect, politics is indeed a kind of *philia*—it comes into being for the sake of living, but in

its actual existence aims at living well. Nancy Sherman puts this aspect of *philia* as an emergent phenomenon[23] very well: "Apart from valuing the benefits and virtues related to being a friend, we prize the give-and-take of mutual exchange. We value creating a shared world and expanding self through a sense of mutuality defined by our interactions. The pleasure of mutuality and the expansion of self that comes with it is a core part of human development and flourishing."[24] We begin Aristotelian friendships (not counting relations of parents and children) with the desire for whatever shared activities give us pleasure, or for whatever material or intangible resources seem required for our success as particular individuals. But as such interactions persist, it is possible that these instrumental activities can become ends in themselves, constitutive conditions of our happiness rather than only instrumental ones. Of course, it is also possible (and even likely, given the strength of *pleonexia* and of human weakness and dependency in its various guises) that these interactions can become exploitative rather than friendly. *Philia* thus becomes both valuable for the end of human life (eudaimonia) and fragile, and is thus, for Aristotle, a—or perhaps *the*—central issue for political science.

Philia is thus in a way, as he says, even more important than law and justice: "If people are friends, they have no need of justice, but if they are just they need friendship in addition, and the most just sort of justice seems to be friendly *(philikon)*" (*NE,* 8.1, 1155a26–28). Not that friendship is an alternative to law and justice, but that they are mutually dependent: the perspective of justice and law enables us to see ourselves as others (relative strangers) see us (which is why even the best human beings require the discipline of law and justice to prevent us from rewarding our friends too much) (*Politics,* 3.16, 1287a32–b5, 6.4, 1318b38–1319a1), while *philia* enables us to see certain familiar others as we see ourselves (that is, as separate humans beings). Both *philia* and justice are thus universalizing elements in human life, though neither of them involves a move from selfishness to altruism either by way of utilitarian empathy or the Kantian transcendence of treating humanity as an end in itself.[25]

Advantage and pleasure friendships are intelligible only by reference to virtue friendships. This is because the useful things and the pleasurable things are not firm and separate categories of things; different people will regard different things or activities as useful, or useless,

pleasant, painful, or indifferent. But Aristotle is not a relativist: the things that are truly pleasant and useful are those that appear so to the best human being by nature—the person who is living well as a human being. The measure *(metron)* of pleasant and painful, useful and harmful, is not any human being *(anthrôpos)* but a *spoudaios* (*NE* 10.5, 1176b15–16), someone who takes, and knows how to take, human life seriously. And getting pleasure and utility right means living prohairetically—with the reservation that living a prohairetic life as such does not guarantee that a person will live as good a life as is possible under the circumstances. To achieve this goal, our *prohairesis* has got to be as accurate as possible, both in our theoretical understanding of what it means to be a human being in general and in our understanding of the particular possibilities and limitations for human life that belong to our particular time and place.

To maximize prohairetic accuracy, both law-and-justice and virtue friendship are required, as is (at least) the degree of philosophical understanding we can obtain by engaging in something like Aristotelian political science as presented in the *Ethics* and *Politics.* This is what friendship is for in human life, according to Aristotle. Perfect friendship is not a comprehensive recipe for a virtuous life, nor a utopian community, but a kind of activity that, along with a number of other important factors, gives us the best chance at living well. Neither philosophy nor politics (ruling and being ruled in turn with a view to the laws) nor virtue friendship alone is adequate to constitute human flourishing. But in conjunction with good health, adequate material resources, and good luck, they can be the elements of a well-lived human life, one characterized not only by thoughtful and well-articulated choices, but by accurate ones. It is important to remember that Aristotle's god, the primary or focal instance of being and of good, neither philosophizes nor politicizes nor loves—all of these are specifically human activities. The important interpretive mistake to avoid is the conclusion that any one of these three supercedes the others, and makes them unnecessary—that politics is the supreme form of friendship (see *NE,* 8.11, 1161b), or that true friendship makes the political kind unnecessary, or that those who philosophize need neither laws nor friends (except as associates in theoretical inquiry). To the contrary, a successfully prohairetic life requires all three.[26]

Like *epieikeia* (equity or decency), *philia* seems to be both an enabling or necessary condition for justice and at the same time a commitment that points beyond justice. The going beyond is even greater here than with *epieikeia*. Of *epieikeia*, Aristotle says that it is a kind of justice: "[T]he nature of *epieikeia* is the correction of the nomos when it falls short of justice because of its universality" (*NE*, 5, 1137b26–27). Of friendship he says, "Where there is friendship there is no need of justice" (*NE*, 1155a26–27). But Pangle claims, correctly, that this requires perfect seamless friendship, and "Aristotle clearly considers the idea of a seamless union chimerical."[27] We cannot arrive at the proverbial condition of one soul in two bodies, nor should we try.

Aristotle's distinction between three kinds of friendship (for pleasure, for advantage, for virtue) reflects the multiple and partially conflicting goods that define humanity, and serves as a bridge between the political life and the life devoted to philosophy, to the activity of going beyond the human things altogether that is said to constitute the best human life in *NE*, 10.6–8 and in *Politics*, 7.[28] In *NE*, 8 and 9, friendship supercedes honor and justice as the motive for acting beautifully or nobly. For this reason, while "it is more necessary to have friends in bad times" than in good, "it is more beautiful to have them in good times," "for then we wish to act well *[eu dran]*" (*NE*, 9, 1171a20–25). This distinction brings into play Aristotle's contention that there are two orders of causality at work: necessary and constitutive conditions of a thing (the very same distinction between two orders of causality is set out by Plato in both the *Phaedo* and *Statesman*).[29] This distinction between instrumental and constitutive causality, derived from Aristotle's natural science in general and his theoretical account of the distinction between potentiality *(dunamis)* and actuality *(energeia)* in particular, comes into play in a number of crucial discussions in both versions of the *Ethics* and in the *Politics* as well. It is difficult to imagine Aristotle's *politikê* without it.[30]

Pangle argues persuasively that even the best Aristotelian friendship can be seen as an instrumental means, or necessary condition, to a philosophic life, rather than an end or a constitutive part of happiness or the human good in itself.[31] But Aristotle's discussions of friendship help us see that there is no bright line between activities instrumentally necessary for virtue and those that are themselves constitutive of virtue

and happiness. The virtue-and-happiness constitutive aspect of friendship is that it allows us to see who we are—individual and distinct human beings, "composite" embodied beings, subject not only to mortality but also to unexpected and unpredictable events and passions of many different kinds. This is why Aristotle says that philosophically informed *conversation* about our virtues and vices is the definitive activity of "perfect" friends (*NE*, 9.9, 1170b10–12). Virtue friendship is not a merging of the minds, but a process of conversation about our perceptions among friends.[32] We share perception, but this does not mean that we see exactly the same things; rather, we transform individual perceptions into a shared understanding through the activity of articulate speech, of conversation. Friendships are the constitutive condition of the most human activity, the activity of logos and of a prohairetic life. As Frank says, "Rather than a 'primordial' sharing, concord among virtue friends is a sharing of perceptions or a coming to a shared perception via speech."[33]

Another way of getting at the work of *philia* in a human life is to consider the statement in *Politics*, 7.13, 1332a–b that human beings become good and excellent through three things: nature, habit, and logos. The *oikos*, the family or household, is concerned with all three of these, but primarily with nature; the polis with all three, but primarily with habituation. The work, or *ergon*, of the primary kind of *philia* is conversation/logos with another self about our lives—such friendships are the interactions within which we can best reflect on our habits and our goals, the meaning and quality of our prohairetic lives. Primary friendships are therefore to practical reason and prohairetic life what *epieikeia* is to justice and the political life, a mode of distancing (from our own best selves in the case of friendship and from the *nomos* in the case of *epieikeia*) that opens the possibility of the life-long self-reflection and critique without which human virtue, in political praxis and in philosophical inquiry, is a dream. The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being, and the primary form of *philia* is one of the constitutive conditions of such examination.[34]

Friendship allows us to see ourselves, keeps us from our strong tendency to hide from ourselves, and so allows us to be, in our actuality *(energeia)* and our work *(ergon)* more fully human. This makes *philia* more than simply a necessary bridge from politics to philosophy, since without

self-perception and self-understanding even the most self-sufficient of human virtues are subject to decay without our noticing. How could virtue or primary friendship, a self-aware partnership of logos and mind (*NE,* 9.9, 1170b10–12), provide such a service? Aristotle, characteristically, sketches the general idea and leaves the examples up to us. The talking that friends do, at its best, must be devoted to making their lives more prohairetic by helping one another avoid self-deception. Perhaps we think we are being brave when we are merely stubborn; or we think we are being equitable and just when we are merely self-abnegating; or we think we are being great-souled when we are merely snobbish; or we think we are spending time with the immortal things when we are simply avoiding caring for our friends or our polis. More generally, we may think we are acting nobly, for virtue's sake, but without awareness that our actions are becoming more and more instrumental, *pleonexia* rather than *prohairesis.* This is not a problem that affects other animals, nor one that troubles gods or fixed stars. It is the uniquely human problem that calls for friendship even in the otherwise most self-sufficient human beings.[35]

Aristotelian Friendship in the Context of Modernity

Relative to modern views of friendship, Aristotle's two-part account of what friends are for seems to be located somewhere between two modern extremes. The primary instance of *philia* is a dialogue about how best to live our life *(bios)* as a whole that in itself constitutes a central aspect of human virtue. The other kinds of *philia,* for pleasure and for advantage, are connected to primary friendship in two ways: as necessary conditions for human virtue, indispensable parts of a whole that is choiceworthy in itself, and points of departure for perfect or complete friendship. For Aristotle, *philia* is not a merely "aesthetic" or prerational attachment of limited moral significance, as it seems to be for Kant in the part of the *Metaphysics of Morals* where he sets out his doctrine of virtue.[36] But neither is it an intimate relationship of soul mates, a kind of unity through and in which we achieve true humanity, as it is for Montaigne and for romantic writers in general. Nor is it the kind of friendship *(l'amitié)* that is the central idea of Rousseau's *Julie,* a calm yet all-absorbing and enlivening openness (an "ecstatic immobility") to a few

well-known others, a feeling quite distinct from the frenzied passion of *l'amour,* which allows friends to escape from the falseness of ordinary society into a world of perfect and essentially wordless mutual transparency: "After six days wasted in frivolous discussions with indifferent people, we have today spent a morning in the English manner, gathered in silence, enjoying at once the pleasure of being together and the bliss of contemplation. How few people know the delights of that state!"[37] The work of Aristotle's friendship is not consolation and reinforcement, nor is it the way to avoid the worst of all evils, the feeling of being alone in the universe. Its function is to make us better prohairetic beings by giving us an opportunity for conversations of a kind that are indispensable, when properly informed by an accurate philosophical understanding of the powers and the limits human being, for a more accurate sense of who, and where, we are. Primary friendship thus completes nature in the way that law and politics are said to do in the *Politics.* Moreover, the significance of politics and family life is best understood as a series of imperfect or partial friendships, attempts to remedy the weaknesses of our biologically inherited nature and to capitalize on its strengths.

In a similar vein, David O'Connor, using examples from both modern philosophy and the *endoxa* of modern American popular culture, presents the relationship of Aristotelian and modern friendship as a contrast between the modern ideal of "intimacy," in which the true friend is the one who both knows us thoroughly and approves of us unconditionally, and the Aristotelian ideal of "partnership" in some humanizing activity.[38] In the modern ideal the activity is secondary to the value of sheer togetherness, while for Aristotle intimacy is a necessary condition for the most important kinds of shared activity and not an end in itself. From Rousseau and Kant to the present, we might say that modern philosophy is of two minds concerning the transformative power of sheer togetherness or identity. Susan Shell, in a discussion of Kant and Nietzsche on friendship, puts the matter this way: "The insistence on a certain 'pathos of distance'—even, and perhaps especially within the bonds of friendship—provides a certain anticipatory, democratic answer to Nietzsche's later animadversions against the 'last men,' who like 'to rub against one another for warmth.' Indeed, there is in Kant's and Nietzsche's common fastidiousness a curious aesthetic convergence; both are nauseously repelled by common intimacies—Nietzsche, in the name of 'aristocracy,'

Kant in the name of a nobility consistent with equality."[39] Shell's comment brings out two central aspects of the modern view about friendship and the human good, the first an opinion, the second a mood: first, the rarely examined two-part opinion that true human virtue involves overcoming our nature as animals, and that such overcoming requires participation in a community that goes beyond politics and ordinary society; and second, the deep modern anxiety that friendship of the wrong kind can easily entrap us in nature's amoral and essentially dehumanizing snares.

Kant wishes to align his thought with Aristotle, misquoting him—as do Diogenes Laertius and Montaigne—as saying, "My dear friends, there is no such thing as a friend." This is an evident corruption of Aristotle's "Those who have many friends and treat everyone they encounter as intimates seem to be friends to no one, except in a political way" (*NE*, 9.10, 1171a15–17), and where he endorses the common saying that "one who has many friends has no friend" (*EE*, 7.12, 1245b20–22), saying that it is true in a way, but that our prayer for many friends is also in a way true.[40] Derrida, in *Politics of Friendship*, tries to have it both ways, recognizing the misquotation but asserting that both the apparently genuine Aristotle and the corrupt pseudo-Aristotelian maxim share a defining commitment to undemocratic ("phallogocentric" and "fraternal") exclusion, something that the best understanding of friendship must first systematically dismantle and then replace by an unprecedented form of human being together, one that requires the voice of prophecy rather than philosophy: "Is it possible to open up to the 'come' of a certain democracy which is no longer an insult to the friendship we have striven to think beyond the homo-fraternal and phallogocentric schema? . . . When will we be ready for an experience of freedom and equality that is capable of respectfully experiencing that friendship, which would at last be just, just beyond the law, and measured up against its measurelessness?"[41] In effect, Derrida reenacts the modern ambivalence toward this oceanic intimacy, an ambivalence before which philosophy seems to dissolve into second-hand prophecy.[42]

To what extent can we bring Aristotle into conversation with these modern conceptions of friendship? Perhaps the closest counterpart to the unconditional and transcendent intimacy modernity both seeks and fears in the Greek *endoxa* to which Aristotle responds might be erotic

philia. Such *philia* is always sexually charged, but not only sexual—some relevant examples are Thucydides' Pericles' Funeral Oration on the erotic longing that should characterize Athenian citizenship, Thucydides himself on the Athenians erotic longing to conquer Sicily, and the erotic longing for the beings cited by Plato's Socrates in the *Republic* and other dialogues. For Aristotle, the troubling feature about this kind of *philia* is not that it is about sexual activity, but that it seems to be essentially overwhelming and unconditional. Erotic *philia* knows no reasonable bounds and so overwhelms *prohairesis*, as in the case of the erotic relationships in which the lover foolishly thinks he must do everything for the beloved and disregard the claims of everyone else.[43] For Aristotle, the problem about erotic *philia* is that it is unconditional, a quality that blinds us to the inevitable imperfections of composite beings such as we. Even the best of us can have our virtue overturned by illness, age, sudden weakness, a series of mistaken judgments, or simply accident; and what is true of us is also true of our friends. There is nothing magical or permanently transforming about even the best friendship; given the natural limitations of our species, it is not surprising that unconditional loyalty is not an Aristotelian moral virtue.[44]

Until very recently, few theorists, whether Aristotelian or not, have attempted to develop anything that resembles an Aristotelian conception of friendship in the context of modernity. One exception to this absence of modern voices recalling Aristotle's is, perhaps surprisingly, Hannah Arendt, who in general appears as an Aristotelian only to those who know little Aristotle. Certainly Arendt dismisses without reflection the species teleological understanding of nature that colors every page of Aristotle's practical philosophy. Despite this, however, Arendt develops a very Aristotelian conception of the meaning of friendship in her essay on Lessing, "On Humanity in Dark Times." What is relevant here is Arendt's insistence on the importance of separating friendship from brotherhood, from a sheer togetherness that trivializes our separate individuality and can provide strength to "pariah" people and other outcasts in times of despair and alienation. For Arendt, the kinds of being together that humanize our lives—as opposed to the links that preserve and fortify those lives—consist primarily of conversations among friends: "Gladness, not sadness, is talkative, and truly human dialogue differs from mere talk or even discussion in that it is entirely permeated by

pleasure in the other person and what he says."[45] The core of her argument is that human beings cannot live genuinely human lives without friendships involving continued conversation and thought. Neither citizenship nor ethnic solidarity can provide the context for the sort of humanizing friendship Arendt sees exemplified in Lessing's life and in his play *Nathan the Wise*, which dramatizes the superiority of virtue friendships to sexual love, religious community, and familial as well as political identity.

Arendt stresses the distance that separates the ancient and modern ideals of friendship:

> We are wont to see friendship solely as a phenomenon of intimacy, in which the friends open their hearts to each other unmolested by the world and its demands. Rousseau, not Lessing, is the best advocate of this view, which conforms so well to the basic attitude of the modern individual, who in his alienation from the world can reveal himself only in privacy and in the intimacy of face-to-face encounters. Thus it is hard for us to understand the political relevance of friendship. When, for example, we read in Aristotle, that *philia* friendship among citizens is one of the fundamental requirements for the well-being of the City, we tend to think that he was speaking of no more than the absence of factions and civil war within it. But for the Greeks the essence of friendship consisted in discourse. They held that only the constant interchange of talk united citizens in a *polis*. . . . We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human.[46]

Arendt here connects virtue friendship with civic friendship more completely than Aristotle would, and more than she herself does in other places in the essay. But even here it is clearly friendship and not citizenship that matters, a friendship of separate selves, engaging in the essentially humanizing activity of continued dialogue about themselves and their surroundings.

But as close as Arendt comes to an Aristotelian account of friendship, her theoretical modernity is reflected in her claim that friendship, like citizenship, lives in a continual tension with truthfulness, given "the possible antagonism between truth and humanity."[47] What distinguishes Aristotle

from Arendt is his commitment to the view that *philia* is a path, however indirect and complex, to a variety of contingent truths about ourselves and our world, truths that lead beyond us toward a more adequate and accurate theoretical sense of the beings, including those beings more perfect than we are. Aristotle's dialogic friendship understood in this way is thus both a constitutive element of a well-lived prohairetic human life and a framework for inquiry that goes beyond humanity.

For Aristotle, friendship is not a substitute for philosophy, for learning and inquiry and reflection, and in this his account is sharply at odds with later conceptions of friendship. The heart of Aristotelian friendship is neither consolation nor transcendent unity, but conversation about the way particular friends live their lives. The quality of a friendship thus depends on the quality of the conversation that constitutes it, and so a friendship that fails to involve some degree of shared philosophizing is a poor thing indeed. But Aristotelian friendship is also more than a mere stepping-stone from the moral virtues and politics to philosophy. True friendship can never be superceded by philosophy because no human being is immortal and all human beings are continually compelled to choose among a variety of options; at the very least, even the most accomplished and fortunate of philosophers will confront the problem of when it is appropriate to philosophize and when other matters should come first—we should not make all sacrifices to Zeus. A well-lived prohairetic life has two constitutive elements, neither of which is of any use without the other. The first is the critical illumination philosophic activity, time spent with the immortal things, supplies. The second is the reflection on our own individual relationship to immortality and mortality that requires the conversation of a few good friends.

Notes

1. In general, the Greek *philia* is more inclusive than the English "friendship," but it also involves slightly different implications. Martha Nussbaum is helpful on this: "*philia* is extensionally wider than friendship—it takes in family relations, the relation between husband and wife, and erotic relationships, as well as what we would call 'friendship.' It is also, frequently, affectively stronger: it is a requirement of *philia* that partners should be linked by

affectionate feeling; and, as we see, *philia* includes the very strongest and most intimate of our affective ties. We can say that two people are 'just friends'; no such thing could be said with *philia*" (*The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 329n, 354). While Aristotle includes erotic relations within the overall category of *philia*, as Nussbaum goes on to note, "Aristotle's choice of a central word reveals something about what he values in human relationships. For the emphasis of *philia* is less on intensely passionate longing than on disinterested benefit, sharing, and mutuality; less on madness than on a rare kind of balance and harmony." Translations from the Greek in this essay are my own, though greatly aided by Carnes Lord's translation of the *Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) and the second edition of Terence Irwin's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999).

2. In *Politics*, *philia* among citizens is a necessary condition for avoiding stasis, without which political life proper (*Politics*, 2.4, 1262b7–9)—ruling and being ruled in turn with an eye to the laws *(nomoi)*—cannot exist. In the *Poetics*, he says that playwrights have discovered that the best way to achieve the tragic effect (moving the audience to fear and pity) is by having the dangerous interactions occur among members of the same *philia* in the sense of family.

3. "Friendship is not of heaven but of the earth; the complete moral perfection of heaven must be universal; but friendship is not universal; it is a peculiar association of specific persons; it is man's refuge in this world from the distrust of his fellows. . . . Friendship develops the minor virtues of life" ("Friendship," in *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981], 206–7, 209). See also Kant's brief discussion of friendship as a duty in *Metaphysics of Morals*, §§46–47.

4. See especially his depiction of the best kind of friendship in *Julie*, pt. 5, letter 3.

5. For an illuminating contrast between Aristotle and Heidegger on friendship, see Robert Dostal, "Friendship and Politics: Heidegger's Failing," *Political Theory* 20 (August 1992): 399–423.

6. That is, undoubtedly treated as such by authors in the Western philosophical tradition.

7. Plato's Socrates, in *Republic*, 7, 518b–d, asserts that philosophic education is not like putting knowledge into empty souls; instead, true *paideia* is the *technê* of turning the soul toward the things that are, and especially toward the good. In *NE*, 2, 1103b26–29, Aristotle says that the point of *politikê* is making us better, not providing knowledge simply.

8. Lorraine Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

9. See *EE*, 7, 1245a35: "*autos diaretos ho philos.*"

10. The *NE* as well as the *EE* want to "save the appearances," to bring out the truths that are contained in widely shared opinions and maxims, but the *EE* is more obviously concerned to avoid paradox, a clash with prevailing *doxa*. (For "paradox" in this sense, meaning countercultural rather than self-contradictory, see Socrates' remark in *Republic*, 5, 472a2–6, that he fears his logos that there will be no rest from ills for cities until philosophy and political power coincide will be seen as "paradoxical"). See *EE*, 7.2, especially 1236b21–26 on why asserting that there is a primary instance of *philia* (that among good people) should not rule out treating other kinds of apparent *philia* as real *philia* nonetheless: "To call this [primary friendship] alone friendship is to do violence to the phenomena and to compel oneself to speak paradoxes *(paradoxa legein anagkaion)*."

11. See my "Aristotle and the Ethics of Natural Questions," in *Instilling Ethics*, ed. Norma Thompson (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 3–16, and "The Deliberative Model of Democracy and Aristotle's Ethics of Natural Questions," in *Aristotle and Modern Politics: The Persistence of Political Philosophy*, ed. Aristide Tessitore (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 342–74. See also Thomas W. Smith, *Revaluing Ethics: Aristotle's Dialogical Pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Aristide Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle's Ethics: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Susan Collins, *Aristotle and the Rediscovery of Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and two essays by Gerald Mara, "The Near Made Far Away: The Role of Cultural Criticism in Aristotle's Political Theory" (*Political Theory* 23 [1995]: 280–303), and "The *Logos* of the Wise and the *Politeia* of the Many: Recent Books on Aristotle's Political Philosophy" (*Political Theory* 28 [2000]: 835–59).

12. Martha Nussbaum, "Aristotelian Social Democracy," in Tessitore, ed., *Aristotle and Modern Politics*, 50.

13. In my discussion of Aristotle on *philia*, I treat the *NE* and the *Politics* as two parts of a connected series of lectures on *politikê*. Thus my focus is on the *NE* rather than on the *EE*. Nevertheless, I refer to the treatment of *philia* in *EE*, 7 for clarification. In general, I think Aristotle's substantive position in *EE*, 7 is much the same as in *NE*, 8 and 9—the primary difference between the two seems to be that the *EE* is more direct and more theoretical than the *NE*, perhaps indicating a less subtle and Platonic understanding of the relation between theory and practice than the greater richness and indirection of the *NE* embodies. While I am not persuaded by Anthony Kenny that the *EE* is more maturely Aristotelian than the *NE*, I do think he is right to notice it is closer in style to modern analytic philosophy than is the Nicomachean version: "As it happens, many of the features which scholars have noted as characteristic of the Eudemian books in contrast to the Nicomachean—a greater interest in the

rigorous presentation of argument and a lesser interest in the dramatic portrayal of character . . . these are features in which contemporary analytic fashion accords more closely with the interests and positions of the Eudemian than with the Nicomachean version of Aristotle's system" (*The Aristotelian Ethics: A Study of the Relationship between the Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], 4).

14. Aristotle's use of the word *prohairesis* to name the central activity of human beings is an innovation, though the word itself does appear occasionally in earlier Greek philosophic texts (for example, Plato, *Parmenides*, 143c). *Hairesis* by itself signifies choice; add the prefix *pro-* and you have a premeditated choice, choosing this rather than that. For a good discussion of "prohairetic activity" in Aristotle, see Jill Frank, *Democracy of Distinction: Aristotle and the Work of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 32–38.

15. In *Politics*, 1 Aristotle argues that we are political animals because we are the only animals to have the capacity to use language to articulate and reflect on what is good for us. Other animals have voice *(phônê)*, and so can indicate pleasure and pain to one another, but we alone have the reflective power he indicates by the word "logos." Owing to this power of articulate and rational speech human individuals can become either the best or the worst of animals. Such a power requires discipline if it is not to become a resource for tyranny and injustice, and the practice of politics, the activity of ruling and being ruled in turn with an eye to the laws of the city, is the humanly discovered remedy for our potential to abuse our rational power. The logos power that Aristotle identifies as human reason is thus quite distinct from Hobbesian instrumental reason, and also from Kantian reason, the capacity for transcending nature to give ourselves universal laws to follow.

16. The other leading candidate would be his statement in book 10 that we should "as far as we can, spend time with the immortal things [this is Arendt's rendering of Aristotle's *athanatizein;* I prefer it to "immortalize" or Irwin's "be pro-immortal"] and do everything we can to live according to the strongest of the things in us" (*NE*, 1177b33–34). This, to be sure, is also a question—just how far can we go toward living in the manner of the permanently actualized unmoved movers of Aristotle's cosmology? What are our powers? What other demands on us are there? The question, however, is as relevant for political people as for those not so fully involved in political life; Aristotle repeats it in book 7 of the *Politics* after setting out yet again the difference between *phronêsis* and theoretical reason: "For what is always most choiceworthy for each individual is the highest it is possible for them to achieve" (1333a29–30).

17. Note that Aristotle does *not* say, here or anywhere else, that the *prohairesis* that results in vice isn't really *prohairesis* at all. Bad people have

thoughtfully chosen badness just as good people have thoughtfully chosen goodness. What is crucial is that bad people are generally *unaware* that their thoughtful choice is bad: "as a whole, weakness of will *(akrasia)* and badness *(kakia)* are different kinds; for badness is unrecognized *(lanthanei)*, but weakness of will is not unrecognized" (*NE*, 1150b35–36). This statement in book 7 indicates, in advance, the human problem to which the primary kind of *philia* is a solution.

18. In saying live well *as human beings*, I stress Aristotle's way of framing moral or practical questions. For him, the moral point of view, the point of view that takes life seriously, is not that of empathic utilitarian altruists or of autonomous rational beings, but of people who want to live their lives as much in accord with specifically human excellence or virtue as possible.

19. As long as this priority of whole to part is established, it is not crucial (given his stated concern with making us better as opposed to theorizing as an end in itself) whether Aristotle establishes that priority, as in the *NE*, by saying that virtue friendship has the properties of all friendships to a higher degree than the others (1157a25–32), or by saying, as in the *EE*, that the other kinds of friendships all "point toward" virtue friendship in the manner of a *pros hen* or *pros mian* (toward one) equivocal (1236a15–20), in the same way that all beings point toward the primary instance of being, namely, perfectly actualized being. As in several other instances, Aristotle seems to opt, in the *NE*, to present his *politikê* in terms that are less dependent on knowledge of Aristotelian theory than he does in the *EE*.

20. In the *NE*, *philia* first appears in 4.6, as similar to a nameless moral virtue of social life or living together *(suzên)*, a disposition to be neither ingratiating nor grouchy in the speeches and affairs of everyday life. By calling attention to this virtue's namelessness, Aristotle may be indicating that most Greeks take it less seriously than he thinks they should. He begins book 8 by saying that *philia* "is some virtue or with virtue, and moreover is most necessary for a way of life *[bios]*" (1155a3–5).

21. Speaking of the primary kind of *philia*, that of good people, he says in the *EE* that "this occurs in human beings only, because only human beings are aware of prohairesis; but the other kinds [of *philia*] also occur among beasts" (1236b5–7).

22. See Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness*, 355n.

23. "Emergent phenomenon" is a recent term for something well known to Aristotle and absolutely central to his understanding of nature, but dismissed by reductionist modern physics—wholes that are more than the sum of their parts.

24. Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 190. See also Stephen R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 110: "We grow in community, partly because our friends assist us in the making of our identities, partly because having friends is to be introduced to a wider world."

25. Alasdair MacIntyre's commentary on the relationship of selfishness and altruism to virtue is sharply Aristotelian: "We do indeed as infants, as children, and even as adolescents, experience sharp conflicts between egoistic and altruistic impulses and desires. But the task of education is to transform and integrate those into an inclination towards both the common good and individual goods, so that we become neither self-rather-than-other-regarding nor other-rather-than-self-regarding, neither egoists nor altruists, but those whose passions and inclinations are directed to what is both our good and the good of others. Self-sacrifice, it follows, is as much of vice, as much of a sign of inadequate moral development, as selfishness" (*Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* [Chicago: Open Court, 1999], 160). Glaucon and Adeimantus, at the beginning of *Republic*, 2, provide a wonderful example of this adolescent dilemma of the war between selfishness and altruism, and Plato's Socrates in the rest of the *Republic* represents one attempt at education of the kind MacIntyre describes.

26. Consider the differences between Aristotle's irreducibly complex prohairetic self and Hegel's conception of the irreducibly complex modern autonomous self, the man who has a foot in three camps—family, civil society, and state. Hegel's self requires no independent theorizing to be free (since the final results of this inquiry have been actualized and realized in the constitution of the modern state); the political community, the state, has become clearly the preeminent human community, thanks to its absorption of the theoretical truths implicit in Protestant Christianity. It is now possible to specify the boundary lines separating the three essential communities whose interaction in human souls gives rise to an autonomous life.

27. Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, 79.

28. See ibid., 197–98.

29. Aristotle introduces this methodological distinction very early in the *Eudemian Ethics*, while elaborating his thesis that everyone who is to live according to their own *prohairesis* should establish a telos at which to aim in the actions of their lives:

> It is especially necessary first to determine for oneself, neither recklessly nor lazily, in which of the human things living well consists, and without which of these things it is not possible for human beings to possess living well. For the things without which being healthy is impossible and being healthy are not the same, and this holds similarly with many other things. And it is necessary not to overlook these things, for they are the causes of the disputes about what being happy

> is, and about the things necessary for becoming happy; for some people believe that those things without which it is not possible to be happy are parts of happiness. (*EE*, 1.2, 1214b11–27)

30. One of the clearest deployments of this distinction is at *Politics*, 3, 1283a14–22. Aristotle's distinction between necessary and constitutive conditions implies a continuum—some things are more like necessary conditions, others more constitutive of happiness—rather than a rigid dichotomy. This is very much in line with the way he uses his distinction between potentiality and actuality more generally.

31. Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, 197–98.

32. Jill Frank makes this argument using these terms in *Democracy of Distinction*, 160.

33. Ibid.

34. This point is made explicitly in the *Magna Moralia*, an incomplete Aristotelian (though perhaps not written by Aristotle) treatise on many of the same themes as the *EE* and *NE*. In the *MM*, 2.15, 1212b24–1213a26, the author argues that even the most self-sufficient human being will need virtue friends, since our self-awareness is inevitably distorted by our good will toward or strong feelings in favor of ourselves. Just as we need a mirror to see our bodies, so even the best and most self-sufficient of us need friends to help us understand ourselves as we truly are. For discussion of this passage, see John Cooper, "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle," reprinted in Cooper, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 340–43. For discussion of the authorship of the *Magna Moralia* and its relation to Aristotle's practical philosophy, see Cooper, "The *Magna Moralia* and Aristotle's Moral Philosophy," in *Reason and Emotion*, 195–211.

35. In thinking through the question of how to fill in the gaps in Aristotle's argument in *NE*, 9.9, I have found Cooper's "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle" especially helpful. He argues there that, for Aristotle, the place of primary friendship in human life is twofold: to widen individual horizons and to make possible a level of self-criticism that individuals cannot achieve on their own.

36. See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 215–17.

37. This is from St. Preux's description of the small circle of intimates at Clarens in Rousseau's *Julie, or The New Heloise*, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997), pt. 5, letter 3, 456.

38. David K. O'Connor, "Two Ideals of Friendship," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7 (April 1990): 109–22.

39. Susan Shell, *Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 160.

40. See Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship,* 193 and 240 n.24.

41. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship,* trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997), 306.

42. Thus self-described postmodernity and post-Christianity dissolves yet again into a stale version of what it purports to have successfully deconstructed. On Derrida's debt to Christianity, see Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship,* 192. For the biblical traditions, the most important human interactions and communities are those that link human beings to God. The sense of transcendence and triumph over mortality is also present in those philosophers who spring from, though claim no reliance upon, Christianity — think of Kant's community of ends in themselves, of Marx's species-beings, of Nietzsche's ahistorical community of the great who recognize and "call to" one another across the centuries in *Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life.* For these writers, a transcendently autonomous being slumbers in the lap of natural man, as it were, and the business of philosophy is to trace the path from nature to an entirely humanly created community and way of life, one that emerges from but goes beyond our merely biologically inherited nature. On the other hand, those philosophers who more clearly reject the authority of the Christian church as a guide to moral and political philosophy and build their systems on modern reductive physical science instead tend, like Hobbes, to treat all human communities as being fundamentally unstable and unreal, when compared with the power and reality of individual self-interest or, like Locke, to redescribe all human relationships as contracts made to enhance the length and security and freedom of individual human life and not to transform it. What these two approaches to friendship share is a belief that the worst of all human evils is death (and not, say, the danger of committing grave injustice, or of acting out of great stupidity or prejudice about the world, dangers the threat of which Plato and Aristotle are both at great pains to evoke in their audience), and all our efforts should be devoted to building a world in which death is somehow transcended; and if this is impossible or too dependent on unempirical mystery, then the best solution is to follow Hobbes and Locke (who proceeds by reimaging all communities as reducible without loss of meaning to contracts among individual members of the community) in attempting to design a regime in which life would be as far as possible protected from the internal fights that are life's greatest enemy.

43. As Aristotle puts it, "Those who give everything to their beloved *(eromenos)* are worthless" (*EE,* 7.11, 1244a19–20).

44. See Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship,* 137–41, especially on what she sees as the difference between Aristotle and at least some

versions of Christianity: "'The most thoroughgoing rejection of Aristotle's teaching about the necessary conditionality of human love is found in the Christian injunction to 'love thy neighbor.'" In *NE*, 9.2, 1165b13–36, Aristotle discusses the problem of what to do when someone you have befriended for their virtue seems to have become bad. The first thing to do is to try to rescue them—that is, after all, what human friends are for. But if that fails, then it makes sense to break the friendship, though with regret and retaining the memory of past friendship sufficient to require that we "accord something to past friends because of our former friendship, whenever it is not excessive vice (hyperbolic *mochthêria*) that causes the dissolution." On Aristotle's rejection of an unconditional duty to one's political community, see Gerald Mara, "The Culture of Democracy: Aristotle's *Athênaiôn Politeia* as Political Theory," in Tessitore, ed., *Aristotle and Modern Politics*, 307–41, esp. 329–32.

45. "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing," in *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955), 15.

46. Ibid., 24–25.

47. Ibid., 28. On the need to think very carefully about that "possible antagonism," see Arendt's "Truth and Politics" (arguing that a commitment to truth is a necessary condition for good politics, precisely because in political life the humanly created "world" matters more than the truth that is independent of human effort ["Truth and Politics," in Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1977), 227–64]), and her "Philosophy and Politics" (arguing that a Socratic commitment to discover the truth in private is a necessary condition, or preliminary moment, for the emancipatory political life ["Philosophy and Politics," *Social Research* 57 (1990): 73–103]).