

*A EUDAIMONISTIC CRITIQUE OF HETERONORMATIVITY*

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## ABSTRACT

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Aristotle argues in the *Ethica Nicomachea* that *eudaimonia*, or flourishing, is the chief human good. This chief good will be that towards which all human activity aims. Amongst the features that contribute to, and help maintain, the *eudaimōn* life Aristotle includes *philia*, or friendship. Aristotle dedicates one-fifth of the *Ethica Nicomachea* to an explanation of *philia* and the conditions under which *philia* can occur. The three forms of *philia* are friendships for utility, pleasure, and character, or virtue, based. The virtue-based friendships, or primary friendships, is the ideal and contributes the most to *eudaimonia*. The attention to detail regarding *philia* in this work on ethics demonstrates that Aristotle views friendly relationships as playing an important role in the *eudaimōn* life. In contrast, Aristotle pays little attention to relationships founded on *erōs*, or erotic love. I argue that just as *philia* can contribute to the development and maintenance of *eudaimonia*, so too can *erōs*. My argument, then, is that Aristotle, having a complete view of *philia*, fails to provide a complete account of *erōs*. *Erōs*, for Aristotle, is mainly a relationship for pleasure but may also be for utility. On my account, Aristotle ought to extend his view of *erōs* to include primary relationships just as he does with *philia*. Furthermore, I argue that as Aristotle's view is heteronormative, it focuses on a problematic sex and gender binary.<sup>1</sup> If the primary form of *erōs* is applied, ideal erotic relationships will be those which are relationships founded on virtuous character, and not on sexual orientation or gender. In lieu of evaluating erotic relationships on problematic sex or gender binaries, we ought to focus on whether the

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<sup>1</sup> Note that heteronormative is a term that Aristotle would not be familiar with. To avoid this anachronism, I describe the way that Aristotle's view resembles heteronormativity and the ways in which it differs.

relationships are virtuous. As such, I criticize heteronormativity and argue for a broadened approach to erotic relationships.

This dissertation is dedicated with love to my parents, Dave and Eldona Doll. Everything that I have accomplished is due to your love and support. Thank you.

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

*EE*    *Ethica Eudemia*

*EN*    *Ethica Nicomachea*

*HA*    *Historia Animalium*

*MM*    *Magna Moralia*

*Phdr.*    *Phaedrus*

*Pol.*    *Politica*

*Ret.*    *Ars Rhetorica*

*Symp.*    *Symposium*



## INTRODUCTION

Aristotle outlines in detail the conditions under which *philia* (friendship) occurs.<sup>2</sup> Further, he argues that *philia* contributes to the good life, *eudaimonia*.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle devotes significant time to analyzing the nature of *philia*; the depth of his examination makes his contribution to the philosophical understanding of friendship substantial. In the *Ethica Nicomachea*, Aristotle discusses a variety of relationship types and the roles they play in the good life. In these other discussions, Aristotle also briefly mentions *erōs* (erotic love).<sup>4</sup> In his limited discussion, Aristotle primarily categorizes *erōs* as involving relationships that are based on pleasure or usefulness. Unlike his view of *philia*, Aristotle does not hold that *erōs* plays a fundamental role in the attainment of the good life. Rather, *erōs* is regulated to pleasure or a biological necessity. As compared to *philia*, Aristotle gives scant attention to *erōs*. I argue that Aristotle's handling of *erōs* is incomplete. On my view, once a complete discussion of *erōs* has occurred, it becomes clear that erotic relationships have the potential to contribute to *eudaimonia*. To demonstrate this conclusion, I provide a thorough analysis of Aristotelian *philia*. By showing the ways in which *philia* contributes to *eudaimonia*, I am able to show the ways in which *erōs* also can contribute to *eudaimonia*.

In Chapter 4, I develop an account of *erōs* that is both consistent with, and an improvement upon, Aristotle's account. Giving a philosophical account of *erōs* that starts with

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<sup>2</sup> *Philia* is a type of friendly love that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> A more detailed discussion of *eudaimonia* and its possible translations appears in Chapter 1.4 and in Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Erōs* is a type of love that is different from *philia*. Where *philia* is a reciprocal love or well wishing, or a friendship, *erōs* refers to an erotic love. Friendships that are founded on an erotic love are those that I refer to as 'erotic relationships.' I examine the role of erotic relationships for Aristotle. However, Aristotle's view is not representative of the variety of erotic views. *Paidēasteia* was a commonly accepted practice in Aristotle's time. In these relationships, an older (and arguably virtuous) male would have a relationship with a younger male (upon whom virtue can be bestowed). Plato, for example, espoused a variety of views of *erōs* that Aristotle would have been familiar with, some of which closely resemble the view I ultimately promote. Thus, while Aristotle is influenced by the mores of his time, his view is not to be seen as the ultimate representation of Greek *erōs* in his time. Further discussion and explanation of *erōs* occurs in Chapter 4.1.

Aristotle, but develops a more complete representation of erotic relationships can be useful for addressing contemporary issues regarding *erōs*. Specifically, my aim is to demonstrate how, on my interpretation, *erōs* can fruitfully challenge heteronormativity.<sup>5</sup> While I draw on an analysis of Aristotle's handling of *philia*, *erōs*, and *eudaimonia*, my goal is not to provide a novel interpretation of Aristotle's views. It is rather to show how, starting from Aristotle's texts, we can develop a fuller understanding of *erōs* that allows for a contemporary analysis and application. I take this approach in part because the contemporary field of ethics is far different from, and more varied than, what Aristotle had in mind when writing the *Ethica Nicomachea*.<sup>6</sup> In the chapters that follow, I show how Aristotle's theories can be expanded upon to more accurately account for *erōs* and to resolve modern ethical dilemmas caused by heteronormativity. Upon demonstrating this novel approach to *erōs*, I argue that there is a political obligation to protect relationships, including erotic ones, that contribute to *eudaimonia*.

First, I provide a summary of Aristotle's position regarding the chief good for humans and the conditions that contribute to the attainment of the chief good (Chapter 1.1). I then discuss Aristotle's three types of *philia*, as well as the ways in which they contribute to the chief good (Chapter 2.5). After this, I examine the ways in which the *polis* contributes to the development of *philia* (Chapter 3.11-3.13).<sup>7</sup> In this discussion, I advance the argument that the *polis* must promote *philia* in its attempt to secure the chief good for its citizens (Chapter 3.8).

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<sup>5</sup> I.e. the assumption that heterosexuality and its corresponding gender identities are the norm or the ideal. Heteronormativity is discussed in more detail in 4.05.

<sup>6</sup> As Sarah Broadie observes (2006, 342). Broadie notes that, since the time of Aristotle's composition, the concept of "ethics" has grown to include more than what Aristotle would have included in his works. Aristotle would have primarily been concerned with character whereas ethics has grown to include standards of right and wrong and good and bad behavior (Kraut, 2006, 2). Because of this, we need to be aware that while we may be able to use Aristotle to understand contemporary ethical issues, they would have been outside the actual scope of Aristotle's work (Broadie, 2006, 342). Likewise, Richard Kraut states that the philosophical branch of ethics, or moral philosophy, has expanded since Aristotle's death. Kraut identifies Aristotle as one of the inventors of this branch of philosophy (Kraut, 2006, 2).

<sup>7</sup> The *polis* is the Greek city-state, a political and social structure that differs in many important ways from contemporary cities and states. The nature of the *polis* is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.01-3.02, 3.05.

Finally, I examine the role of erotic relationships and demonstrate that the taxonomy of these relationships is parallel to the taxonomy Aristotle develops for *philia* (Chapter 4.2). We ought, then, to adopt an account of *erōs* that mirrors the Aristotelian description of *philia*. I argue that from this it follows that we ought not to promote a heteronormative version of erotic relationships; rather, we ought to focus on the quality and type of relationships, which should be assessed by means of the way in which they contribute to the chief good (Chapter 4.2).

Lastly, a short note about the primary texts I will examine. Aristotle's ethical discussions are largely limited to the *Ethica Nicomachea* (*EN*) and the *Ethica Eudemia* (*EE*). The historical order of the two volumes is disputed by contemporary scholars; however, it is likely that the *Ethica Nicomachea* is a revision of, and improvement upon, the *Ethica Eudemia*. This view is supported by the fact that the *Ethica Nicomachea* appears to expand upon, and correct ideas within, the *Ethica Eudemia*.<sup>8</sup> Because it is the better known, and more likely to be the later Aristotelian volume on ethics, I primarily rely on the *Ethica Nicomachea* in support of my view and use the *Ethica Eudemia* as an ancillary resource. A third ethical text, the *Magna Moralia* (*MM*), has been attributed to Aristotle but its origins are indeterminate. I use it to a minor degree, bearing in mind questions about the authorship and authenticity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Richard Kraut's treatment of the different ethical treatises. Kraut states that the *Ethica Nicomachea* is Aristotle's final treatise on ethics (Kraut, 2006, 4). Nancy Sherman notes that while some have argued that the *Ethica Eudemia* is the later work, the majority of scholars take the *EN* to be the final work on ethics (Sherman, 1999, xvi, footnote 2). For the purposes of this dissertation, however, the ordering of the texts need not be resolved. The areas of relevance are consistent enough to provide a clear account of Aristotle's views of *philia* and *erōs*.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Barnes states in his note to the reader that certain texts within the *corpus aristotelicum* are unlikely to have been written by Aristotle. He indicates that the authenticity of the *Magna Moralia* has been seriously doubted and as such, he includes *MM* in the works unlikely to have been written by Aristotle (Barnes, 1995, vii).

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 ARISTOTLE AND THE CHIEF GOOD

*Ethica Nicomachea* begins with Aristotle's inquiry into what he refers to as the chief good for humans. Aristotle asserts that all knowledge, inquiry, and activity seeks out some good or end (I.1 1094a). Because there are different ends for different activities, projects, etc., Aristotle holds that there are multiple types of goods. In I.2, he specifies that he is concerned with determining the chief good for humans, i.e. the final and highest end that is desired for its own sake.

According to Aristotle, there is a chief, or ultimate, good that all people crave (I.7 1097a). This good will be one that is final, complete, and pursued for its own sake (I.2 1094a). The distinguishing feature of being a final good is that it will not be a means to another good. The chief good is the *highest* of the available goods; as such, it is intrinsically, and not instrumentally, valuable (I.6 1096b). Ultimately, the chief good will be that toward which all human activity aims. Aristotle's goal is twofold: first, he seeks to identify the chief good; second, he seeks to establish the means to attaining and maintaining this good (see e.g. II.2 1103b). This endeavor is practical in nature. Aristotle holds that one ought to understand the good with the intent of changing one's life so that it becomes consistent with that good (II.2 1103b).

Understanding the chief good is important because attaining knowledge about it will enable one to more accurately aim for it and shape one's activities and character accordingly. One should, therefore, attempt to identify the chief good and the expertise or capacity to which it belongs (I. 2 1094a). Aristotle quickly arrives at the conclusion that the chief good is *eudaimonia*, or flourishing (I.4 1095a, V.6 1176a).<sup>10</sup> While he says that all people would agree that this is the

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<sup>10</sup> 'Flourishing' is my preferred translation for *eudaimonia*. Another popular translation is 'happiness'; however, this is inadequate as happiness can be superficial and does not quite encompass the living well and being one's best self that Aristotle includes when discussing *eudaimonia*. When translating *eudaimonia* it is important to note that we are talking about a higher-order happiness or flourishing rather than simply a pleasant feeling about a situation. *Eudaimonia* is a type of excellence and flourishing. For Aristotle, then, *eudaimonia* must be an activity in

final end, he notes that they will disagree about the nature of *eudaimonia* and about what it means to attain it (i.e. to be *eudaimōn*) (I.7 1097b). He examines the *endoxa* (the opinions of reputable individuals) to demonstrate the misguidedness of certain common opinions, for example that pleasure is the chief good (I.7 1097b). Having identified the final end as *eudaimonia* and clarified how the *endoxa* miss the mark, Aristotle argues that the chief good will be attained through an excellent activity (see for example, I.8 1099a). He then seeks to elucidate the means of attaining the chief good.

To identify what type of excellent activity leads one to the chief good, Aristotle first examines the *ergon*, or function, of humans (I.2-I.13). For Aristotle, fulfilling one's function well will be central in the attainment of the flourishing life. The human *ergon* will be something unique to all and only humans, a function which is fundamental to human existence. He notes that performing one's function well seems to be closely associated with goodness and excellent activity (V.6 1176b). *Eudaimonia*, then, will be connected to the function of humans as an excellent action in accordance with that function (I.7 1097b). Identifying the function of humans enables one to identify what it means for a human to be living well. From this, one can then identify, pursue, and attain *eudaimonia*. Since non-human animals have growing, nutritive, and perceptive capacities, Aristotle concludes that the human function cannot be excellent action in accordance with any one of these. Again, the function will be something that is special and specific to humans (I.7 1098a). Humans are, according to Aristotle, unique with respect to their rational capacities. The function of humans must, therefore, be an "activity of the soul in

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accordance with excellence. Broadie cautions against the generalized use of 'flourishing', however, because it fails to adequately account for the inclusion of the gods. *Eudaimonia* is something that would be experienced by the gods; however, it seems incorrect to describe divine excellence as flourishing in the same way as human flourishing (Broadie, 2006, 343). I will continue to use 'flourishing' but I am referring specifically to human flourishing and not to the flourishing of the gods.

accordance with reason” (I.7 1098a).<sup>11</sup> An excellent, flourishing person will live a life that properly cultivates and uses one’s rational capacities. Such a person will end up completing activities excellently due to being guided by reason and wisdom which directs one to excellent activities. Flourishing for humans, then, is excellence with respect to rational activity (I. 13 1102b). Having established that *eudaimonia* is the chief good, and that this is excellent rational activity, the next task is to determine what lifestyle is most *eudaimōn*. Throughout the remainder of the *Ethica Nicomachea* Aristotle cultivates an understanding of *eudaimonia* and the means of acquiring it. Ultimately, Aristotle concludes that the most *eudaimōn* life is the life of contemplation (X.7 1177a).<sup>12</sup> The life of contemplation will be the happiest, most flourishing, and closest to the divine life of the gods; it is the best life available for humans (X.7 1177a, 1177b, 1178a). Having established that this is the best life for humans, Aristotle must investigate and establish the details of the chief good for humans. He proceeds by examining human excellence and the ways that it contributes to *eudaimonia*.

## 1.2 INTELLECTUAL AND ETHICAL VIRTUES

Because *eudaimonia* is an excellent activity, we first have to clarify what types of excellences aid in the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle identifies two such types of excellence (*arete*), or virtues (II.1 1103a). A virtue is a disposition that develops as the result of excellent activity. Additionally, a virtue is a state or disposition to act excellently in an appropriate way given the circumstances. Aristotle, then, is looking at which types of excellent dispositions will contribute to the excellent rational activity involved in the life of contemplation. In II.2, Aristotle

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<sup>11</sup> All translations of *EN* are from Rowe and Broadie, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Further discussion about the argument used to reach this conclusion and an explanation of what the life of contemplation entails is provided in section 1.03.

distinguishes between two types of virtues: intellectual and character-based (i.e. moral or ethical). While humans have the potential to be virtuous, the virtues are not inherent dispositions. Rather, they require cultivation: they have to be learned in the case of the intellectual virtues and habituated in the case of the ethical virtues. Both kinds of virtue may contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. One develops an excellent character through using reasoning to identify traits which contribute to *eudaimonia* and then habituating those character traits until they become dispositions (II.1 1103a, VI. 5 1140a). Virtuous character is the result of habituation of activities as informed, and guided, by reason (I.13 1102b). Ethical virtues are not innate but their development can be helped or hindered by one's natural propensities and environment. Natural inclinations, education, and environment (including the *polis*) will all contribute to one's ability to achieve the virtues (I.9 1099, X.8 1178a). We must first engage in the activities, then learn from doing them and perform those activities until they become habitual. Ultimately, performing the activities frequently enough will give rise to habituation—the result of which is a stable character trait. For example, lawmakers can make good citizens through correct habituation (I.13 1102a).<sup>13</sup> The ways in which a society is structured will encourage the habituation of certain activities through the laws of the *polis*. Good lawmakers will order society in a way that encourages good activities through the laws and norms. These activities, when done repeatedly, will become character traits. Through good laws and social structure, a *polis* is able to help the citizens cultivate the moral virtues (X.9 1179b-1180b). Having these social norms well-established will encourage habituation of excellent character from childhood on. Excellent

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<sup>13</sup> Character traits are learned through habit while intellectual ones are learned through education and instruction (EN II.1 1103a). The process of habituation involves doing something repeatedly until it becomes habit. To achieve a virtuous habit, one has to repeatedly choose to make virtuous actions. For Aristotle, excellent character has to do with pleasures and pains. Through habituation we can create the dispositions to have pleasure at truly pleasurable things (virtues) and pains at things that ought to pain us (vices). The proper pleasures and pains will incentivize and solidify the good dispositions (EN II.3 1104b).

activities will allow us to cultivate the good character traits needed for *eudaimonia* and they will be possible with the guidance of a well-ordered society.

Aristotle uses the concept of the mean in his explanations of excellent states and morally excellent action. Moral excellence is an intermediate state, or disposition, between excess and defect (II.6 1106b). The virtue of courage, for example, is the intermediate, or mean, between cowardliness (defect) and recklessness (excess) (II.7 1107b).<sup>14</sup> Having an excellent disposition, or state, is not alone sufficient for having moral excellence. One may have the correct disposition without being moved to act (I.8 1099a). It is those who use their dispositions to complete excellent activities that are truly excellent. Morally excellent action is the mean between excessive and deficient actions. That is, the courageous thing to do in battle is the mean between the most fearful and most bold actions. One who is able to identify the mean and who properly strives for, and recognizes, the correct ends has the intellectual virtue, *phronēsis*.<sup>15</sup> *Phronēsis* is an understanding about the good life and the path to attaining it (VI.5 1140a). The *phronimōs* is one who will make the right decision in the right circumstances for the right reasons. Through having the wisdom about the right practical ends, virtuous disposition, and virtuous action one can become ethically, or morally, virtuous.<sup>16</sup>

While *phronēsis* will lead to the attainment of the ethical virtues, to live a fully *eudaimōn* life requires possession of the intellectual virtues, too. Mainly, the intellectual virtue of

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<sup>14</sup> For Aristotle, the mean does not require being in the precise middle between excess and defect. Rather, the mean is an indeterminate state wherein the excellent person will rightfully assess the appropriate disposition given the circumstances.

<sup>15</sup> The correct end for Aristotle is *eudaimonia*. *Phronēsis* enables one to see what is actually *eudaimōn* and not what is just apparently so. *Phronēsis* is an intellectual virtue of the practical sort. This type of wisdom will guide one through practical pursuits. Other intellectual virtues, such as contemplation, knowledge, wisdom, and art are aimed towards theoretical or productive ends.

<sup>16</sup> *Phronēsis* is the excellence of the practical intellect whereas virtues are excellences of the non-rational intellect part of the soul; it involves the “appetitive and passionate part which can obey reason but does not exercise it.” (Moss, 2011, 207). Jessica Moss argues that the development of excellent character will direct one towards the right aim whereas *phronēsis* will identify the path to that end (Moss, 2011, 205).



contemplation. Intellectual virtues are excellent dispositions related to the rational faculties. In contrast to the ethical virtues, intellectual virtues are mainly acquired through education and learning (II.1 1103a). On Jessica Moss's reading, the ethical virtues, through the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*, identify the end, i.e. *eudaimonia*, the intellectual virtues will inform one about the way to that end. That is, through excellent rational activity one will correctly be able to identify which actions and behaviors are most likely to ensure the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Ultimately, as discussed above (1.1), Aristotle concludes that the life of contemplation is the most *eudaimōn*. The ethical virtues, then, will direct one to cultivate habits consistent with an ethically virtuous life whereas the intellectual virtues will direct one to excellent contemplative activity as a means to *eudaimonia*.

### 1.3 THE *EUDAIMŌN* LIFE

In X.6, Aristotle expands the argument that the intellectual virtues and contemplative activity are the most *eudaimōn*.<sup>17</sup> He reiterates that excellent rational activity, primarily contemplation, is the highest end for humans; that is, the end that is pursued for its own sake and not for its contribution to another good or end. As excellent rational activity is associated with the human *ergon*, the life of rational activity will be the flourishing life, or the most pleasant life available to humans. In X. 7, Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* should be an activity in accordance with the *best* excellence. Since intelligence and reflective, or rational, activities are the highest and most complete excellent activities for humans, the chief good for humans will be excellence in accordance with rational activity.

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<sup>17</sup> *Phronēsis*, while an intellectual virtue, is concerned with the practical way to attain the best end.

The most excellent activity will be the most pleasurable, which raises the question of what role pleasure plays in the contemplative life, i.e. the *eudaimōn* life. According to Aristotle, pleasure is a characteristic of *eudaimonia*; hence intellectual activity and the life of contemplation, being the *ergon* of humans, will be the most pleasant activity for humans (X.7 1177a). Moreover, the contemplative life will result in self-sufficiency as well as the other “blessed activities” (X.7 1177b). The contemplative life is most self-sufficient because its exercise does not require external features or goods in order to achieve completion (X.6 1176b1). Furthermore, because intellectual accomplishment, *sophia*, is divine, living a life of intelligence is like partaking in the divine (X.7 1177b). The life of contemplation, then, elevates one as far as possible beyond mere human pursuits and allows one to be as close to the divine as is humanly possible. Since excellent rational activity is by nature what is best for humans, it will also be the most pleasant. The person who lives excellently in accordance with reason, then, will be happiest and most flourishing. The contemplative life is thus the most pleasant, the most divine, and rightly considered the most flourishing, i.e. the most *eudaimōn*.

While the life of contemplation is most *eudaimōn*, Aristotle discusses the other types of living that will be good for humans. In X.8 Aristotle establishes that the second happiest life would be the one that is in accordance with the other excellences (i.e. the ethical, or character-based, virtues). The ethical virtues are far more dependent upon external factors than the intellectual virtues (e.g. courage and moderation need the external circumstances that allow one to be courageous and moderate towards others) and therefore cannot be self-sufficient like the intellectual virtues. Hence the ethical virtues cannot be the highest good, and the life of ethical virtue cannot be the best life for humans. While there is value in these excellences, the life of reflection is superior because of its self-sufficiency, completeness, and nearness to divine

godliness. This would appear to lead to the conclusion that the life of moral virtues is inferior to, and possibly even unnecessary for, the life of intellectual virtue. After all, if the intellectual virtues and the life of contemplation are the ideal, it is not clear what value would come from the life of ethical virtues, even if this is the second happiest life. This is a hasty conclusion, however, and it is worth considering the contribution to the good life made by the ethical virtues.

First, certain external features can influence one's flourishing, even in the presence of intellectual virtues (I.10 1100b-1101a). Good or bad fortune have the potential for making one miserable. However, it is through good activities that one can bear these difficulties and avoid misery (I.10 1100b): "the truly good and sensible person bears what fortune brings him with good grace, and acts on each occasion in the finest way possible given the resources at the time" (I.10 1101a). Here, it is the virtuous actions that will secure one's quality of life. In order to successfully carry out virtuous actions, one needs to have *phronēsis*.<sup>18</sup> While general intellectual accomplishments are both productive and desirable for their own sake, they are not sufficient for attaining the contemplative life without *phronēsis*. The attainment of ethical virtues requires the cultivation of practical wisdom, or an intellectual virtue (II.1 1103a, II.6 1106b, VI.2 1139a). It is through the excellent activities that one is able to attain the ethical virtues. In attaining the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis*, and thus the ethical virtues, one is better equipped to develop the remaining intellectual virtues. That is, by achieving excellence through the practical rational faculties, the rational faculties become excellent enough to evolve into the other intellectual virtues. Because *phronēsis* is a component of the intellectual part of the soul, attaining practical wisdom will contribute to the attainment of the intellectual virtues. Through using practical

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<sup>18</sup> The relationship between *phronesis* and ethical virtues is such that one cannot have one without the other. A *phronimos* is by definition a person with virtuous character and vice versa (EN 1144b30). See also C. W. Surprenant, 2012, 222.

reasoning, having the correct motivation and ends, one can become an excellent person (VI.12).

The ethical virtues, through the development of *phronēsis* will contribute to the intellectual virtues which allows the life of contemplation to become possible.

Second, while the life of contemplation is an ideal and is the most self-sufficient life available to humans, it will still require external features in moderation. Humans will still need the ethical virtues to live an excellent life. The gods, being divine, are wholly self-sufficient and have no need for external goods. They are complete in themselves and need for nothing else (VII.1 1145a). Humans are not themselves self-sufficient like the gods; therefore, they have to fulfill these needs in order to survive (for example, sustenance, health, friends etc.). As Aristotle argues,

But the one who is happy will also need external prosperity, in so far as he is human; for human nature is not self-sufficient for the purposes of reflection, but needs bodily health too, and the availability of nourishment and other kinds of servicing. And yet, if it is not possible to be blessedly happy without external things, still it should not be thought that the happy person will need many of them.... ( X.8. 1178b)

Gary Gurtler makes a strong case for including not merely external goods, but the ethical virtues as well. Another interpretation is that in I.7 Aristotle argues that the life of virtues is the most *eudaimōn* which would lead to the interpretation that both the intellectual and ethical virtues need to be cultivated in order to have a *eudaimōn* life. Gurtler notes that this is the inclusivist view; the *eudaimōn* life includes both the possession of ethical and intellectual virtues (Gurtler, 2003, 801-802). Aristotle diverges from this in X. 6-8 where he specifies that it is the life of contemplation specifically that is the good life. Those who argue that this latter view is exclusivist point out that passages from *EN* that include the ethical virtues in the *eudaimōn* life are excluded (Gurtler, 2003, 801). Unlike the inclusivists, exclusivists argue that the truly

*eudaimōn* life does not require the attainment of the ethical virtues. This, however, is troubling as it renders Aristotle's discussion of the ethical virtues incompatible with the good life. Gurtler resolves this by examining Aristotle's discussion of *eudaimonia* and pleasure in X.1-8, which he says provides a cohesive account of the role the virtues play in the *eudaimōn* life. For the virtuous, the *eudaimōn* life is centered on flourishing and not pleasure. Pleasure is concerned with practical activities while, for Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is contemplation of the divine. Pleasurable actions, however, enable the "resting of the body so that one can engage in virtuous activity" (Gurtler, 2003, 803). The intellectual activity of contemplation involves *nous*, or the intellect with wisdom being *nous*'s intellectual virtue whereas contemplation is the activity of the virtue (Gurtler, 2003, 803-804). Gurtler says that this distinction does not lead to the conclusion that only contemplation is part of the *eudaimōn* life. Rather, he argues that all human activities are connected to *eudaimonia* (Gurtler, 2003, 804). Gurtler notes that Aristotle describes humans as complex beings whose lives involve a variety of activities that are necessary for the flourishing life. The life consisting solely of contemplation is reserved for the gods, not humans (Gurtler, 2003, 804 footnote 2). Pleasure will still play a role in the *eudaimōn* life for this reason and because it will help mold a person to do correct things. The pleasure attained from practical activities will motivate one to perfect the activities and to do them well. In this sense, pursuing such actions that engage in pleasure, including the ethical virtues, will create the disposition to behave in virtuous ways due to reinforcement by the pleasure received (note that this is in respect to a person who is on the path to being virtuous; a vicious person will be pleased and pained by the wrong things and will develop the wrong dispositions). Gurtler states, "while the highest activity it [contemplation] is not the only activity. Thus, though it is the highest and most valuable, intelligence remains part of a complex being that has other activities as well" (Gurtler,

2003, 833). Gurtler's view, thus, promotes an inclusivist view. The ethical virtues are pleasurable, practical pursuits that are part of the flourishing life. Aristotle states at X.9 1179b that in order to achieve excellence, one "must in a way already possess a character akin to it, one that is attracted by the fine and repulsed by the shameful. But it is hard for someone to get the correct guidance, from childhood on," in the absence of laws and education that reinforce good character. The good character traits will ensure that one is pleased and pained by the correct things, which will be necessary for the attainment of the intellectual virtues. The ethical virtues will help provide the means by which humans can compensate for the deficiencies resulting from being human. The ethical virtues will ensure that one will rightly choose the lifestyle and activities that will contribute to the contemplative life. Thus, even if the life of contemplation is the happiest and most likely to lead one to *eudaimonia*, one cannot survive without external goods nor can one maintain excellence in the absence of the ethical virtues. It is problematic to assume that only the intellectual virtues are important; we must also take into consideration external goods and ethical virtues as they will be essential for the *eudaimōn* person.

Finally, the forming of the ethical virtues is obtained through a difficult process of being directed by pleasure and pain. In this process, it is necessary to have the proper education to be able to identify which actions should be pleasurable and which ones should be painful. This involves difficult intellectual work that requires self-discipline. In using *phronēsis*, one is engaging in an activity (reinforced by pleasure), that will lead to ethically virtuous dispositions, including moderation. Through this process it becomes clear that a weak-willed and immoderate person will not have the character traits necessary to engage in intellectual excellence. In achieving the intellectual excellence associated with *phronēsis* and the ethical virtues, one is

establishing the dispositions that will let one further develop the other intellectual virtues, including contemplation.

In the next section, I discuss in more detail one of those external goods that aid in the development and maintenance of the moral and intellectual virtues: *philia*. Since the truest form of *philia*, the complete or perfect form, requires that the friends be morally excellent, we can see that the moral virtues contribute in yet another way to the life of contemplation and *eudaimonia*.

#### **1.4 PHILIA AND EUDAIMONIA**

In the *Ethica Nicomachea*, Aristotle argues that *philia* plays a key role in the attainment of the intellectual and moral virtues and thus the contemplative life and *eudaimonia* (IX.3 1165b). The friendly relationships that we have with others assist us in meeting the conditions necessary for developing the excellent dispositions of the intellectual and ethical virtues. Aristotle divides *philia* into three kinds: friendship of pleasure, of utility, and of virtue (VIII.3 1156a). He argues that the third type, the virtuous or complete friendship, is the ideal form of *philia* towards which we should aim because of the ways this form of *philia* contributes to the good life as an external good.

*Philia* is among the external goods that Aristotle identifies as essential to the life of contemplation. *Philia*, then, is one of the conditions that aids in the development of the intellectual and moral virtues. Friendship has the potential to contribute to, or interfere with, one's cultivation of the virtuous habits that lead to *eudaimonia*. In *Ethica Nicomachea* VIII.11-13, Aristotle discusses the way that the communal components of *philia* contribute to *eudaimonia*. Just as an environment has the potential to shape one's virtues, friendly relationships may also help one to cultivate the virtues necessary for *eudaimonia* (I.7 in contrast

with X.6-8 and VI.12 1143b). Different relationships bring with them different vices, virtues, expectations, responsibilities, and conceptions of justice. The introduction of these features will factor into the types of dispositions that will be developed. *Philia* then, has the potential to introduce character traits that can contribute to, or interfere with, the establishment of the virtues. With repeated exposure to these traits, one will become habituated so as to acquire them as dispositions.

Friendships between good individuals will positively shape the good friends while friendships between bad individuals will have the opposite result. By repeatedly interacting with these character traits, one will engage with, internalize, and habituate the corresponding traits. If one interacts primarily with virtuous individuals, one will habituate similar virtuous traits. On the other hand, repeated interaction with a vicious person can result in the attainment and habituation of vicious dispositions. Anyone who aims to reinforce the proper dispositions and activities, then, ought to associate with people of good character.<sup>19</sup> Each of the aforementioned three types of *philia* will contribute to the development of traits in different ways.

One thing that all three kinds of *philia* have in common is that, for Aristotle, *philia* involves reciprocal feelings of good will (VIII. 2 1155b). In the first type of friendship, this reciprocation occurs in relationships based on usefulness or utility. In this form of *philia*, the friends are mutually benefited by the relationship and, recognizing this mutual benefit, wish good for each other. This relationship will end once it ceases to be beneficial, and the feelings of good will tend to end along with the relationship.<sup>20</sup> Second are the friendships based on mutual

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<sup>19</sup> This is a cursory introduction to *philia*'s contribution to the development of virtuous traits. I elaborate on the nature of friendships and their contribution to *eudaimonia* in Chapter 2.

<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that the ending of a beneficial friendship will result in reciprocal ill-will. Rather, it is more likely that the feelings will be neutral. It is also possible that some good will may remain out of recognition of the former benefit.



pleasure. In these relationships the connection and well-wishing are formed when the friends find some form of pleasure in one another. As friendships of utility end when the friends cease being useful to one another, so these relationships dissolve when the friends cease to please one another.

Because these two types of friendship are dependent upon subjective external conditions being met, they will be limited in both scope and longevity. They will, therefore, only minimally contribute to the cultivation of virtues. For this reason, Aristotle's primary or complete friendship is that with which I am most concerned: complete or perfect friendship. Perfect friendships occur between two people of virtuous character who have a reciprocal feeling of good will for the other's sake *because* of the recognition of one another's good character. In complete friendships the friends want what is best for each other only for the sake of the friend and not merely because of external conditions such as usefulness or pleasure. Rather, this good will stems from a mutual recognition of the goodness of the other. Because the friends are both of virtuous character, they are motivated to want what is best for each other *because* of the presence of this goodness. Because these primary friendships are founded on virtuous traits, these friendships will have the most influence on the development, and maintenance, of virtues.

Complete friendships can form when friends recognize one another's virtuous traits. It is most likely that the reciprocal recognition will be due to the complete friends' possessing the same virtues (although possibly at different degrees); both friends, then, will be of similar good character.<sup>21</sup> Since development of virtuous character is difficult and rare (II.9 1106b), these

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<sup>21</sup> Some may argue that complete friends ought to be in possession of *all* of the virtues, but I do not think that is an Aristotelian requirement. John Cooper examines this view, but sees it as problematic as it would blend ordinary people with bad people who can only be friends for pleasure or utility (1980, 304). Cooper rejects this requirement of perfection because so long as the friendship is formed out of a respect for character traits—whether complete or incomplete—the friendship is of the complete kind (Cooper, 1980, 306-307)

complete friendships will be both rare and difficult to form. The emphasis on goodness and virtuous character, however, makes these friendships the ideal.

Because of the shared virtuous traits, friends of this sort are seen by Aristotle as an extension of one another (IX.8 1168b). They are a kind of mirror to one another, so to speak—one which both helps each better understand one's own self and provides opportunity for better understanding the virtues. For this reason, each friend's *eudaimonia* is closely connected to the other's. As Cooper argues, *philia* ends up being a considerable component in Aristotle's ethical view of *eudaimonia* (1977, 622). Friendships are so fundamental to one's development that one should have a variety of friendships ranging from the complete friendship to those that are, in essence, a friendly attitude towards a stranger (VIII.1 1155a). One key advantage of complete friendship, however, is that such friends will have correct understandings of each other's characters and, in wishing good for each other, will be promoting each other's moral virtues (1977, 640). Additionally, insofar as they are people of good character, these friends are in a position to help each other pursue and maintain excellence. For this reason, the primary friendships are the ones most likely to contribute to *eudaimonia*.

Nevertheless, all forms of Aristotelian friendship can contribute to one's attainment of *eudaimonia*. Even the incidental friendships of benefit and pleasure have the requirements of mutually, and reciprocally, wanting a good for each other (1977, 644). These incidental friendships have the potential to help individuals cultivate good habits, to promote one's own well-being, whilst simultaneously advancing the well-being of another individual. Although these relationships do not bear the moral superiority of the primary friendship, they carry with them an advantage and opportunity that non-*philia* relationships do not: the chance to benefit oneself, not at the expense of another but for mutual advantage. Any of the three forms of

friendship enable one to pursue an intermediate between being selfish and selfless: neither one's own nor someone else's interest is sacrificed. This intermediate contributes to the establishment of virtuous traits and the more often that one experiences this, in any of the three types of friendship, the more securely one will have developed a disposition. This establishes the external or instrumental value of friendship; however, it still remains to be seen whether friendship will be a part of the life of contemplation.

In *Ethica Nicomachea* I.8, as we have seen, Aristotle states that virtue is not sufficient for flourishing (*eudaimonia*) and that even the virtuous person will require external goods. Nancy Sherman argues (1989, 125) that this leads to the conclusion that friends will still be needed, even if one is living the life of contemplation:

happiness, conceived of as doing well and living well ([EN]1098b21), requires not merely ethical (and intellectual) virtues, but activities which manifest these excellences. With regard to ethical virtue, ends of character must be realized and implemented in action ([EN] 1099a1-6). But for this, the proper resources and opportunities must be at hand. Among these resources or external goods are friends.

Even the *eudaimōn* person, then, will require the external goods provided by friends. Even in the life of contemplation, the most self-sufficient life available to humans, friendship (mainly the complete friendship) will be essential. Further, Aristotle writes that a person would not choose a life, no matter how good, without friends (VIII.1 1155a). Because one needs friends as an external condition and would not choose to live without friends, one living the life of contemplation will still need friends. It is worth noting, however, that one living the most self-sufficient life will need fewer friends, and, having little need of friends of utility or pleasure, will mainly need friends of character (X.8 1178b). As Aristotle argues, “the talked-about self-sufficiency will be a feature of the reflective life most of all; for both the intellectually

accomplished and the just person, and everyone else, will require the things necessary for living” (X.7 1177a). The contemplative life will be the happiest, most pleasant, most complete, and the best route to attaining *eudaimonia*; however, it will still require external goods such as friends. In the next section, I examine how the external good of *philia* relates to the structure provided by the *polis*.

### 1.5 PHILIA AND THE POLIS

According to Aristotle, virtues are “one way we call just the things that create and preserve happiness and its parts for the citizen community” (V.1 1129b). On Sherman’s interpretation, this means that virtues like justice, for example, are for the benefit of the community (1989, 115). Humans, as will be shown in Chapter 3.1, being political animals have a shared common goal. The *polis* is organized to help humans achieve this common goal and to aid in the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Both the virtues and the *polis* contribute to the benefit of the citizens.

One way that the *polis* can benefit its citizens is through providing opportunities to establish relationships with others. The *polis* can facilitate relationships in two ways. First, the *polis* exists to create parameters that encourage and cultivate virtuous habits for the citizens which can be reinforced through their relationships. Second, the interactions between individuals, insofar as they include *philia*, enable people to become better.<sup>22</sup>

Because the *polis* provides a natural environment for social interaction as well as for the development of virtues, it has the potential to create conditions under which *philia* can exist—and in particular, the complete form of friendship.<sup>23</sup> That is, it is not enough that the *polis* merely exists and allows relationships to occur. Rather, it ought to take steps to ensure that the

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<sup>22</sup> This is explained in more detail in Chapter 3.12-3.13.

<sup>23</sup> This is argued in more detail in Chapter 3.11-3.13.

relationships cultivated within society include those that contribute to the attainment of virtues because of the role such friendships play in the attainment of *eudaimonia*.<sup>24</sup> In contributing to securing the good for its citizens, the *polis* has the obligation to provide the conditions that make the life of contemplation possible—conditions that will include friendship because such relationships contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. The life of contemplation, the life most suited to *eudaimonia*, is only possible with *philia* (primarily complete friendship) and the attainment of the virtues. Complete *philia* is best secured in a well-ordered society that promotes the virtues. As I show in Chapter 3, based on Aristotle’s ideal society, the *polis* ought to incorporate the means for creating and sustaining *philia*, specifically the primary friendships. *Ethica Nicomachea* X.9 again stresses that the path to excellence requires a well-ordered society and a communal relationship that permits flourishing. *Philia*, being necessary to *eudaimonia* and the good life, will also be a necessary aspect of the ideal society. Further, there is another kind of relationship that, I argue, can contribute to flourishing, and so ought to be protected by the *polis*: *erōs*.

## 1.6 PHILIA AND ERŌS

In his discussion of relationships and how they influence one’s development, Aristotle briefly mentions the role of *erōs*, or erotic relationships, and concludes that these relationships are primarily a matter of pleasure. While Aristotle’s detailed and relatively elaborate analysis of *philia* has rightly garnered ample scholarly attention, I argue (chapter 4) that his analysis of *erōs* is significantly incomplete. As we saw above in section 1.4, Aristotle argues that friendly relationships are essential to the development of character. I argue that given this commitment

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<sup>24</sup> While this will primarily involve the complete friendships, it will also include the incidental friendships that contribute to virtue.

erotic relationships also play a role in the development of character. Likewise, Aristotle argues that business, familial, and political relationships have the potential to contribute to *eudaimonia*. It is disappointing, then, that Aristotle neglects *erōs* and its possible contribution, as *erōs* is a type of relationship which can shape a person's character. I seek to remedy the omission here. Yet Aristotle gives these important relationships inadequate attention. He speaks very little of these interactions and in his discussion focuses almost exclusively on their pleasurable aspect.

If one accepts *philia* as a key component for virtuous development, one should accept the same for *erōs*.<sup>25</sup> Although Aristotle does not give an account of *erōs* that is equal to his account of *philia*, I argue in Chapter 3 that such an account can and should be developed.<sup>26</sup> On my view, erotic relationships, like friendships, can be for pleasure, utility or founded in virtue. Hence just as the *polis* is obligated to create the conditions under which virtuous friendships are possible, so any just state has an ethical and social obligation to promote and protect virtuous erotic relationships.

## 1.7 *ERŌS*, HETERONORMATIVITY AND VIRTUE

There is a tendency to understand 'correct' or 'ideal' erotic relationships as heteronormative. The notion of heteronormativity, though, is anachronistic with respect to Aristotle. While this is a contemporary way of putting the matter, something similar has been reinforced throughout history. It is believed by many that proper erotic relationships are between a cisgendered man

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<sup>25</sup> The concept of *erōs* is more robust than the contemporary notion of "erotic" relationships. *Erōs* includes relationships that have a romantic, loving component that is beyond friendship and which may or may not include sexual relations. In contemporary terms, 'erotic' is often understood as being something of a solely sexual nature. Throughout this paper, I will be using *erōs* and erotic as cognates, in keeping with the ancient Greek sense of *erōs*.

<sup>26</sup> While Aristotle limits *erōs* to pleasure primarily, and utility occasionally, his view of *erōs* is not representative of the variety of views of *erōs* at the time. In the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, for example, Plato describes erotic relationships founded on virtue and a desire for the good.

and cisgendered woman.<sup>27</sup> Some may also go so far as to condemn relationships between same sex couples and are critical of trans and non-gender conforming identities as well as any other expression of non-heteronormative relationships. This position is misguided and problematic because erotic relationships ought to be evaluated based on their possession of, or contribution to, the virtues. This does not require that the relationships be heteronormative. Aristotle argues that our character is shaped by those with whom we have relationships. As we have seen, the pursuit of virtuous friendships is crucial to the attainment of the ethical and intellectual virtues. In *EN* Books VIII and IX Aristotle focuses on the ways in which friends, specifically primary friends, contribute to the development and maintenance of ethical and intellectual virtues.<sup>28</sup> Although Aristotle himself did not develop a parallel treatment of erotic relationships, such a treatment can be developed, and can be both Aristotelian in spirit and illuminating.

While Aristotle maintains that erotic relationships can be classified as relationships of benefit or pleasure, for him this is where the parallels to *philia* end. We can extend the classification of erotic relationships to fully mirror those of *philia*; that is, we can add to the taxonomy erotic relationships that are character-based. If so, we ought to pursue virtuous erotic relationships, as they may shape and develop our virtues in a positive way. As with *philia*, the virtuous erotic relationships will be the ideal or primary types of these relationships. They are the ones best suited to aid in habituating the virtuous character traits that contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. We ought, then, to encourage and support erotic relationships that contribute to the attainment of the ethical and intellectual virtues. Since Aristotle's discussion of *erōs* is limited, my aim is to complete the discussion.

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<sup>27</sup> Cisgender refers to an individual whose unambiguous biological sex at birth matches their gender expression and identity.

<sup>28</sup> To reiterate, complete friends help with the attainment of virtuous character traits and can create opportunities for contemplation and other intellectual virtues. There will be further discussion of *philia* and the virtues in Chapter 2.

When Aristotle addresses *erōs*, he makes it a matter of emotion and a relationship primarily of pleasure (VIII.3 1156b). In VIII.4, Aristotle expands the discussion of *erōs* to acknowledge that erotic relationships can also be useful: “those who do not make the pleasant but the useful the basis of exchange in erotic relationships are friends, and continue as friends, to a lesser degree” (VIII.4 1157a). Aristotle has established, then, that just as with *philia*, *erōs* can be for pleasure or utility. Further parallels between the structure of *erōs* and *philia* are established in IX.1. Here Aristotle notes the dissolving of erotic relationships is comparable to friendly relationships of both pleasure and dissimilar pairings (IX.1 1164a). To rectify Aristotle’s neglect of *erōs*, on my account his view ought to be expanded to more fully mirror his account of *philia*.

In Chapter 4, I argue that it is fruitful to go beyond Aristotle’s discussion of *erōs* and extend the comparison between *philia* and *erōs* beyond the pleasant or useful, so as to include erotic relationships of the virtuous type. Aristotle’s conception of *erōs* was influenced by ancient Greek mores, and so originates from a starkly different understanding of such relationships.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, my understanding demonstrates that there are erotic relationships that are more than just for pleasure or utility; they can also be founded in virtuous character.<sup>30</sup> As such, my view provides a friendly challenge to the Aristotelian conception of erotic relationships while illustrating a limitation of Aristotle’s view. To make my case, I need to show that there exist erotic relationships based on reciprocal concern for the other for their own sake and out of

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<sup>29</sup> However, his view is not representative of the variety of erotic views. *Paiderasteia* was a commonly accepted practice in Aristotle’s time. In these relationships, an older (and arguably virtuous) male would have a relationship with a younger male (upon whom virtue can be bestowed). Plato, for example, espoused a variety of views of *erōs* that Aristotle would have been familiar with, some of which closely resemble the view I ultimately promote. Thus, while Aristotle is influenced by the mores of his time, his view is not to be seen as the ultimate representation of Greek *erōs* in his time.

<sup>30</sup> Again, my view is not unique as in both the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* Plato, an older contemporary of Aristotle’s, described erotic relationships similar to what I’m describing. Plato’s view of *erōs* is discussed in Chapter 4.7.



recognition of their goodness, and that such relationships are very likely to contribute to *eudaimonia*. If I succeed, the analogy of *erōs* to Aristotelian *philia* will be complete.

Virtuous erotic relationships are the ideal form of *erōs* and contribute to the cultivation of ethical virtues in the same way that the corresponding form of *philia* does. Because our interactions with others contribute to the cultivation of virtues, we ought to take into consideration how these erotic relationships do so as well. In accepting the argument that there are three types of erotic relationships, it follows that we should evaluate erotic relationships based on whether they meet the standards of true, virtuous relationships. If they do meet these criteria, they will contribute to the moral virtues and will help one attain the moral virtues and *eudaimonia*. Even if this completes the analysis of the types of erotic relationships in one sense, the dilemma created by heteronormativity remains.

### **1.8 A EUDAIMONISTIC CRITIQUE OF GENDER NORMS AND HETERONORMATIVITY**

Despite some progress in the courts, a contemporary inclination is to equate ideal erotic relationships with heteronormative ones and to view non-heteronormative relationships as divergent (and in some cases inferior). This handling of erotic relationships is insufficient and inaccurate. I propose using the Aristotle-inspired treatment of erotic relationships I have sketched above to critique heteronormativity and heteronormative concepts of gender.

Eudaimonists such as Aristotle hold that individuals aim toward that which will enable the attainment of *eudaimonia*. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* requires conditions that permit individuals to form the practical reasoning capacity, *phronēsis*, that sufficiently enables identification of activities which will contribute to *eudaimonia*. This includes the ability to distinguish between things that are actually versus apparently good as well as the type of corresponding good: utility,

pleasure, or perfect goodness. This process correctly habituates healthy dispositions. Once one has established it, practical wisdom will allow one to maintain those things which actually contribute to *eudaimonia*. But Aristotle recognizes that the cultivation of such abilities cannot occur *ex nihilo*; *phronēsis* ensures that virtuous actions will be taken, but virtue is a prerequisite for *phronēsis*. Hence it will often be someone else's *phronēsis* that initially guides a person to perform the actions leading to the development of moral virtue. An individual must be situated in conditions that permit such development to happen. One's family, society, *polis*, pastimes, and friends are crucial with respect to an individual's proper development (*EN* I.9 1099a).

As I discuss in Chapter 3.4, in the *Politica*, Aristotle provides a direct connection between an individual's moral obligation and the political obligation of the *polis*. The ideal *polis*, he says, must provide an environment in which its citizens can flourish as individuals; the individuals need to be molded to be equipped to understand and pursue their ultimate aim, *eudaimonia*. The political environment, thus, has the moral obligation to foster the appropriate social customs, laws, and institutions that contribute to *eudaimonia*. As I contend in Chapter 3.4-3.9, the political moral obligation is to promote social constructs that allow people to pursue the lives and relationships that promote *eudaimonia*. Heteronormative norms regarding gender, sex, and sexual orientation are problematic for a variety of reasons, among which: they limit an individual's freedoms, opportunities, education, and autonomy. Heteronormative societies impress upon people the requirement to be defined and determined by their biological sex with respect to gender, sexual orientation, and economic opportunity. Individuals who deviate from these norms may be falsely treated as inferior and taken to have an incorrect disposition. The so-called deviant is preemptively defined via problematic and inaccurate, conceptions of human beings. They are not able to pursue the lived existence that will be best for them. Because of this,

I am critical of the heteronormative gender norms that exist, for example, under patriarchy.<sup>31</sup>

Such a society fails to give people the opportunity to become the type of person likely to flourish.<sup>32</sup>

Biological essentialism is a further problem in that it reduces an individual's personal and sexual options to reproductive potential. While we may be able to get some analytic mileage out of a binary gender construct, focusing too narrowly on gender may distract us from making progress with a non-heteronormative account. I therefore suggest that we should be promoting *eudaimonia* as the standard in lieu of gender and sexual identification or orientation. We ought not to ask whether the presence of ovaries means a person must be docile and maternal; rather, we ought to ask whether an individual's disposition has been developed and shaped in a way that is conducive to one's overall well-being and *eudaimonia*. Under this model, the question about erotic relationships is not whether they promote heteronormative standards but whether the relationship contributes to the flourishing of the involved parties. The contribution to, or impairment of, flourishing ought to replace heteronormativity as our standard for relationships.

The heteronormative standards of gender and sexuality are harmful because they artificially limit a person's ability to develop character and good habits. In addition, the emphasis for relationships is on heterosexuality and not on the quality of character of the people in the relationship. A focus on whether a relationship exhibits the characteristics of the complete character-based erotic relationships, will prove more promising. When people are able engage in

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<sup>31</sup> A patriarchal society is one where males have control of the power and females are largely unable to wield power.

<sup>32</sup> While my primary emphasis is on how gender norms limit opportunities for women to be recognized as full human members of society, and deny to them opportunities granted without question to their male counterparts, men, too are harmed by this binary assignment of gender. The false dichotomy indicates that both men and women are to be defined by their reproductive potential. This limits, although not to the same degree nor with the same repercussions, the opportunities for men to choose freely. Instead of stressing that an individual should be masculine or feminine, independent of sex, there are reasons to think that we should be encouraging men and women to cultivate components of each side, that we should eliminate the binary assignment and focus instead on the cultivation of *eudaimonia*.

erotic relationships that contribute to habits consistent with moral virtue, they are more likely to flourish. Just as character friendships can help with moral development, character-based erotic relationships can aid in moral development. I propose that non-heteronormative relationships be given an equal footing with heteronormative relationships and that all should be evaluated based solely on whether they contribute significantly to *eudaimonia*.

## 1.9 CONCLUSION

While the Aristotelian account of *philia* is relatively complete, the account of *erōs* is incomplete. Aristotle's examination of *erōs* would be improved if it included utility-, pleasure- and virtue-based erotic relationships. To complete the account of *erōs*, the Aristotelian taxonomy of *philia* can fruitfully be applied to *erōs*. To accomplish this, in Chapter 2, I examine the role of *philia* and the means by which it contributes to the development of character consistent with the intellectual and ethical virtues. Moreover, I demonstrate that even the life of contemplation, the most self-sufficient life, will require external goods including *philia*. Because of the necessity of friends, I also argue that the well-ordered society will have to make character-based friendships possible.

In Chapter 3, I examine the role that the *polis* plays in the attainment of *eudaimonia*. I argue that the *polis* is obligated to provide the conditions under which primary *philia* can occur. In Chapter 4 I argue that we need to apply the standards of friendship to erotic relationship because erotic relationships can influence the development of character in the same way that friendships do. Having established the similarities between *philia* and *erōs*, I promote the argument that just as the *polis* has an obligation to create opportunities for primary friendships, it also has the obligation to protect primary erotic relationships. Just as it has with *philia*, then, the

*polis* will have an obligation to ensure that character-based erotic relationships are accepted so that people will have the opportunity to maximize their chance of attaining and maintaining *eudaimonia*.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I provide a contemporary analysis of modern erotic relationships using Aristotle's argument for character-based *philia* and the attainment of *eudaimonia*. On the view I develop here, we ought to apply Aristotle's taxonomy of *philia* to erotic relationships and thereby emphasize society's obligation to protect virtue-based erotic relationships. This will mean that we should be concerned with how an erotic relationship contributes to *eudaimonia* and not, as is currently too often the case, simply on whether it conforms to heteronormative standards.

## CHAPTER 2: *PHILIA* AND *EUDAIMONIA*

### 2.1 ARISTOTELIAN *PHILIA*

Two primary aims of the *Ethica Nicomachea* are to establish *eudaimonia* as the chief good for humans and to determine which conditions and activities contribute to, and secure, *eudaimonia*.

In his analysis, Aristotle argues that the development of excellent activities leading to excellent dispositions in the form of virtues are ultimately essential to the attainment of *eudaimonia*.

Throughout his works on the development of virtues, Aristotle devotes a significant amount of space to discussing *philia*: he spends one-fifth of the *Ethica Nicomachea* on it (Books VIII-IX), and it is also discussed in his *Rhetoric* (II.4), *Ethica Eudemia* (Book VII), and the contested *Magna Moralia* (II.12). Having examined *philia* in such detail across several works, it is safe to conclude that Aristotle believes friendly relationships are integral to human development and flourishing. Moreover, one is justified in concluding that a complete understanding of *philia* is necessary for understanding Aristotle's ethics as well as his theory of the development of virtues—specifically, the ethical virtues. To that end, in this chapter, I examine Aristotle's treatment of *philia* as it relates to the development of character and the ethical virtues. I also show that *philia* has a key role to play in the life of contemplation.

For Aristotle and his contemporaries, *philia* describes a more robust relationship than our current understanding of friendship. Contemporary friendship often depicts a relationship of pleasant or affectionate feelings between people. In recent decades, friendships include acquaintances as well as essential strangers in the case of social media. *Philia* goes beyond this, insofar as it has a significant role to play in the development of the ethical and intellectual virtues. Aristotelian *philia* covers a variety of types of relationships that reflect a person's object

of love and corresponding commitments.<sup>33</sup> These relationships bring with them the possibility of shaping one's character by more fully partaking in the intellectual virtues.

As we have seen, Aristotle divides *philia*, or friendship, into three types: the derivative friendships of utility and pleasure, and the complete or perfect friendships that are based on character or virtue in the *Ethica Nicomachea* (VIII.3). Each of these friendships refer to the object of love in the relationship (VIII.3 1156a). Friendships of utility are based on a recognition of benefit derived from the relationship (VIII.3 1156a). Friendships of pleasure are derived from a recognition that the relationship is pleasurable (VIII.3 1156a). Primary friendships, however, are possible only where the relationship is formed on the basis of mutual recognition of good character (VIII.3 1156b).

While these are quite different relationships, the three kinds of *philia* are similar insofar as they involve friendly feelings that are recognized and reciprocated (VIII.2 1155b, 1156a). These feelings go beyond mere fondness for another person: the recognized reciprocal feeling in question is what Aristotle calls good will, or mutual well-wishing (*eunoia*) (VIII.2 1155b). On Aristotle's view, to have good will toward another is to wish for what one thinks is best for the other just for the other's own sake (VIII.3 1156b).<sup>34</sup> This reciprocal good will is present in all forms of *philia* and is what sets *philia* apart from other relationships which do not require reciprocation or good will. Even in the case of the derivative forms of *philia* where the object of love is an external feature, friends will have this shared good will independent of the utility or pleasure generated. As such, Aristotelian *philia* requires more than do the looser relationships we might now call 'friendship.' As John M. Cooper explains, *philia* includes familial and non-

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<sup>33</sup> Love here does not mean erotic or romantic love; it is the emotion shared between friends.

<sup>34</sup> See, on this topic, John M. Cooper 1980, 302. Aristotle also specifies in the *Ars Rhetorica*, that friendship involves mutual well-wishing (II.3 1380b-1381a).

familial relationships as well as civic friendships, which may include business relationships, religious and political affiliations, and social clubs. Aristotle's conception of friendship, then, is more expansive than mutual feelings of affection.

While all three of the Aristotelian forms of *philia* share the feature of reciprocal good will, there is a significant difference that sets them apart: the source or cause of the mutual good will. In friendships of utility the reciprocal good will stems from a mutual understanding of reciprocal advantage or benefit. Similarly, pleasure-based friendships are founded on the reciprocal presence of pleasure as a result of the relationship. These friendships are derivative because they are dependent upon incidental or external characteristics (which may be temporary) of the individuals. Because these are qualified friendships they can be formed quickly and may only last a short while; the friendship will end when there is no longer benefit or pleasure (VIII.3 1156a). Complete friendships, on the other hand, are deemed primary because they are based on essential qualities without qualification, namely virtuous character traits. Friendships of this sort are founded in the mutual recognition of the goodness of one another's character—something that is essential and enduring. These relationships, then, will be difficult to form but equally difficult to dissolve (VIII.3 1156b).

## **2.2 PHILIA AND GOOD WILL**

The manner in which the derivative forms of friendship involve reciprocal good will deserves a more detailed examination. For since it appears that what one loves in the case of the derivative friendships is an instrumentally valuable feature (utility or pleasure) and not the friends themselves, one could easily assume that these friendships are self-centered and lack reciprocal well-wishing for the other's sake. On such an interpretation, the object of love is the external



feature of pleasure or utility and not an essential quality of the friend. Such an interpretation could be supported by Aristotle's own handling of the derivative forms of friendship. In both cases, he takes the two parties to be friends because of incidental features and not for the friends themselves (IX.1 1164a, VIII.4 1157a, IX.3 1165b). This seems to support the interpretation that one is focused on well-wishing for oneself and not on good will towards the friend for the friend's sake. If so, then complete friendships are the only ones that meet the criterion of having reciprocal good will between friends.

Cooper (1980, 310), for example, rejects this restrictive construal by suggesting that the assumption that only complete friends express good will is the result of an improper translation of the text at VIII. 2 1155b, mainly of *dia* ('because'). The view that derivative friendships are the result of incidental features relies on taking *dia* to mean 'cause of.' On this translation, that which causes the loving feelings is the pleasure or advantage and not the friend. According to this reading, one might be justified in concluding that one loves not the friend but the personal benefits provided by them. But Cooper argues that a more appropriate translation of Aristotle's *dia* in this context is not 'cause of' but 'in recognition of' (Cooper, 1980, 310-311). On this reading, one has good will towards the friend out of recognition that the friend has the quality of being able to provide pleasure or utility. That is, one can appreciate the benefit or pleasure the friend provides, while nevertheless wishing them well for their own sake because one appreciates the type of person the friend is. Cooper states: "A full-fledged friendship will exist, then, when such intentions are recognized by both parties as existing reciprocally" (Cooper, 1980, 311). On this understanding of *dia*, Cooper rightly argues that the recognition of reciprocal intentions is a feature of both primary friendship and the derivative types. On his translation, one has good will towards friends in recognition of admirable traits such as benefit, pleasure, or good ethical

character. All three forms of friendship, then, require reciprocal good will for the sake of another and not merely for self-centered motivations.

Cooper's reading has the advantage that it is more consistent with Aristotle's treatment of *philia* and good will throughout the *Ethica Nicomachea*, the *Ethica Eudemia*, and the *Ars Rhetorica*. In each of these treatises, Aristotle makes reciprocal good will between the friends a defining feature of *philia*. In the *Ethica Nicomachea*, for example, he states that "friendship demands that one wish a friend good things for his sake.... [F]riendship, people say, is good will between reciprocating parties" (VIII.2 1155b).

Aristotle goes on to question whether just any feeling of good will can count as a friendship—for example, good will towards someone who is unaware of the presence of this good will. He answers his own question: "but how could one call them friends, if they are not aware of their mutual feelings? If there is to be friendship, the parties must have good will towards each other, i.e. wish good things for each other, and be aware of the other's doing so, the feeling being brought about by one of the three things mentioned" (VIII.2 1156a). And in the *Ethica Eudemia* Aristotle is clear that the mere presence of good will is not sufficient for *philia*: he argues that it is a feature of all three forms of *philia* that good will is felt towards a friend for their own sake and not merely for one's own sake (VII.7 1241a). Aristotle explains that if one only wishes well for one's own sake, i.e. merely because of the personal advantage of benefit or pleasure, this does not constitute friendship. Likewise, in *Ars Rhetorica* II.4, Aristotle defines *philia* as wanting what is good for another for another's sake, and not one's own. By Aristotle's own definition, *philia* requires reciprocal good will between friends. This supports Cooper's view that *dia* means 'in recognition of' and not 'cause of.' Aristotle's own handling of *philia* requires reciprocal good will to set it apart from other relationships.

While all three forms of Aristotelian *philia* share the criterion of reciprocal good will, it does not follow that they share all of the same criteria of friendship. The fundamental difference between the types of *philia* is that primary friendships are unqualified, i.e. not influenced by incidental properties, while friendships of benefit and pleasure center feelings of good will on a recognition of incidental features belonging to the friend. That is, friendships of utility and pleasure are primarily dependent upon features of the friend that are external rather than essential to the friend. Even though one may recognize that a friend's ability to provide a benefit is a quality or property of that friend, that quality will be an incidental one; hence one's recognition of the friend's value will still be tied to an incidental feature.

Complete friendships, on the other hand, are based on a recognition of a goodness of character that is not incidental. One's character is a definitive feature of the person. In this case, the friend is loved for the essential value of good character and not for an incidental or external feature that is pleasant or useful. Thus, while all three forms of *philia* require the mutual well-wishing for another's sake and not one's own personal advantage, they differ significantly in terms of the recognition that leads to good will. The ideal, most perfect, causes of reciprocal good will are the friendships based on character as they are founded on a definitive and enduring, not incidental and temporary, characteristic of the friend.

## **2.4 COMPLETE *PHILIA***

In contrast to derivative friendships, complete friendships are more complex and harder to attain. Such friendships form only when the friends recognize the virtuous character in one another and for that reason have reciprocal good will. It follows from Aristotle's description of the character-based, or ethical, virtues in the *Ethica Nicomachea* that the individual development of good

character is difficult, time intensive and rare (VIII.3 1156b). Since primary friendship can only be achieved after both parties have first gone through the process of developing good character, and the development of good character is very difficult, complete friendships will be rare.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, such friendships will be rare because it is so difficult to recognize the ethical virtues in another person. Such an ability to properly recognize these traits is not possible unless the friends have had the time to develop trust and know one another (Cooper, 1980, 308; VIII.3 1156b).

The conditions under which these friendships form are such that, barring physical separation or distance that prevents the friends from interacting, character friendship will be consistent and permanent (VIII.3 1156b; Cooper, 1980, 309). While these friendships are difficult to form, once formed they are equally difficult to dissolve. Further, they will be pivotal for *eudaimonia*, or the flourishing life.

## **2.5 PHILIA AND EUDAIMONIA**

In the *Ethica Nicomachea* and the *Ethica Eudemia*, Aristotle outlines the ways in which one can attain *eudaimonia*. For the development of the ethical virtues, the emphasis is on one's ability to identify the mean and cultivate habits consistent with good character. The virtuous person has *phronēsis*, which is excellent intellectual activity about practical issues. *Phronēsis* and the ethical virtues will require a combination of educational guidance (mainly by using virtuous people as a way of informing one of what is right and wrong) and habituation of excellent activities. In contrast, with respect to the intellectual virtues, Aristotle's emphasis is on excellent contemplation resulting from proper education and instruction.

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<sup>35</sup> The youth, for example, are incapable of forming such friendships as they are unstable on Aristotle's account (VIII.3)

Aristotle's assertion that the (primary) friend is another self (IV.12 1171b) can shed some light on this matter. But how should we understand this assertion? On one interpretation, the friend acts as a mirror through which one can learn about one's own virtue. Such an interpretation is supported by *Magna Moralia* II.12 which discusses the reasons that a self-sufficient person will still need friends, and specifically primary friends:<sup>36</sup>

Since then it is both a most difficult thing, as some of the sages have said, to attain a knowledge of oneself, and also a most pleasant (for to know oneself is pleasant)—now we are not able to see what we are from ourselves (and that we cannot do so is plain from the way in which we blame others without being aware that we do the same things ourselves; and this is the effect of favour or passion, and there are many of us who are blinded by these things so that we judge not aright); as then when we wish to see our own face, we do so by looking into the mirror, in the same way when we wish to know ourselves we can obtain that knowledge by looking at our friend. For the friend is, as we assert, a second self. If, then, it is pleasant to know oneself, and it is not possible to know this without having some one else for a friend, the self-sufficing man will require friendship in order to know himself. (II.12 1213a)

On this account, knowledge of oneself is most pleasant yet difficult to obtain. In order to better see oneself and know oneself, it is beneficial to see oneself as reflected in a mirror. The true friend, being another self, provides that mirror. One sees one's own good actions reflected in those of primary friends, and this helps one to better understand one's good actions, including areas of similarity with respect to the possession of good attributes.<sup>37</sup> Cooper is one proponent of this interpretation, which he dubs the "reassurance argument." According to Cooper, roughly speaking, the friend serves as a mirror to confirm, or reassure one of, one's own possession of virtues. Citing Aristotle (*EN* IX.9 1169b-1170) Cooper claims that it is easier to see the good in a

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<sup>36</sup> Despite the contested nature of the *Magna Moralia*, Cooper says that it fills a gap that is left by the *EN* and *EE*. In these latter texts, Aristotle does not articulate the desire to study good actions which cannot be accomplished in isolation (Cooper, 1980, 324). I share Cooper's reason for utilizing the *MM*.

<sup>37</sup> Mavis Biss (2011) examines and describes the 'friend as a mirror' argument. Ultimately, she rejects 'the friend as another self' and argues that the friend is a partner in moral perception. Biss's 2011 view is discussed in more detail below.

friend than in oneself and that upon seeing the good in the friend, one can understand the good in oneself. On Cooper's reading, it is difficult to adequately see oneself in a way that permits accurate self-contemplation, even if one has reached the self-sufficient life. As it is easier to observe and contemplate the friend, the friend serves as a mirror that reflects one's own goodness. As the friend is another self, the good in the friend is similar to the good in oneself (Cooper, 1977, 301-302). In contemplating a friend's goodness, one will have reassurance of one's own goodness.

Cooper's interpretation is, however, open to criticism. A second approach, one that goes beyond this idea of friend-as-mirror, holds that the friend provides more than just a reflection from which we can learn. Rather, friends are beneficial because they, specifically in the primary friendships, provide us with the means to accumulate self-knowledge. On this view, it is not so much that the friend reassures one of one's own virtue as that the friend creates an opportunity to attain self-knowledge, which, at least according to the *Magna Moralia*, is the most pleasant (II.12 1213a). Mavis Biss makes such an argument in response to the discussion of the necessity of self-knowledge made by Aristotle in the *Ethica Eudemia* VII.12. According to Biss, the idea of the primary friend as a mere mirror is too superficial to adequately account for what Aristotle is trying to convey with the discussion of a friend as a mirror and another self. For Biss, Aristotelian primary friendships will be more robust and will contribute more to the attainment of *eudaimonia* than they do on the friend-as-mirror interpretation. Biss argues that primary friends allow one to establish a shared perception and to go beyond that shared perception to attain self-knowledge, which is essential for the flourishing life. Being another self, the primary friend gives one an opportunity to contemplate oneself in a way that would not be possible without the friend. The nature of the friendship, founded on loving feelings as a result of the

recognition of virtuous character, is well-suited to help facilitate such knowledge and contemplation (Biss, 2011, 126).

On this interpretation, the reflection of virtues is more than just a reassurance of one's own virtuous character. Rather, the reciprocal loving and well-wishing will be based on virtuous character granting one the opportunity to better *contemplate* one's own virtues. This is made possible because the friend is, according to Aristotle, another self. As another self, the friend will exhibit the same virtues as oneself.<sup>38</sup> On Biss's account, one can look at the friend and recognize and contemplate shared virtues. She takes it a step further, however, to distinguish her view from the friend-as-mirror argument. Biss holds that this ability to contemplate one's own virtues comes from "active engagement with a partner in perception who generally shares one's moral perception" (125).<sup>39</sup> In such interactions complete friends will engage in activities that allow them to get pleasure from the good (127). In contrast to Cooper, for Biss, the desire for self-knowledge cannot be attained merely through the knowledge of one's own character (129). Rather, this desire for self-knowledge will inspire the friends to engage in the activity of perception of the good. The mirror, on the other hand, merely reflects similarities between the friends. On Biss's view, the friend can draw attention to their differences, which can allow one to better contemplate oneself and one's own virtue (130-131).<sup>40</sup> As Biss states, "fully understanding another person's point of view expands one's powers of moral perception" (133). The primary

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<sup>38</sup> This is due to the unity of the virtues, under which if a person is virtuous, they possess all of the virtues. Biss notes, however, that while the virtuous person has all of the virtues, it is possible that people may possess the virtues in different ways due to the uniqueness of their circumstances (131).

<sup>39</sup> Another way in which Biss's account differs from Cooper's is that, in the latter, the friend-as-mirror can help one become more virtuous whereas Biss requires that the relationships be between "adult individuals who already have formed virtuous characters" (125).

<sup>40</sup> While Biss requires that primary friendships occur between virtuous adults, she does not require that the friends be identical with respect to virtue. Because the mean will vary from person to person, it is possible for friends to share virtues in different degrees. Both friends may be generous, but given individual differences, the friends may be generous in differing degrees (131).

friend allows one to further contemplate the scope of the virtues and allows one to consider different ways one may act if circumstances were different. The end goal, then, is not mere reassurance but providing the means of perception and contemplation of the good. The contemplation of the virtues will be part of the ideal life of contemplation that Aristotle describes in *EN X*. The value of this type of *philia* ought to be clear for a person who has not attained *eudaimonia*; after all, exposure to virtues (whether through action, education, or contemplation) is essential to secure the habits that contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia*.<sup>41</sup> But a pressing question remains: what role, if any, does *philia* play in the life of the self-sufficient or *eudaimōn* person?

## **2.6 SELF-SUFFICIENCY (AUTARKEIA) AND *PHILIA***

As stated above, *philia*, particularly primary or complete friendship, may help one attain, or further develop, the virtues through providing the opportunity to contemplate and recognize virtues both in a friend and in oneself. Complete friendships also provide opportunities for one to behave in virtuous ways. The primary friend creates an opportunity, for example, to exhibit altruism because the friend represents a person toward whom one wants to do good things for the friend's own benefit. In being altruistic toward the friend, one can attain, or broaden, the virtue of altruism through habituation of the altruistic actions towards one's friend. The friendship creates an opportunity for one to show, and act on, concern for another person while acting on what is good for the friend.<sup>42</sup> Thus Aristotle can make a strong argument that *philia* is pivotal in the attainment and development of the virtues (especially the ethical virtues).

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example *EN I.7*, where Aristotle discusses happiness deriving from instruction and/or habituation.

<sup>42</sup> The opportunities for virtuous actions are not limited to the interactions with friends. One can act altruistically toward strangers, acquaintances, etc. The primary difference is that friendships are relationships that are formed in such a way that acting virtuously is easier and more natural than it is with a stranger. With friends, you already have



However, the role of *philia* in the self-sufficient (*autarkeia*) or flourishing life itself is less clear.<sup>43</sup> The more pressing question is: what place, if any, does a friend have in the *eudaimōn* life? In *Ethica Nicomachea* X, Aristotle maintains that the life of activity of the intellectual virtues, or contemplation, will be most self-sufficient (X.7 1177a-1177b). The life of contemplation will also be the most blessed, happy, and complete of lives available to humans. As the life of contemplation is the most self-sufficient for humans, the role, or necessity, of friends in the life of contemplation requires explanation. Aristotle poses this question in the *Ethica Eudemia* when he asks of the self-sufficient man, “why would he need a friend” (VII.12.1-2)? Aristotle makes a similar inquiry in the *Ethica Nicomachea* when he asks of the happy and self-sufficient person:

will he need friends or not? For people say that those who are blessedly self-sufficient have no need of friends, since the things that are good they already have, and so, since they are self-sufficient, they need nothing further (IX.8 1169b).

It seems *prima facie* doubtful that a self-sufficient person should need external goods including friends. After all, self-sufficiency and completeness suggest that everything that is needed is possessed by the flourishing person. Echoing Aristotle’s question, Cooper inquires whether the perfect person will need friends (1980, 317). To say that a self-sufficient person needs friends seems to suggest that friendship fulfills a need or provides something the flourishing person lacks; yet it seems that the self-sufficient person should not lack anything, and so have no need of a friend to fulfill such a lack. Thus, while it is clear that *philia* contributes to the attainment of

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a built-in reciprocal loving feeling toward the friend which gives the preliminary motivation to treat the friend virtuously. With complete friends, the recognition of virtuous character will amplify the desire to behave virtuously.  
<sup>43</sup> *Autarkeia* for Aristotle would not be what we think of as being self-sufficient. Rather, the ‘self-sufficient’ that he speaks of includes sufficiency for those one loves, which will include family, friends, fellow citizens (*EN* I.7 1097b). ‘Self-sufficient,’ while a common translation, does not quite convey what is meant by Aristotle. Aristotle is referencing a ‘complete’ or ‘flourishing’ person, not one that needs nothing.

the ethical virtues and the self-sufficient life, it is questionable whether the friend is needed once the self-sufficient life has been attained, that is, in the life of contemplation.

Donald N. Schroeder entertains the following possible defense of Aristotle's view that the self-sufficient person nevertheless needs friends. According to what Schroeder calls the "pleasure argument," the good, or self-sufficient, person needs character-friends because of the pleasure derived from contemplating the friend's virtuous actions. In contemplating the character-friend's virtuous activities, the good person will encounter a "pleasant apperception" that is consistent with the good life (1992, 206). This supports the interpretation that friends are a necessary component that contributes to the self-sufficient life being the most pleasurable. In contemplating virtuous activities of one's friend, one is able to experience a higher order pleasure that is consistent with *eudaimonia*. Schroeder argues that while it is true that character-friendships will result in a unique and desirable pleasure, it is unlikely that this is the actual reason that the good person will need friends. The principal problem with this approach, Schroeder notes, is that it runs the risk of reducing primary friendships to pleasure-based relationships rather than character-based relationships (206).

The views arguing for the necessity of friends for the contemplative person have thus far failed to appropriately describe the relationship between the self-sufficient person and complete friends. The arguments given above are problematic as they run the risk of making primary friends of merely instrumental or pleasurable value. In the mirror, or reassurance, argument, the friend is a tool that helps one better understand one's own good. In the pleasure argument, the friend is reduced to creating pleasurable reactions. These views end up providing a justification for friends that may reduce all friendship to friendships of pleasure and utility; and Aristotle is clear that the self-sufficient person will have little use for such friends (IX.9 1169b).

Schroeder argues that these approaches are inadequate because they essentially reduce primary friendships to the derivative friendships, and that if we are to understand why Aristotle deems friends necessary for the self-sufficient person, we need to identify the ways in which friends are *absolutely* good and not merely instrumentally so. To support this, Schroeder points to the *Ethica Nicomachea* where Aristotle acknowledges that there may be instrumental benefits to true friendships, but the true value of these friendships will be “good and pleasant absolutely” (VIII.4 1157b). While it is true that primary friendships will be pleasurable and beneficial, the primary *reason* that one needs primary friendships will be because such friendships are good in themselves and not for their incidental features. As Schroeder puts it, “while virtue-friendship is both useful and pleasant, these do not constitute its essential goodness. Rather, its utility and pleasantness is a consequence of its primary goodness” (206). For both Aristotle and Schroeder, true friendship will be good in and of itself and not merely for instrumental reasons such as pleasure and utility. On Schroeder’s view, the nature of humanity is such that it requires external goods such as complete *philia*, not because of instrumental value but because of an absolute good.

To explain why the self-sufficient person needs true friends, Aristotle notes a peculiarity: it seems odd to “assign all good things to the happy person and not give him friends, something that seems greatest of the external goods” (IX.9 1169b). It hardly makes sense to assert that the flourishing person will have all goods *except* friends. The *eudaimōn* person will live a flourishing life that contains all goods. Friends, primarily true friends, will be among the goods that the flourishing person possesses. In the case of the self-sufficient person, the friends are not fulfilling a lack so much as they are being included in the goods that contribute to the flourishing life. For Aristotle, even the self-sufficient person will require external goods, and these ought to

include friends—specifically primary friends. Second, Aristotle holds that “no one would choose to live without friends, even if he had all the other good things” (VIII.1 1155). Friends, then, are the type of external good that even the perfectly happy person would want to live in company with (VIII.5 1157b). These goods are not merely instrumentally valuable, but are valuable in their own right.

On Aristotle’s own description, a self-sufficient person could hardly be considered truly happy living in isolation, denied the good of friends (IX.9 1169b, *EE* VII.I.51234b). Cooper elaborates this point: “It is reasonable, I think, to assume that human nature is inherently such that no human being can provide entirely from within himself the sources of his interest and pleasure in his life and the activities that make it up” (1980, 329). Human nature is such, according to Aristotle (and echoed by Cooper), that living a life of solitude will not fulfill the interests, activities, needs, and pleasures of a flourishing person. Such an isolated life would be incomplete and would hinder flourishing because humans need external goods to thrive. A self-sufficient life, according to Aristotle, will be the *most* complete life available to humans. ‘Complete’ in this sense includes the possession of all the essential goods because a self-sufficient, complete life does not mean for Aristotle a solitary life devoid of external goods.

A self-sufficient life, then, is different from an isolated life. The self-sufficient person, after all, will still require external goods such as friendship. Friendship can be consistent with, if not necessary for, a flourishing life (IX 9 1169b). In the *Magna Moralia* Aristotle explains that the complete life will contain friends when he says:

Again, if it is a fine thing, as it is, to do good when one has the goods of fortune, to whom will he do good? And with whom will he live? For surely he will not spend his time alone; for to live with some one is pleasant and necessary. If, then, these things are fine and pleasant and necessary, and these things cannot be without friendship, the self-sufficing man will need friendship too (II.15 1213b).

For Aristotle, then, friends (primarily true friends) will be an essential part of the flourishing life. Even in the life of contemplation, the *eudaimōn* person will have needs for friends.<sup>44</sup>

## 2.7 FRIENDS, ACTIVITY, AND SELF-SUFFICENCY

In addition to being an external good that is part of the complete life, Aristotle also associates true friends with activities of the self-sufficient life. For Aristotle, flourishing is an activity in accordance with excellence. The flourishing, or self-sufficient, person, will be engaged in activities that contribute to flourishing. In *EN* IX.9 1169b, Aristotle reiterates that the happiness of the self-sufficient person “lies in living and being active.” In addition to engaging in good activities, the good and flourishing person wants to study and contemplate good actions.

Aristotle again notes that it is easier to observe and contemplate a friend’s virtuous activities than one’s own (IX.9 1169b). Because actions of good friends will be good and pleasant, a flourishing person will need good friends with whom to complete activities and study (IX.9 1170a).<sup>45</sup>

One way to partake in excellent activities is possible when living with a friend. In living with a friend, one has the opportunity to converse, contemplate, and act excellently (IX.9 1170b). This interpretation is supported by the *Magna Moralia*, where Aristotle argues that self-knowledge is a prerequisite for flourishing and that the only, or at least the best, way to acquire it is via friendship (II.15 1213b). Cooper shares this interpretation and explains that “It is only or best in character-friendship that one can come to know oneself—to know the objective quality of

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<sup>44</sup> In section 2.5 I argued that primary friends can help one develop ethical virtues through reflection and contemplation of one’s virtuous nature. This will similarly apply to intellectual virtues. One of the reasons that the self-sufficient person needs primary friends is that it will create the opportunities to engage in excellent contemplative activity with one another. See section 2.7 below.

<sup>45</sup> Cooper (1980, 323) advocates this interpretation.

one's own actions, character, and life" (1980, 324). Friends play a pivotal role in the exercise of excellent activities.

In this same vein, Cooper asserts that primary friendships have an additional value in the life of contemplation. First, Aristotle holds that knowledge of oneself will be pleasurable and desirable (*EN* IX.9 1170b). As stated in 2.5, it is easier to observe one's friend than to observe oneself. The goodness of one's friend is akin to one's own because the friend is a second self. Insofar as the friends are similar, the friend can help one better contemplate and exercise one's own goodness. Insofar as the friends are different (for example, the way that Biss argues friends can have varying degrees of the virtues), the friend can help one become more excellent in the areas that are lacking. The good life, as well as the awareness of it, is pleasant and desirable. The primary friend, being virtuous, will be living the good life. By extension, one can observe and contemplate the good life through contemplating the primary friend. Because the friend fulfills this role, one will find the friend to be both desirable and pleasurable. One cannot satisfy the desire of awareness of a friend (or the good as depicted by a friend), nor oneself, except by "living in company with him" (IX.9 1170b).<sup>46</sup> Once again, since flourishing involves good and pleasant activities and we can study others more easily than ourselves, a flourishing person needs friends, and mainly primary friends, with whom to engage in excellent activities.

Cooper states that "According to Aristotle we value, and are right to value, friendship so highly because it is only in and through intimate friendship that we can come to know ourselves and to regard our lives constantly as worth living" (1980, 332). The primary friend both serves as a means to understand oneself and creates the opportunity to partake in activities that allow one to experience virtues, even within the life of contemplation. Amélie O. Rorty notes that

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<sup>46</sup> Cooper (1980, 318) takes a similar stance.

friendship “provides that sense of our lives as one whole *energeia*, pleasurable when properly lived and contemplable when properly understood” (1980, 389). Friends share activities that may include thinking and contemplation, which are pleasant for the self-sufficient person. Further, Rorty notes that a primary friend as another self lets us understand the excellence of humanity as a species. Rorty claims that it “is for this reason that it is not inappropriate for Aristotle to say that we *contemplate* rather than merely see our friends” (1980, 390). On this reading, our primary friends provide an opportunity for excellent contemplation which is essential to the self-sufficient life.

Rorty also notes an objection, one that can be resolved easily: Aristotle emphasizes both the necessity of friendship to the well-lived life and “the priority of self-sufficient, self-contained *energeiai*” (1980, 389). Rorty concludes that Aristotle does not need to justify friendship for the life of contemplation in the sense of how it furthers self-development. Rather, friendship is part of the intrinsically worthy self-sufficient life (1980, 389).

Moreover, primary friends will be necessary because excellent activity is difficult in isolation; i.e., the flourishing person will need character-friends with whom to do good activities.

As Aristotle explains:

for an isolated person, life is difficult, for being continuously active is not easy by oneself, but is easier in the company of people different from oneself, and in relation to others. Consequently his activity will be more continuous, being pleasant in itself, which is a necessary condition of blessedness; for the good man, in so far as he is good, delights in actions in accordance with excellence .... Living in the company of good people may also provide a training in excellence (IX.9 1170a).

Shared activities with true friends enable one to maintain interest, pleasure, and engagement in the ethical and intellectual activities necessary for the flourishing life. As Cooper puts it, “The need for self-knowledge [does not] ... undermine or render doubtful the recognition of the worth

of the other person and his life which we think (and Aristotle emphasizes in his opening account of what friendship is) is essential to any relationship deserving of that name” (1980, 334, 330). Friends give us an opportunity to observe virtues in action, which allows us to better understand our own virtues and how to maintain a virtuous character. Further, friends help us engage in the excellent activity that is consistent with the flourishing life.

These shared activities with the true friend create further opportunities for flourishing. According to Cooper, the shared activities Aristotle is discussing share three properties. First, there is a shared and mutually known common good. Second, there is a mutual understanding of everyone’s roles in achieving the goal. Finally, each agrees to, and does, one’s share in what Cooper refers to as the “common effort” (1980, 327). On Cooper’s reading of Aristotle, then, engaging in an activity shared with someone whom one rightfully admires increases the value of the activity (or at least will confirm the value) and gives direct experience that is worthwhile. Cooper sees this as advantageous because it allows one to be at least indirectly involved in all of the stages of activities, through engagement with the friend. By sharing activities with a primary friend, one’s ability to engage in good activities is extended. That is, shared activities involve more opportunities for contact and, therefore, higher enjoyment and interest. A perfect person living the life of contemplation, therefore, will benefit from the presence of primary friends because it will allow for more opportunities to experience and participate more fully in good activities, including contemplation.

The friendships of the primary kind are better suited for aiding in the attainment and maintenance of *eudaimonia* than are the derivative kinds of friendship. First, Aristotle notes that the flourishing person will have no need for useful friends (as one is self-sufficient and complete) and will have no, or only limited, need for friendships of pleasure (IX.9 1169b;



XI.11). Second, the confirmation of the friend's virtue is what gives way to the primary friendship. Confirming that the friend is worth admiring and is virtuous requires knowing the friend in a way that is not available outside of character friendship. Such confirmation requires significant time and the presence of certain essential properties. The derivative friendships, on the other hand, are quickly formed and are focused on incidental characteristics and are not lasting, so they will not provide the conditions under which character can be known and virtuous activities can be shared. Primary friendships, by contrast, will meet these conditions and so will contribute to the flourishing life. In short, the self-sufficient person will need character-based friends but will have little use for the derivative friendship of pleasure. Moreover, Aristotle notes that primary friendships will be long lasting and will be good without qualification, beneficial, and pleasant (VIII.3 1156b).

Schroeder supports Aristotle's view that there is yet another reason why friends are essential in the self-sufficient life: "friendship, being an indispensable condition in the sense of being constitutive of happiness, must be involved in the excellent exercise of *nous*" (1992, 209). To attain *eudaimonia* one must use one's own rational faculties in accordance with excellence, and mainly the best and most perfect of the human excellences or virtues, i.e. *nous*. This final good requires friendship as an essential component of the life of virtue. On Schroeder's view, like Aristotle's, primary friends are indispensable. Such friends provide opportunities through which one can attain self-love. The friend, through contemplation of the virtues and excellent activities, creates the opportunity for one to better understand oneself and thus love oneself. Schroeder argues that self-love and *philia* share properties that contribute to the self-sufficient life. According to his analysis of IX.4 1166a1-10, those properties are: "(1) promoting the good of the other for the other's sake, (2) desiring the existence and preservation of the other for the

other's sake, (3) enjoying the company of the other, (4) desiring the same things as the other, and (5) sharing the other's joys and sorrows" (1992, 209). These properties are common to both the love of self and the love Aristotle calls *philia*. When one loves one's best part, the intellect (*nous*), one is said to be a true lover of self, and one will have developed the best part of oneself. Schroeder holds that the flourishing person will have acquired the virtues, or the best things, for themselves and that, as a result, will be worthy of self-love. The self-love, then, hinges on the possession of good qualities, and not merely on a love of self-identity (1992, 210). Schroeder's interpretation, unlike other arguments for the necessity for friends, emphasizes the ways in which primary friends contribute to excellent rational activity.

Having established that self-love and *philia* share the same properties, Schroeder argues that we can draw a parallel between self-love and *philia*. We recognize the goodness or virtue in others as we recognize the goodness in ourselves. In recognition of that goodness we want what is good for the other, wish for their preservation, enjoy their company, desire the same things, and share in their joys and sorrows. Schroeder points to Aristotle's affirmation:

So because these attitudes each belong to the decent character in relation to himself, and because he is to his friend as he is to himself (for his friend is another self), friendship is actually thought to be one or other of the attitudes in question, and friends those who have them .... because friendship in its superior form resembles one's love for oneself. (IX.4 1166a30-3).

Because the primary friend is good, and the friend reflects the good in oneself, Schroeder's interpretation lends itself to the conclusion that to know one's friend is to know one's own goodness. In knowing the goodness of one's friend and oneself, one expresses love towards the goodness of each. From this, it follows more or less that true love for oneself and for one's friends is also a love of the good.

Schroeder states that “[i]n Book X we learn that the life of contemplation is the most self-sufficient because it is done for its own sake and requires the fewest of external goods. Hence, it is the happiest of lives .... however, [Aristotle] admits that contemplation can be done even better with others” (1992, 211). This is supported by the text: at X.8 1178b, Aristotle suggests that if humans had been different, for example like the gods, they might have been able to get these results without friends, in which case the necessity of friends could rightfully have been called into question. However, since humans are imperfect, they require friends to fully understand themselves and to appreciate the value of their lives.

On Schroeder’s view, while it is true that the self-sufficient person will require *fewer* external goods than the non-flourishing person, they will nevertheless require external goods, including primary friends, due to the necessity of external goods. Humans are unable to reach the virtues on their own and so require friends to help them acquire the moral virtues and to engage in the activities consistent with the contemplative virtues. Because of this, humans are incapable of sustaining their own lives and flourishing independently. Therefore, self-sufficiency for humans means something different than it does for gods: gods can flourish in isolation because they are invulnerable, whereas humans need others to aid in the attainment and maintenance of flourishing. On Cooper’s view as well, it is only through activities shared with friends that a human, unlike a god, can find life “continuously interesting and pleasurable” (1980, 325).

On Aristotle’s account, however, one needs friends, not because of one’s own individual faults or imperfection, but because of the type of being humans are. The self-sufficient person will still need friends because of the social nature of human beings. As social beings, humans require relationships with others, specifically primary friends, to flourish. Schroeder notes that as part of this social activity of friendship, through mutual awareness of and sharing of activities,

humans can perfect contemplative activities (1992, 212). For Aristotle, human self-sufficiency does not mean being completely solitary. Rather, because humans are by nature social and political beings, human self-sufficiency includes both the self and the people with whom one is in relationships.<sup>47</sup>

Aristotle calls the life of contemplation the *most* self-sufficient for humans; unlike the gods, humans cannot be wholly self-sufficient. In *EN* Book I Aristotle says, “By self-sufficient’, we do not mean sufficient for oneself alone, for the person living the life of isolation, but also for one’s parents, children, wife, and generally those one loves, and one’s fellow citizens, since man is by nature a civic being” (I.7 1097b).<sup>48</sup> Aristotle is just as clear in the *Ethica Eudemia* and *Magna Moralia* as he is in the *Ethica Nicomachea* that this is due to human nature, which is distinct from divine nature. Unlike gods, humans are unable to be fully self-sufficient and complete; for while a god “just is his own good condition”, the flourishing person’s goodness stems from external conditions (as does its maintenance) (*EE* VII. 12.12 1245b). And since Aristotle’s inquiry in all three ethical treatises is about the self-sufficiency of humans and not of gods, the self-sufficient life for humans will not be equivalent to that of the gods (*MM* 1213a). Aristotle claims that one wants what one thinks is good for the friend for their friend’s sake. However, they do not want their friends to become gods, even though that would be a divine, or ideal, life, because then the friend would cease to be human.<sup>49</sup> Since humans will not be able to flourish in isolation, they will still need friendships once the life of contemplation has been attained.

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<sup>47</sup> I give a fuller discussion of what Aristotle means when he states that humans are political animals in 3.1.

<sup>48</sup> See also IX.9 1169b where Aristotle again says that the blessed person would not live in isolation.

<sup>49</sup> Cooper reinforces this interpretation of Aristotle and the self-sufficient person (1980, 314).

Schroeder likewise argues that human self-sufficiency includes relationships with others, breaking this down in the following way:

(1) a good (happy) person is self-sufficient; (2) 'self-sufficiency' for human beings is consistent with having friends; (3) this is because a friend is another self; (4) this extension of self is a result of the mutual awareness of each other engaging in the most divine of activities (especially contemplation) (1992, 213).

Friends love each other due to a shared awareness and appreciation of their goodness. In particular, the recognition and appreciation of the *nous* of the friend is the motivation for the friendship. For Schroeder, then, there is a shared consciousness of the good between the friends which allows each of them to become a more virtuous and happier person (214).

Moreover, on Schroeder's view, the self-sufficient person will be able to contemplate good actions. First, one will be able to contemplate one's own good actions. Second, one will be able to contemplate the good actions of the friend. As the friend is another self, Schroeder's interpretation of Aristotle means that a friend's actions are also in a way one's own.

Contemplation of a friend's good activities is akin to contemplating one's own good activities, which will fulfill one's desire to contemplate good activities. This will enable one to contemplate more activities than if one were only contemplating one's own direct activities (215).

By virtue of having formed a primary friendship, the friends will become aware of one another's *nous*. This awareness, in turn, will allow each to better contemplate the divine. Contemplating the divine is one of the marks of a good person, for Aristotle, so Schroeder believes that the best way for one to complete this activity will be provided through interactions with friends (217). For Schroeder, it the recognition of a friend's well-developed *nous* and knowing the friend as another self that will further aid in the contemplation of the divine. According to Schroeder, "[a]s one becomes aware of the *nous* of the other, it becomes one's

own” (217). It is through this shared awareness of each other’s *nous* that the friend truly becomes another self.

Thus, on Schroeder’s interpretation of Aristotle, shared awareness between character-friends will “enhance the qualities of both friends” (218). Aristotle considers the contemplation of the divine to be one of the best and most pleasant activities for humans. Contemplation of the divine, or *nous* on Schroeder’s account, is difficult for humans because of human limitations. However, humans can more completely contemplate the divine and *nous* through a primary friendship.

A final argument for the necessity of friends comes from Cooper, in contrast to Schroeder. Cooper states that those who question the necessity of friendship for the blessedly happy have misunderstood Aristotle. It is mistaken to view the need for friends as constituting a deficiency, a defect that prevents the flourishing person from being completely fulfilled. Cooper argues that Aristotle is asking whether having friends is a necessary condition of for a flourishing life and not whether having friends *improves* a flourishing life (1980, 318). Criticism of the necessity of friends, he says, is often misguided because it assumes that friends *improve* the quality of life for the perfect person. However, the role of character friends is not such that they correct a deficit (that is, improve a life that is lacking); rather, the friend is a necessary component of the self-sufficient life itself.

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

For Aristotle, *philia* is a condition that facilitates the development of the moral virtues by providing opportunities to engage in, and contemplate, good activities. Additionally, *philia* enables one to better understand oneself and the quality of one’s character. In addition to helping

one attain the virtues, *philia* may help facilitate the maintenance of the virtues by providing the external goods that will contribute to the contemplative life. *Philia* helps one complete the excellent activities and contemplate the divine, both of which are part of the good life. The self-sufficient person, then, will still have a need for primary friends.

In the next chapter, I examine the ways in which one's environment can provide the conditions that make primary friends possible. I argue that the *polis* has the obligation to create an environment that makes flourishing possible, which includes creating situations where primary friendships are possible.

## CHAPTER 3: THE *POLIS*

### 3.1 THE *POLIS* AND POLITICAL ANIMALS

As we have seen, Aristotle's view is that even self-sufficient human beings living the life of contemplation need certain external goods, including friends. These external goods will contribute to both securing and maintaining the good life. The life lacking these goods will be inferior to the one where these goods are present. In this chapter, I examine Aristotle's view in the *Politica* (*Pol.*) that such external goods should be provided by the *polis*. For Aristotle, humans as a species are by nature political (1253a); hence human flourishing has a political element.

'Political' and its cognates have a broad meaning in Aristotle. 'Politics' is typically more narrowly understood as involving the governing, and governing bodies, of a society, while 'political' is currently understood as involving an adherence to a political party, that is, a party that is dedicated to a specific doctrine of rule—but there were no political parties, as such, in Aristotle's time. For Aristotle and his contemporaries, *politikos*, *polis*, and their cognates have a much broader meaning.

In the *Historia Animalium* (*HA*), Aristotle gives a biological justification for the argument that humans are *zoon politikon* (political animals). Here, Aristotle describes humans as herding, or social, animals that share a common goal with other humans (I.1 487b). This shared common goal is what makes humans naturally political, in contrast to other, non-political animals (487b). The classification of political animal is not reserved only for humans: any herding species that shares a common goal is political. Hence for example bees and cranes are political animals (487b). For Aristotle, then, 'political' involves a biological component, and certain non-human animals are 'political.' In non-herding animals 'political' refers almost



exclusively to a social structure. Unlike other political animals, though, humans are political to a higher degree. Their social gathering and shared common interest involve a naturally occurring, organized, social community.

For Aristotle, what sets humans apart from other political animals is the human capacity for speech (*logos*). Aristotle writes:

It is also clear why a human being is more of a political animal than a bee or any other gregarious animal. Nature makes nothing pointlessly, as we say, and no animal has speech except a human being. A voice is a signifier of what is pleasant or painful, which is why it is also possessed by the other animals .... But speech is for making clear what is beneficial or harmful, and hence what is also just or unjust. For it is peculiar to human beings, in comparison to the other animals, that they alone have perception of what is good or bad, just or unjust, and the rest (*Pol.* I.2 1253a).<sup>50</sup>

On Aristotle's account, non-human animals may possess a voice with which they express pain or pleasure. In addition to this capacity to use their voice to express pain or pleasure, humans also have the ability to communicate beyond that basic expression. For humans, the voice becomes speech (*logos*) because it is connected to reason (1253a). According to Aristotle, because of this *logos* humans are *more* political than any other political animal.

This natural predisposition for reason and the ability to express this reason are unique to humans and secures their natural status as political animals. It is through *logos* and reason that humans are able to conceptualize and express concepts such as justice and injustice.<sup>51</sup> It is through *logos* that humans have the ability to conceive of short- and long- term benefits, including the shared common good that accompanies being members of the *polis*. Through

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<sup>50</sup> All translations of the *Politica* are Reeve's.

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle's emphasis is on Greek male citizens, whom he takes to be most rational. I extend citizenry to align with the contemporary account which includes women. See also *Pol.* I.13 1260a where Aristotle describes the extent to which each type of person possesses reason.

language and reason, humans can communicate these benefits as well as understand (and communicate) the means of attaining and maintaining such benefits. Reasoning and the communicative ability allow humans to communicate about whether something contributes to, or interferes with, the good life. Aristotle holds that the *polis* exists to promote and secure this common good for humans.<sup>52</sup>

For Aristotle, justice is part of the common good, which is the goal of the correct *polis* (*EN* V.1 1129b, V.6 1134a). Unlike other animals, humans are able to conceptualize and speak about justice and their shared common good due to reason. These rational abilities enable humans to understand concepts linked to what is good or bad for humans, such as justice or injustice, as well as to understand the idea of a good life. As reasoning can be used to ascertain what is good and bad for humans, it is consistent with Aristotle's view to conclude that reasoning can allow humans to understand that *eudaimonia* is the chief good (I.4 1095a).<sup>53</sup>

*Logos* enables humans to communicate such concepts, not only justice and injustice, but the way that justice contributes to the good life and injustice interferes with it. Unlike other political animals, humans have the ability to understand such concepts as justice and *eudaimonia*. Yet without the *polis*, they lack the conditions necessary to establish and follow rules of justice and are unlikely to have the means of living the good life (I.4 1095b).<sup>54</sup> Humans

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<sup>52</sup> See, for example, *EN* I.2 1094b and *EN* II.1 1103a-b where Aristotle describes the chief good as that towards which lawmakers of the *polis* aim. At V.1 1129b Aristotle describes the laws as being just and as enforcing, or encouraging, just behavior. Then, at VIII.10 1160a, Aristotle states that the King, the ruler of the ideal city, will rule with the best interest of the citizens and the *polis* in mind. This best interest will be the chief good for Aristotle. At VIII.12 1161b, Aristotle describes the friendship between citizens (and other groups) as being concerned for the common interest. Likewise, at *Pol.* III.7 1279a, Aristotle writes that the correct constitutions will be those that are for the common benefit.

<sup>53</sup> Aristotle holds that the *polis* exists to help promote and secure the chief good for humans; he also argues that the chief good is *eudaimonia* (*EN* I.4 1095). The *polis*, then, exists to promote and secure *eudaimonia* for humans.

<sup>54</sup> Against Terrence Irwin's argument that *eudaimonia* is only possible with political activity within the *ideal* society (1989), Tim Duvall and Paul Dotson (1998) argue convincingly that *eudaimonia* is *best* achieved in the ideal *polis*; however, it is also possible within a non-ideal *polis*. I take up their interpretation because, while Aristotle says that *eudaimonia* is possible within a *polis* and that political action is the second-best life, he does not specify that

need the structure, community, laws, and education that can only be provided by a well-ordered *polis*.<sup>55</sup>

Aristotle states: “For as a human being is the best of animals when perfected, so when separated from law and justice he is worst of all .... But justice is a political matter; for justice is the organization of a political community, and justice decides what is just” (*Pol.* I.2 1253a). For Aristotle, then, the chances of human flourishing are improved when guided by a *polis*, and especially the correct *polis*. This ought not be interpreted to mean that every human must engage in political rule or that their goodness is determined by whether they are good citizens.<sup>56</sup> First, a person can be involved in the *polis* without being politically active proper.<sup>57</sup> Second, as I will explain below, the role of political ruler ought to be reserved for good and wise people. Third, Aristotle argues that a person’s good citizenship is proportional to the type of *polis* of which they are a member. A person following the laws and rules of a bad society would be by definition a good citizen; however, this would not make them a good, or *eudaimōn*, person, a point made by Kullmann. In order to become a good and wise person, one must participate in excellent activities (*EN* I.9 1099b). While this is possible in a bad society, it will be difficult as the laws will guide a person away from excellence. Opportunities to engage in excellent activities and

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political activity within the correct *polis* is the only means to attaining *eudaimonia* (1998, 30). As Duvall and Dotson note, Aristotle discusses the ways in which *eudaimonia* is possible in non-ideal cities. In further support of this interpretation, it is worth noting that exhibiting political excellence is an adherence to the norms and laws of a *polis*, which means a person could have excelled at the political life in one of the inferior cities (30).

<sup>55</sup> Wolfgang Kullmann offers a similar interpretation and argues that humans have “only the predisposition for justice and [are] not always just.” On Kullmann’s view, then, the *polis* helps facilitate justice and other virtuous dispositions (1991, 10).

<sup>56</sup> Kullmann, and Duvall and Dotson, make such an argument and hold that while the *polis* can provide guidance to the development of *eudaimonia*, engaging in political rule or activity is not a necessary condition for *eudaimonia*. Note, however, that others, such as Dorothea Frede (2005) and Irwin associate citizenship with the ability to participate in political activity and the joint virtues of being able to rule and be ruled.

<sup>57</sup> Athenian male citizens of age, however, would have been entitled to hold political office.

flourish are provided by a good society that is properly ordered.<sup>58</sup> This is because the end of the correct *polis* is to make citizens “good, and doers of fine things. (I.9 1099b).<sup>59</sup> The correct *polis*, then, is a natural occurrence that will aim at helping citizens become excellent. Through this guidance, the likelihood of attaining *eudaimonia* is increased for the citizens.

In one sense, political animals are those that Aristotle has noted have shared common interests. Bees, for example, are political animals because they share, and work towards, a common goal (*HA* I.1 487b). There is a second meaning that Aristotle may have in mind when he says that humans are political animals. For humans, ‘political’ may also signify a connection to the *polis* or city-state. The *polis* is a naturally occurring entity that provides protection, security, and livelihood for humans (*Pol.* I.2 1252b); it even provides the means for the leisure that Aristotle finds essential in the good life (IV.6 1293a). Importantly, a *polis* will provide the conditions for a good life for humans (I.2 1252b).<sup>60</sup> Humans rely on communities to secure their survival; for Aristotle, a natural way to accomplish this is through the formation of a *polis*.

*Poleis* for Aristotle, then, are a natural way to provide comfort and security to humans. Without cities, humans would not be able to secure what they need to survive and flourish (Cooper, 2005, 65). In support, Cooper writes, “*some* form of city life is something human beings need if they are to live secure and comfortable lives” (Cooper 2005, 66). The *polis*, then, when ordered correctly, is advantageous to humans.

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<sup>58</sup> Duvall and Dotson argue (29) that the correct *polis* can provide the means to attaining *eudaimonia*, but that *eudaimonia* can also be attained outside of the correct *polis*—with greater difficulty. This is supported by Aristotle where he says of *eudaimonia*, “it will be possible for it to belong, through some kind of learning or practice, to anyone not handicapped in relation to excellence” (*EN* I.9 1099b).

<sup>59</sup> See also I.13 1102a where Aristotle discusses how the goal of the political expert is to make the citizens good.

<sup>60</sup> Aristotle describes how humans form communities, starting with a household, to gain security and the things necessary for survival. Ultimately, the community that will be most self-sufficient for its citizens will be the *polis*.

### 3.2 THE POLITICAL LIFE

The *polis* is a natural way to ensure security and self-sufficiency for humans while providing necessary external goods (*EN* VIII.13 1162a).<sup>61</sup> However, humans being political and the existence of the *polis* both being natural does not imply that humans are necessarily politically *active* in the sense of ruling over others for Aristotle. Such activity will be reserved for an exceptional few who are adept in the political sciences (I.2 1094a, VI.8 1141b, VIII.10 1160a, X.9 1180b-1181b). Being a political animal, then, may just refer to belonging to a *polis* and being a member of this social community. Richard Mulgan holds this interpretation of humans and political involvement: “in Aristotle, ‘political’ sometimes refers to the life of the *polis* as a whole, including what we might call specifically political activity, but it also includes all other areas of social life (1990, 196).” Under this interpretation, which I share, when Aristotle claims that a human is a political animal by nature, *zoon politikon*, he is not saying that humans are naturally politically active *per se*. Rather, Aristotle is making the claim that humans are naturally predisposed to belong to a social community, i.e. a *polis*,<sup>62</sup> and to have naturally occurring relationships within the city.<sup>63</sup> According to Aristotle’s taxonomy, humans are naturally inclined to either rule or be ruled; not all people are able to rule (*Pol.* I.5 1254a, VII.2 1325b). Such an arrangement (having ruling and ruled classes) is one that Aristotle claims is both necessary and

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<sup>61</sup> Of friends, Aristotle says that they are amongst the external goods that even the most self-sufficient person needs. Thus, given Aristotle’s discussion of the *polis* as naturally occurring to provide self-sufficiency, and to promote the good life, the *polis* is one of the external goods that even the self-sufficient person will need (*EN* VIII.9 1169b, X.8 1178b). Further support comes at VIII.9 1170a where Aristotle notes that the life in isolation will be difficult, and that living in the company of good people may provide training for excellence. Moreover, at IX.9 1169b Aristotle states that the self-sufficient, *eudaimōn* person will not live in isolation as humans are civic beings.

<sup>62</sup> Mulgan mentions a secondary definition of ‘*polis*’ that more closely resembles the contemporary usage of ‘political.’ *Politikos*, the masculine singular adjective, signifies someone who is engaged in political activity and leadership, i.e. a statesman. The *politikos* is one who is directly involved with the political activity associated with running a *polis* and protecting the institutions necessary for citizens to thrive. These individuals are charged with “managing the affairs of the city,” which involves more than civic leadership; it also includes “attending meetings of the assembly, serving on juries, and generally executing the duties of citizenship” (196-197).

<sup>63</sup> This understanding does not have to be at the exclusion of the previous definition of being an animal with a shared goal. In fact, this can be seen as an extension of the biological explanation of *zoon politikon*.

beneficial (I.5 1254a). Despite drawing this distinction, Aristotle does not make the argument that those who are more naturally suited to be ruled cannot attain *eudaimonia*.<sup>64</sup> For Aristotle, being a *zoon politikon* goes beyond political rule and focuses instead on humans being a certain type of social animal. As we have seen, this means having a shared social concern.

To further illustrate the extent to which humans are political animals in this sense, Mulgan points to Aristotle's distinction between concern for oneself versus concern for a community good. On Mulgan's reading, Aristotle is arguing that by being social animals, humans are naturally predisposed to be concerned with social wellness and not merely with what is solely in one's own best interest. Aristotle, according to Mulgan, understood that there was a difference between private and political, or public, life. Even while having one's own flourishing as an end goal, as political animals, humans will also have the good of humanity as a whole as a goal. Mulgan notes that even private life has ties to the *polis* for Aristotle. The life of citizens was tied to the "political" elements of the *polis*, and as Mulgan states, "There certainly was a notion of individual or personal life as distinct from political life; such life, however, was not private but was, indeed, often as much public as the life of the assembly or civic office" (1990, 198). According to Mulgan, then, the *polis* was arranged such that even private lives intersected with the public interest. The citizens of the *polis*, even in their private lives, were acting in the social interest of the *polis*. Moreover, the success of their private lives was directly tied to the benefits provided by the *polis*.

Mulgan's interpretation is supported in the *Ethica Nicomachea* where Aristotle states that while people look for what is best for themselves, "presumably one's own well-being is

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<sup>64</sup> Being ill-suited to rule is not in itself the reason why a person might be incapable of attaining *eudaimonia*. Aristotle may, however, exclude people such as slaves from the possibility of attaining *eudaimonia* and may argue that a person's circumstances of birth may make attainment of *eudaimonia* more difficult for that person. Again, Aristotle's view that certain people are by birth naturally inferior to other people must be forcefully rejected.

inseparable from managing a household, and from political organization” (VI.8 1142a). In this sense, Mulgan is confirming Aristotle’s claim that humans have a shared goal as political animals, even in the presence of individual interests. The *polis* is so fundamental to human flourishing that it will still be prominent even when contrasted with one’s private life.

Mulgan explains that the good life Aristotle describes is not one of isolation nor one that requires political activity. Rather the ideal life will be a mix of philosophical activity and the “social life of the *polis*” (1990, 204). Human flourishing is such that it requires the social goods provided by the *polis*. This can be further supported by Aristotle’s own argument that even the most self-sufficient person will need external goods.<sup>65</sup> Aristotle argues for the necessity of the *polis* as an external good when he says, “It is presumably strange, too, to represent the blessedly happy person as living in isolation since no one would choose to have the sum of all goods by himself; man is a civic being, one whose nature is to live with others” (IX.9 1169b). Humans, being less perfect and self-sufficient than gods, will require external goods such as friends and the *polis* to survive and to flourish (IX.9 1169b, *EE* VII.I.51234b). Aristotle writes of the *eudaimōn* person: “But the one who is happy will also need external prosperity, in so far as he is human; for human nature is not self-sufficient for the purposes of reflection, but needs bodily health too, and the availability of nourishment and other kinds of servicing” (*EN* X.8 1178b-1079a). The nourishment, shelter, and other forms of sustenance and prosperity will best be provided by the ideal *polis*. Thus, just as Aristotle holds that friends are a needed external good, so too will be the benefits afforded by the *polis*.

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<sup>65</sup> Further explanation occurs in chapter 2.5 and 2.6 where I discuss Aristotle’s argument that friends are a needed external good.

### 3.3 THE *POLIS* AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

For Aristotle, the *polis* naturally occurs because individuals lack self-sufficiency. The *polis* exists for the sake of the good life for humans. The development of the *polis* comes from a natural development of human communities. First, individuals form a household, a relationship founded on helping one another to survive and to fill in the corresponding lacks that the involved parties have (*Pol.* I.2 1252b). The household provides an opportunity for people who are not self-sufficient to maintain some degree of self-sufficiency.<sup>66</sup> While the household secures some essential goods, it is not sufficient to provide its members with all of the resources and stability that is needed.

After the household, to further compensate for lack of self-sufficiency, villages are formed—that is, communities consisting of multiple households that have banded together to create an environment that allows all involved parties to be collectively more self-sufficient (I.2 1252b). When there are multiple villages that have attained a sufficient degree of self-sufficiency, there is the *polis*. The correctly ordered *polis* will have a constitution that aims at the common advantage of the citizens (I.2 1252b). More than just arising to address a lack of self-sufficiency, for Aristotle, the *polis* arises both for survival as well as for the attainment of the good life (or living well, *to eu zēn*) (III.6 1278b, VII.1 1323b, VII.2 1324a, VII.2 1325a). Aristotle argues here that the ideal *polis* will be one which prioritizes the chief good and the good life. Moreover, such a *polis* will be equipped with the resources that make such a flourishing life possible. Duvall and Dotson agree with this interpretation, noting that “[f]or Aristotle, then, man is a *social* animal whose activity naturally takes place within a social and

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<sup>66</sup> Remember that for Aristotle, the self-sufficient life is the best life for humans. Total independence and self-sufficiency, however, are not possible for humans. Thus, we rely on these partnerships to survive and flourish.



political association, the *polis*; and this activity is ideally aimed at man's *telos*, or highest good, which is *eudaimonia*" (1998, 23).

### 3.4 THE *POLIS* AND GOOD CITIZENS

In order to create a society that provides the conditions necessary for *eudaimonia*, lawgivers in correct *poleis* ought to use rational principles for the good of the citizens, not personal benefit, as their fundamental approach to ruling (*EN* V.6 1134a-b). Put another way, lawmakers ought to have the chief good in mind for the citizens of the *polis* as a guide for creating and implementing laws. This is possible only if the lawmakers have wisdom regarding the chief good as well as the rational faculties needed to identify which things contribute to attaining *eudaimonia*. Correct lawmakers will be concerned with ensuring that their citizens have the best possible chance of attaining the ethical virtues as well as the intellectual virtues (*Pol.* VII.2 1325a).

In a corrupt city, by contrast, the lawmakers are concerned neither about the character of their own city's citizens nor about the character of other cities' citizens. Cooper echoes this interpretation when he states that the citizens of the correct cities will "want them to be decent, fair-minded, respectable, moral people (anyhow, by their own lights)" (2005, 72). That is, citizens within the ideal *polis* will want their fellow citizens to be morally decent. A correct *polis* will include a mutual concern for the common good as well as a concern that fellow citizens not be unjust or vicious. Citizens seem to be concerned with their fellow-citizens more than with citizens of other cities in that the character of citizens seems to reflect upon us and our own character (2005, 74). The well-ordered city ought to share this concern for making citizens excellent as a reflection on the virtue of the city. Such reciprocal concern for the development of

excellent citizens is not found in bad societies. As such, bad societies will not have the incentive to improve its citizens that is found in correct cities.

Aristotle is clear that the excellent lawgiver will be motivated by the desire to create and enforce good laws that help citizens, through habituation, to learn virtuous behaviors and so become excellent (*EN* II.1 1103b). The production of good people, for Aristotle, is best accomplished through legislation and education (*X.9* 1179b, 1181b). Hence the ideal *polis* is concerned with the chief good of humans and providing the means to attain the chief good, and it will be founded on correct laws that guide the citizens toward excellence. For Aristotle, humans generally need such a *polis* because they are not by nature likely to become virtuous on their own. At VI.8 1142a, Aristotle also argues that an individual will be unlikely to have the wisdom about what is in their own actual best interest. The person needs experience to attain that wisdom. However, in the absence of such experience (and in light of the personal barriers that may negatively impact development), Aristotle argues that “a person needs to be brought up and habituated in the right way in order to be good, and then live accordingly under a regime of decent behavior, neither counter-voluntarily nor voluntarily doing what is bad; and if this will come about when people live in accordance with a kind of intelligence or correct principle or order....law does have the power to compel, being a form of words deriving from a kind of wisdom and intelligence....The best thing, then, is that there should be communal supervision of the correct sort” (*X.9* 1180a). It makes sense, then, to argue that the correct lawmakers, or legislators, are best suited to provide this environment in which citizens receive the proper guidance needed to cultivate virtues in pursuit of the good life. Aristotle also states: “Before he acquires excellence, then, a person must in a way already possess a character akin to it, one that is attracted by the fine and repulsed by the shameful. But it is hard for someone to get the correct

guidance towards excellence, from childhood on, if he has not been brought up under laws that aim at that effect.... So their upbringing and patterns of behavior must be ordered by the laws” (X.9 1179b). Aristotle is arguing that the best way to ensure the correct means to attaining *eudaimonia* comes through guidance by laws and a *polis* led by excellent politicians. Aristotle argues that excellence comes from experience which is made possible through habituation under the guidance of excellent lawgivers (II.1 1103b).

This is in part because they are political animals, in part because they may be influenced by their own passions or desires instead of by reason’s guiding them toward what is best (X.9 1179b). Since the attraction to excellence is not guaranteed, people will be better served if there are laws in place that guide the citizens towards excellence (X.9 1179b). Providing instruction that encourages the citizens to be pleased and pained by what *should* please or pain them increases adherence to the laws and, thus, makes the habituation of excellent character and intellectual traits more likely.<sup>67</sup> Aristotle states: “the things that tend to produce excellence as a whole are those legal provisions that have been enacted in relation to education with a view to the common interest” (V.2 1130b25).

Thus the ideal *polis* would be ordered such that it is ruled by excellent lawgivers and is structured with the end of promoting the common community interest through laws and education. Such a *polis* would be concerned with proper education and habituation of its citizens. For Aristotle, the citizens who follow the ideal laws of the *polis* would become good through habituation and proper education. When the *polis* is ruled by good and wise people, it includes a proper education that is conducive to the good life. The youth, who are led by emotion, as well

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<sup>67</sup> For Aristotle our relationship with pleasures and pains molds our character. If pleased and pained by the correct things, one can develop excellent habits (*EN* II.3 1104b5). The correct *polis* will have good laws that guide citizens correctly towards the proper pleasures and away from bad pleasures.

as those who lack self-control, will all benefit from the rules established by political experts. Such rules give citizens reasons and the desire to act in ways consistent with the chief good—actions they might not undertake in the absence of this guidance (I.3 1095a). Through the citizens' seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, the *polis* can influence the behaviors of all citizens, helping them go through the steps consistent with attaining the good life. In this manner, the lawmakers can ensure that people are brought up from youth onwards in a way that encourages them to become good and partake in excellent activity.

### 3.5 THE CORRECT *POLIS*

Having considered the status of correct lawmakers and citizens, I now turn to Aristotle's discussion of correct *poleis*. Frede notes that, in the discussion of the ideal *polis*, Aristotle describes three different scenarios under which a correct *polis* can be constructed. She summarizes: "(a) There is the best state that one could wish or pray for (*kat' euchēn*).[...] (b) Then there is the best state 'under the *given* conditions' [...] (c) And then there is also the 'best state under special circumstances'" (2005, 168). For Aristotle the best state that one could wish for is the kingship; the best state under the given circumstances is the aristocracy; and the best state under special circumstances is the polity (*Pol.* III.7 1279a-b).

Aristotle concludes that the ideal political ruler is a king because the king is concerned with what's best for those he rules over, and the king will be self-sufficient. A kingship is a *polis*, a city-state where the many are ruled by one who is best suited to rule. In the correct *polis* the king will have excellence, wisdom and a concern for the common good. In the ideal kingship, as opposed to the deviant types, the king is motivated by what is best for the people over whom he rules (*Pol.* III.7 1279a, III.13 1284b). The goal of the king is to help citizens attain the chief good

and to provide the laws and environment that are conducive to *eudaimonia* (*EN* I.10 1099b, I.13 1102a). Through the leadership of the political experts and the guidance of the king (in the best society), the citizens will become good through the *polis*. However, while a kingship is the best of the good city-states, Aristotle holds that this is an unattainable society because it requires a level of superior virtue in a single ruler that is not possible in humans: the ideal king would need to be akin to a god (*Pol.* III.15 1286b). Aristotle turns, then, to the second-best *polis*.

The second-best *polis*, aristocracy, is the best one that Aristotle thinks is attainable (III.15 1286b). An aristocratic *polis* is ruled by several people; however, the several are among the most virtuous in the city. For Aristotle, rule by several will be preferable to the rule by one because the several will be less corruptible and better able to identify and encourage good lives. In both kingship and aristocracy, the aim is to create and enforce laws that make citizens good. The motivation for constructing the city in such a way comes from the desire to bring about the good for the citizens (*EN* II.1 1103b1). As Aristotle writes, “the end of political expertise is best, and this expertise is dedicated above all to making the citizens be of a certain quality, i.e. good, and doers of fine things” (I.9 1099b30). Since aristocracy is the best structure under given conditions and is most attainable, it is most likely of the available constitutions to provide the conditions that make *eudaimonia* possible; hence we should aim for aristocracy. The attainable ideal state, namely the aristocracy, will have laws, customs, and an educational system that are conducive to the development of the virtues and, therefore, to the development of *eudaimonia*. For Aristotle, the *truly* ideal state would consist of fully developed *eudaimōn* citizens; a body of such excellent citizens would result in the state’s corresponding excellence.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See Frede, 2005, 168.

While aristocracy is the attainable ideal, it is not necessarily tenable; a society of exclusively excellent citizens would be difficult to create given the rarity of excellence. Thus the minimum requirement for Aristotle will be that the city be *ruled* by excellent citizens who provide the rules and laws that encourage virtuous behavior in other citizens (*Pol.* I.5 1254a). In creating a society that is designed and ruled by the most excellent citizens, the *polis* would be equipped with the structure that makes *eudaimonia* most likely and maximizes the number of excellent citizens. Thus, the ideal *polis* will provide the external conditions that are conducive to the development of virtues<sup>69</sup> because the ideal *polis* has the aim of achieving a communal good and is founded by those who have wisdom about the nature of that good.

According to Aristotle the *polis* aims at the highest good and is political in the broad sense noted above (I.1 1253a). Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle states that politics is the art or science of a practical good, that is, of *eudaimonia* (I.2 1094a27).<sup>70</sup> The natural goal and end of the *polis*, then, is living well, or living the best life available for humans. As the best life is a self-sufficient life, the goal of the *polis* will be the good (*eudaimōn*), self-sufficient life.<sup>71</sup> The well-ordered *polis*, then, will consist of laws, social structures and customs, and education that contribute to the *eudaimōn* life. In a variety of passages in Book III, Aristotle reiterates that the *polis* will establish a social structure that creates opportunities to cultivate the virtues that will lead to the attainment of *eudaimonia* (*Pol.* III.7 1279a, III.9 1280b, III.9 1281a, III.13 1283a, III.18 1288b). Through this structuring, the *polis* creates an environment within which the citizens have the conditions that contribute to flourishing, increasing their likelihood of success. The more frequently citizens can engage in virtuous behavior, as provided by the *polis*,

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<sup>69</sup> As I will argue later, these external goods will include the characteristics needed to create true friendships because such friendships are essential to the *eudaimōn* life.

<sup>70</sup> This is pointed out by Rowe, 2002, 10.

<sup>71</sup> See Kullmann, 1991, 96.

the more likely they are to habituate virtuous traits (*EN* II.1 1130a, II.4 1105b). The aristocratic *polis* creates frequent opportunities for virtuous behavior, increasing the chances of developing virtuous character, and provide the correct education to lead to the development of the intellectual virtues.

In sum, in the excellent *polis*, which will take the form of either kingship or (more realistically) an aristocracy, the citizens will be best equipped to become good people and to attain *eudaimonia*. The political expert, according to Aristotle, “will have worked at excellence more than anything; for what he wants is to make the citizen-body good, and obedient to the laws (*EN* I.13 1102a5).”<sup>72</sup> Since the excellence of which Aristotle speaks is human excellence, or excellence of the soul, the political expert should know about the soul and what is good for the soul (I.2 1094a). The excellent political expert will ensure that the *polis*, whether a kingship or an aristocracy, is structured in such a way that it contributes to excellence and will encourage what is good for the soul.

### 3.6 THE *POLIS* AND THE SELF-SUFFICIENT LIFE

We have seen that according to Aristotle, the primary goal of the *polis* is to provide a good life for its citizens. This means that the *polis* is an external condition that contributes to the development of the virtues necessary for *eudaimonia*. As I have described, for Aristotle, the *polis* is an external good that aids in the development of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle also includes friends, and primary friends, among the necessary external goods. Because the *polis* aims to promote the goal of living well, it also has an obligation to provide conditions for the external good of primary friendship. To fully understand those conditions, and to secure the conditions needed for

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<sup>72</sup> In correct *poleis*, laws will also be good and correct; therefore, adherence to them will provide the citizens with correct habits and education which can provide the means for attaining *eudaimonia*.

the self-sufficient life, one must first understand the role of the *polis* as it contributes to *eudaimonia*.

We have already seen that the life of contemplation is for Aristotle, the most self-sufficient and *eudaimōn* life. As *eudaimonia* is the end goal for humans, humans will strive for it. Just as the emphasis on self-sufficiency earlier raised questions for us about the role of friendship in attaining *eudaimonia*, so it may now raise questions about how the *polis* contributes to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. That is, it may appear that for those striving for the self-sufficient life of contemplation, the *polis* has limited and instrumental value only. One might argue that the *polis* is only valuable insofar as it provides conditions that allow one to cultivate the habits and character traits essential for *eudaimonia*.<sup>73</sup> If so, the *polis* is of merely instrumental value. Once the conditions provided by the *polis* have achieved their goal, the self-sufficient individual would have no further need for it.

Mulgan notes, however, that in both the *Ethica Eudemia* and *Ethica Nicomachea* Aristotle never states that the contemplative person will leave the *polis* and be fully independent (1990, 199). Instead, as Mulgan observes, “The wise and good man will devote the best part of himself to philosophy, but he will also need to satisfy his more human needs for the company of others and the life of the *polis*” (1990, 199-200). Aristotle also notes that self-sufficiency is not an adequate reason to live outside of the *polis*. He writes: “Anyone who cannot form a community with others, or who does not need to because he is self-sufficient, is no part of a city-state—he is either a beast or a god. Hence, though an impulse toward this sort of community exists by nature in everyone, whoever first established one was responsible for the greatest of goods. For as a human being is the best of the animals when perfected, so when separated from

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<sup>73</sup> Primarily this objection would arise with respect to the means to attaining the virtues because the community within the *polis* provides the opportunities to establish the ethical and intellectual virtues.



law and justice he is worst of all” (*Pol.* I.2 1253a). A person who is able to live outside of a *polis* is either a beast or divine; as humans cannot be divine, even the best person will still require the *polis*.

One needs the *polis*, among other things, to provide opportunities to practice the virtues. For example, Mulgan draws on *EN* 1123b when he discusses how the *polis* enables one to practice the virtue of magnanimity (*megalopsuchia*), i.e. “greatness of soul, highmindedness, being far above the petty concerns and jealousies of the majority of mankind” (1990, 201). The magnanimous person possesses a virtue related to honor. Such a virtue cannot be demonstrated or acted upon in the absence of people whom one can honor. If a virtuous person did not live within the *polis*, they would be deprived of the opportunity to partake in the excellent activities that are essential to living the good life because they would lack the social interactions that let such activities take place. The *polis* provides the community and leadership that permits one to act in virtuous ways, thus enabling one to exercise the virtues and live a good life. The assertion that one will no longer need the *polis* once one attains the virtues is false because, if Aristotle is right, it is not enough to merely attain the virtues; one must also exercise them. A life of isolation and total self-sufficiency would fail to provide the conditions under which one can exercise the virtues. Hence even the good and virtuous person will benefit from being in a *polis*.

In addition to providing opportunities to exercise virtues, the *polis* is also a type of external good such that its absence is detrimental to the good of the individual. While some assume the good person’s self-sufficiency amounts to living a solitary life,<sup>74</sup> this is not the case; rather, as Mulgan argues, the good and self-sufficient person’s life will involve a political community that is essential for the good life and which provides the external goods that are

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<sup>74</sup> See Biss’s discussion of this view (2011, 128).

necessary for the flourishing life (1990, 205). Such external goods provided by the *polis* include personal security, protection, food security, and the social community. Along similar lines, Nancy Sherman argues that having practical wisdom entails being “interested in one’s own welfare as part of the common welfare” reflecting Aristotle’s discussion at *EN* VI.8 1142a, quoted in full at 3.2 above, that an individual’s well-being requires a household and a *polis*. On Sherman’s interpretation of this passage, *phronēsis* requires political wisdom and life under social conditions that contribute to flourishing, that is, an excellent *polis* (1989, 53-54). Without the *polis* the practical wisdom acquired will be impoverished and insufficient. Sherman explains, practical wisdom “is never adequately cultivated without reliance on others, and has only the narrowest sphere of practice when an agent studiously avoids the circumstances in which others matter” (1989, 111). We again see that the most self-sufficient life for humans is not an isolated life; it is one that requires the presence of others; and this is best provided by a well-ordered *polis*. The *polis* provides the conditions under which one can cultivate practical wisdom. For Sherman as for Aristotle, the *polis* plays a pivotal role in the attainment of *eudaimonia*.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.7 THE *POLIS* AND GOOD CITIZENS

Since, according to Aristotle, the correct *polis* provides conditions that facilitate *eudaimonia*, one may raise the question whether, or in what sense, a good citizen is the same as a *eudaimōn* person (*Pol.* III.4 1276b). If the *polis* provides the means that help attain *eudaimonia*, is it sufficient to follow the rules of the *polis* to attain *eudaimonia*? The question is whether a person

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<sup>75</sup> Sherman, like Frede (2005) argues that political life is essential. Duvall and Dotson, 1998, however, argue that the *polis* can contribute, but is not essential, to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Duvall and Dotson argue that a person can achieve the virtues needed for *eudaimonia* even in a deficient *polis*; however, it is exceptionally hard to do so when the social and political features are absent or deficient. Whether essential or merely beneficial, the *polis* increases the likelihood of achieving *eudaimonia* and remains necessary or beneficial once *eudaimonia* is attained.

who follows the rules of the *polis* is also necessarily a *eudaimōn* person or whether the criteria are different for the two. If the former, then a good citizen will attain *eudaimonia* simply in virtue of being a good citizen. On this matter I take the same view as Duvall and Dotson. They argue that being a good citizen is different from being a *eudaimōn* person (1998, 20 and 28). There is a significant distinction being missed by those who advocate the view that the good citizen and good person are one and the same. In particular, to be a good citizen one must simply follow the rules of the *polis*, while more is required to meet the conditions for a good person who acts in ways consistent with the attainment or possession of *eudaimonia*. To become a good citizen, one may blindly follow the rules without exercising any reasoning or virtues independent of the quality of the *polis*. To become a *eudaimōn* person, however, one must develop practical and theoretical wisdom, the ethical virtues and the intellectual virtues. Each of these factors require intensive habituation or education that is guided by the chief good. The correct *polis* is best suited to provide these conditions needed for *eudaimonia*. A deficient city, however, might not provide the conditions that are most conducive to *eudaimonia*. It is possible, then, for one to be a good citizen in a deficient city yet not *eudaimōn* because the city is not properly ordered. While it is possible to attain *eudaimonia* in these deficient cities, it is more difficult and less likely because the external conditions that contribute to *eudaimonia* are absent. One may ask, then, why the correct *polis* is essential to the development of the conditions necessary for the attainment of *eudaimonia* if *eudaimonia* can be attained in the deficient cities. For Aristotle, the best *polis* is superior because it provides the course most likely to result in the attaining of *eudaimonia* (*Pol.* IV.11 1295a).<sup>76</sup> Because the attainable ideal *polis* correctly seeks out the good, it is best suited for ensuring that the conditions for attaining *eudaimonia* are met. A deficient

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<sup>76</sup> See Duvall and Dotson (1998, 30) for further discussion of how one can attain *eudaimonia* in a deficient *polis*.

*polis* may happen to produce a *eudaimōn* citizen, but rarely. The deficient *polis* is more likely to succeed in producing obedient citizens; and this is not the same thing as producing *eudaimōn* ones.

### 3.8 POLITICAL EXPERTS AND *EUDAIMONIA*

Political expertise, like the *polis* itself, is concerned with the chief human good. Political experts establish legislation and dictate which actions are good or bad, based on their contribution to the development of the chief good. For Aristotle, “political good is justice, and justice is the common benefit” (*Pol.* III.12 1282b15-20). The establishment of a *polis* by political experts can assist humans in attaining *eudaimonia*.<sup>77</sup> In the best *polis*, the political experts will correctly identify which components are consistent with, and contribute to, the chief good. The ideal *polis* correctly focuses on the communal good above individual interests and creates legislation and customs consistent with this good. In deviant cities (tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy), political experts legislate for themselves rather than for the citizens. Because they emphasize an incorrect good, i.e. the good for the rulers, the non-ideal city-states will not have an environment conducive to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. What is necessary for the establishment of an ideal *polis* is the presence of good political experts.

While it is hardly controversial that political expertise is concerned with happiness, Aristotle acknowledges that there is a dispute about what happiness is and what type of happiness is being discussed (*EN* I.4 1095a). Aristotle clarifies that political experts will not be concerned with mere pleasure. Rather, the act of political inquiry performed by political experts

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<sup>77</sup> While communities such as the *polis* exist to compensate for humans’ lack of self-sufficiency, Duvall and Dotson (1998, 31-32) argue that virtues, and therefore *eudaimonia*, can be attained in non-ideal communities. The attainment in such communities, however, is more difficult because the structural conditions are not conducive to *eudaimonia* and the citizens have to overcome those barriers.

is an inquiry into the chief good for citizens. Political expertise is concerned with fine and just things, i.e. those activities or pursuits that would help contribute to, or maintain, *eudaimonia* (I.10 1099b). Aristotle argues that the task of political experts is to be concerned with which activities or areas of expertise are needed for the citizens, including what will make citizens happy (I.13 1102a). Since Aristotle holds that the chief good is *eudaimonia*, *eudaimonia* will be the good life towards which political experts aim (I.4 1095a). Because Aristotle holds that *eudaimōn* life is excellent activity that contributes to *eudaimonia* (I.7 1098a), it is the proper concern of political experts. For Aristotle, political experts are guided by the desire to attain knowledge of the end that is pursued for its own sake, i.e. the chief good or *eudaimonia*. Additionally, political experts are concerned with helping provide the means to *eudaimonia* to the citizens of the *polis*. The pursuit of political inquiry, like all other inquiries, is ultimately an inquiry into the chief good; that is, one must know the chief good in order to create a *polis* that leads citizens to the chief good (I.2 1094a 25). The best political experts structure laws and constitutions such that they promote a life consistent with *eudaimonia* for their citizens (VI.13 1145a).

In short, the purpose of political expertise, and therefore of the *polis* which is guided by political experts, is to help citizens become good and to live good lives (I.9 1099b).<sup>78</sup> The well-ordered city will be constructed based on consideration of the chief good and that which contributes to the chief good for citizens. In the well-ordered *polis*, political experts will be those who are properly educated, who possess virtuous character, and who are fit to rule (I.12 1102a, VI.7 1141a, VI.8 1141b, X.9 1180b-1181a). Being ordered and ruled by people of virtue ensures that the rulers of the *polis* will correctly recognize the difference between the apparent good and

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<sup>78</sup> On this topic, see Rowe, 2002, 10-11.

the actual good for humans. This requires knowing which lifestyles, habits, and behaviors contribute to *eudaimonia* and which ones will interfere with its attainment. Having determined which lifestyles will contribute to the chief good, the *polis* will be structured such that laws that will help citizens live good lives consistent with *eudaimonia* will be enacted and enforced; laws and legislation that interfere with *eudaimonia* will not be integrated into the political structure. By institutionalizing good behaviors, the *polis* fosters an environment that provides the conditions that will increase the likelihood that each citizen attains *eudaimonia*. The correct political experts will lead to the development of the correct *polis*.

In the correct *polis*, mainly the kingship and the aristocracy, the laws are correct, just, and excellent. This is possible due to the excellence of the political experts and their adherence to the pursuit of securing *eudaimonia* for the citizens. Being bound by these excellent laws makes the excellence of citizens more likely. The excellent laws provide prescriptions of what is good and bad which result in good or bad behaviors depending on whether the citizen follows or breaks the laws.<sup>79</sup> In a kingship or aristocracy, these laws correlate with what is actually, and not merely apparently, good. If the citizen of an excellent society with completely excellent laws follows the laws, they will be acting in accordance with excellence, which will increase their chances of becoming excellent and attaining *eudaimonia*. Moreover, excellent laws provide exemplars of virtuous behaviors which citizens can refer to and act upon in their quest to become virtuous. Political expertise prescribes everything in the *polis* (VI.13 1145a); a completely excellent *polis*, then, will prescribe just and good laws for the citizens. Having correctly identified the chief good and the means to attain the good, these lawgivers will encourage good behavior. This will

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<sup>79</sup> Through reinforcing the pleasure of the good activities and the pain of the bad activities, the *polis* can encourage citizens to be good.

contribute to the development of virtues because, for Aristotle, excellence is attained through habituation and education.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.9: THE *POLIS* AND THE VIRTUES

By creating just laws and an environment that encourages citizens to follow these laws, the *polis*, as organized by the excellent political experts, can create the conditions under which citizens can habituate excellent activity and receive excellent education—two features required for the *eudaimōn* life. The well-constructed *polis*, which encourages virtuous behavior, promotes the environment which fosters the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Ethical virtues are attained through performing virtuous activities to the point that they become habit and part of one's character (I.13 1102a). Through habituation of excellent activities and behaviors, as prescribed by correct laws, the citizens themselves will become ethically virtuous and will have a higher likelihood of attaining the chief good, *eudaimonia*, because the ethical virtues are part of the *eudaimōn* life (VII.10 1152a). Aristotle states:

This is why it is necessary to ensure that the activities be of a certain quality; for the varieties of these are reflected in the dispositions. So it does not make a small difference whether people are habituated to behave in one way or in another way from childhood on, but a very great one; or rather it makes all the difference in the world (II.1 1103b.)

In addition to ethical habituation, the *polis* will require virtuous instruction to ensure that the citizens have met all of the conditions necessary to become excellent and qualify for living the life of contemplation. Those designing the *polis* have the responsibility of developing an educational system that is consistent with the good life and correct knowledge (II.1 1103a, X.9

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<sup>80</sup> For the ethical virtues and intellectual virtues respectively.

1179b).<sup>81</sup> By enacting correct intellectual education, the *polis* provides the tools necessary for attaining the intellectual virtues which in turn enable one to pursue the life of contemplation and so attain *eudaimonia*. Thus it is through the laws of an excellent *polis* that the conditions for attaining *eudaimonia* are best met, and developing and implementing such laws is the aim of excellent lawmakers.

In sum, since the *polis* is concerned with the chief good, the correct *polis* is designed with the attainment of the chief good in mind. This means that the correct *polis* will be structured and organized such that it produces the conditions necessary to the attainment of both the intellectual and ethical virtues and encourages the cultivation of both through excellent and just laws. To this end, the correct *polis* implements laws that are conducive to the development and habituation of character traits and activities consistent with *eudaimonia*, that is, the laws should foster excellent activities and instruction. Thus, the *polis* is entrusted with providing the external goods that contribute to flourishing. As established in Chapter 2 (2.5-7), primary friendships contribute to, and are even essential to, *eudaimonia*. In what follows, I argue that the *polis* has the added obligation of creating an environment that is conducive to establishing and maintaining primary, virtue-based friendships. Whether kingship, aristocracy, or polity, the society ought to be ordered so that virtuous individuals have the opportunity to establish bonds of *philia*.

### **3.10 PRIMARY *PHILIA* AND THE CORRECT *POLIS***

The benefits of primary friendships in the correct *polis* are numerous. Generally speaking, primary friendships play a crucial role in the development of the character traits that contribute

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<sup>81</sup> The argument here is that the *polis* aims at the chief good, *eudaimonia*. Attaining the chief good requires two types of excellence: ethical and intellectual. Since the intellectual virtues are attained through teaching, the *polis* will have an obligation to teach citizens in a way that promotes intellectual virtues.



to *eudaimonia*. As we have seen, Cooper argues that primary friendships can reassure one of their own possession of virtues.<sup>82</sup> By exhibiting virtuous behaviors whilst being of the “same” soul, the character friend will reinforce and reaffirm one’s excellent and virtuous character traits. This will enable citizens to confirm that they are on the right path to *eudaimonia*. In a similar vein, Aristotle argues that the good characteristics of our character-based friends are characteristics that we share with them. In this sense the character-based friends will help reinforce one’s excellent character traits (IX.8 1168b). These traits are essential to attaining *eudaimonia*. Character friendships, then, contribute to the conditions that foster the development of virtuous behavior. Character-based friends have a friendship that resembles love of oneself (IX.4 1166a–b): the love one has for a friend will mirror the love one has for oneself. Since this self-love is also important to the development of virtuous traits, character friendships are crucial for creating the conditions that allow one to flourish. In addition, character-based friendships will help with correct self-perception. By engaging in these friendships, the friend is helping one with respect to self-knowledge (Biss, 2011, 126), enabling one to have a better understanding of one’s own character, including strengths and weaknesses. With this self-understanding, a person will be better equipped to hone the traits that contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Excellent lawgivers, being of virtuous character, will understand the role primary friendships play in the development of *eudaimonia*. Consequently, they ought to ensure that the external conditions that are conducive to friendship are incorporated into the institutions and laws of the *polis*.

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<sup>82</sup> Cooper, 1977, 301-302; Cooper 1980, 324.

### 3.11 COMPLETE FRIENDSHIPS AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXCELLENT ACTIVITY

In addition to helping with the cultivation of virtues, primary friendships present one with the opportunity to engage in excellent activities that contribute to *eudaimonia*. Aristotle holds that primary friends will be eager to do good for one another (VIII.13 1162b5). In wanting to do good for one another, the primary friends are motivated to create opportunities to perform good actions for one another. By completing these actions, a primary friend is increasing the opportunities for one to partake in excellent, or virtuous, activities. The more often citizens complete virtuous actions, the closer they get to fulfilling the conditions needed to attain *eudaimonia*.

Another way that character-based friendships can help with the development of virtues and the attainment of *eudaimonia* is that they are able to help single out bad behaviors, dispositions, or traits (IX.3 1165b, IX.12 1172a). A friend of the primary type will help one identify one's good and bad character traits and will create opportunities for activities that will improve one's character traits so that they are more in line with virtue. In wanting to do good for one's friend, the primary friend will uncover these negative traits and will want to help correct them. These friendships can present occasions to help correct bad behaviors, dispositions, or traits (IX.3 1165b). The primary friend can aid in the correction of such traits by helping one determine how to best correct any deficiencies while reinforcing excellent traits.

Additionally, Aristotle argues that primary friendships keep cities and likeminded people together (VIII.1 1155a). Primary friendships grow proportionately with the goodness of the friends and involve engagement in good actions. Primary friends help maintain each other's goodness (VIII.1 1155a-1155a). Thus, the primary friend will help their friend engage in activities that will strengthen their virtuous activities and character traits, which are prerequisites for *eudaimonia*. Good will, for example, is a key component in the attainment of virtues. Being

in a primary friendship affords the friends the opportunity to foster good will towards one another (IX.5 1166b30). While all forms of *philia* involve *some* sense of good will, the primary friendships are built on a stronger sense of good will because they are formed in reaction to the goodness of the friends as demonstrated by their virtuous character traits. Because character-based friendships create opportunities to cultivate the virtues, citizens need an environment that promotes these relationships. Once again, it falls on the *polis* to ensure that such an environment is available.

As Aristotle establishes and we have already seen, the goal of the *polis* is to help citizens live well. Because *eudaimonia* requires excellent activities, behaviors, and dispositions, the *polis* is obligated to create conditions that encourage growth in virtue. Opportunities for growth are easier to identify with the assistance of primary friends who thereby facilitate the development of *eudaimonia*. They allow us to create opportunities for excellent activities that, in turn, enable us to better observe excellent traits in our friends. As we are better able to observe the excellent behavior of our neighbors or character-friends than of ourselves (IX.9 1169b), these primary friendships give us the chance to improve our understanding of the virtues. This greater understanding improves one's ability to engage in excellent, or virtuous, activities and fosters dispositions that contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Lawgivers are concerned with passing laws and creating a *polis* that contributes to the good life. Hence the lawgivers who understand the ways in which primary friendship contributes to *eudaimonia* will rightly feel obliged to help citizens of the *polis* by promoting such primary friendships.

As we have seen, even the self-sufficient person within the *polis* will benefit from the external good of primary friendships as just and good people will still need friends (IX.9 1169b). Even someone who has acquired the intellectual virtues and accomplished the life of intellectual

contemplation will still need friends. As I have argued, for Aristotle the self-sufficient person will benefit from primary friendship because it is an external good they must possess in order fully to flourish (1169b): humans are social beings who are fulfilled by relationships with others, and they help the self-sufficient person to best engage in the contemplative activities that constitute *eudaimonia*. Since the lawmakers of the correct *polis* will recognize all of these ways in which primary friendships are necessary for human flourishing, they should seek to order *the polis* so as to foster primary friendships.

### 3.12 THE *POLIS* AND *PHILIA*

That some form of friendship should be of concern to the rulers of the *polis* is especially advocated by Cooper. He argues that civic friendship, which is a kind of utility-based friendship, is a means to form a bond of mutual concern (2005, 74). These bonds between fellow-citizens lead to “such practices in cities as ‘connections by marriage, brotherhoods, religious festivals, and the pursuits in which people share their lives’” (2005, 74).<sup>83</sup> Aristotle classifies this bond between fellow-citizens as a kind of friendship, or *philia* (*Pol.* III.9 1280b). Like all forms of *philia*, these involve mutual well-wishing. In particular, friendships amongst fellow-citizens involve a recognition of the community’s common good and the need to support what is best for the citizens of the *polis*. According to Cooper, these relationships “reinforce the common activity of civic life itself, and the friendship that is specific to that life” (2005, 74). These relationships give rise to civic involvement and civic participation in that they encourage people to be invested in the wellbeing of others. Cooper posits that, for Aristotle, civic friendship has its basis in a mutual interest in community wellbeing (2005, 74-75). Like other friendships for Aristotle, civic

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<sup>83</sup> See also (*Pol.* III.9 1280b).

friendship includes a component of mutual benefit and concern for one another's well-being (2005, 75). The mutual well-wishing in friendships means that citizens are participating in a common good, i.e. the good of the community via its individual members, which becomes a communal good. The *polis*' rulers' ability to rule in ways that help the citizens depends on civic friendship, so *philia* ends up being an important feature of the community. It ensures that the citizens share a common good with reciprocal concern for one another and that the citizens organize the city in a way that promotes the common good. In a correct city, rulers are concerned with the benefit of the citizens and will be invested in the development of their character. If an aristocracy impedes the moral development of citizens, it is unjust and would exploit the ruled and would destroy friendship amongst citizens (2005, 77). The common good of the *polis* can only be available on the basis of civic friendship (2005, 79).

Given that the correct *polis* should create an environment that fosters *eudaimonia*, and that primary friendships are essential to the attainment of *eudaimonia* it follows that the correct *polis* has an obligation to create an environment that promotes not just civic friendship, but also primary friendships. The correct *polis* is concerned with the education of citizens, including personal, intellectual, and political features. One of these matters of personal education would be the types of relationships that contribute to *eudaimonia*. The primary friendships are among the best relationships that contribute to *eudaimonia*; therefore, the *polis* has the obligation to create laws that allow these friendships to occur as well as the obligation to protect and nurture these friendships.

### 3.13 CONCLUSION

I have argued that the correct *polis* has the obligation to create laws and a society that contribute to the character traits that are conducive to *eudaimonia*. This involves structuring laws, social customs and institutions, education, and security provisions in ways that contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia*, which includes promoting and maintaining primary friendships. Because these friendships are pivotal to the attainment of *eudaimonia*, they are a concern of the correct *polis*.

While the argument I have made so far is consistent with Aristotle's views about the nature of character friendships and the *polis*' role in promoting *eudaimonia*, the next step moves my argument beyond the limits of Aristotle's account. This is necessary because Aristotle fails to give a complete and accurate account of the role that *erōs* plays in the cultivation of virtuous traits and *eudaimonia*. In the next chapter, I will explain Aristotle's view of the limited role of *erōs* as well as the ways in which his view is unsatisfying and incomplete. Finally, I will argue that just as the correct *polis* has an obligation to cultivate primary friendships, it also has an obligation to create an environment that fosters what I will call primary erotic relationships.

## CHAPTER 4: COMPLETE *ERŌS*

### 4.1 GREEK *ERŌS*

Before applying Aristotle's ideas to a contemporary discussion of *erōs*, one must first identify the mores of Aristotle's time and place, for which Kenneth Dover (1989) is the definitive source. In ancient Athens, what we would call heterosexual relationships were the norm for marriage and procreation.<sup>84</sup> In these relationships, the man had priority in all aspects of life *except religion*; women were permanent minors. The woman, on the other hand, was tasked with everyday household management and taking care of young children. Another type of relationship between men and women involves *hetairai*. *Hetairai* were women who entered into sexual relationships with men, usually in exchange for being maintained by their partner (1989, 20). There also were erotic relationships that resembled what we would now call homosexual relationships. Aristotle would have been aware of same sex relationships; however, such relationships between members of the same sex would have had specificities with which we are not familiar.

In ancient Greece, same sex erotic relationships between women were largely undocumented (171-184). Much more literature and art were dedicated to erotic relationships between men. Mainly, these relationships were between men and boys in the bloom of youth, i.e. those who have attained full height (16). On Dover's translation, *pais* (plural *paides*) is a young boy, the beloved in the relationship; the *erastēs* is the man, or the lover in the relationship (and *paiderastia* is the name of such relationships). Where applicable, I will follow this translation. Another feature unique to these relationships is that the Athenians did not condone sexual penetration in same sex relationships between men. Lesbian relationships do not have the same

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<sup>84</sup> Note that it would be anachronistic to refer to 'heterosexuality' or 'heterosexual relationships' in reference to ancient Greek relationships.

coverage as male relationships, so it is more difficult to find a reliable record of the mechanics of such relationships (2).<sup>85</sup>

Aristotle, then, would have been aware of a variety of erotic relationships: marriages between men and women; *paiderastia*; and of men's relationships with *hetairai*. Despite his understanding of these different types of erotic relationships, including the normalization of certain erotic relationships outside of marriage, Aristotle's main area of focus is on the roles of relationships and virtue within marriage between husband and wife.<sup>86</sup> His discussion of *erōs* is quite limited when compared to his handling of *philia*:<sup>87</sup> he devotes two books, a fifth of the *Ethica Nicomachea* (VIII and IX), to *philia* and its importance in attaining and maintaining *eudaimonia*, while his discussion of *erōs* is scattered throughout the ten books.

## 4.2 ARISTOTELIAN *ERŌS*

At *EN* VII.11 Aristotle discusses the ways in which different forms of friendship mirror the different forms of good rule (kingship, aristocracy, polity). He argues that the relationship, or friendship, between a husband and wife mirrors that of the aristocracy, the most attainable of the better types of rule (1161a). Such relationships, then, are best ordered when the couple is ruled by the man (the superior member of the couple), with the wife playing a subordinate role. For Aristotle, these relationships are naturally occurring and "man is naturally a coupler more than

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<sup>85</sup> Whereas Dover (1989) uses 'homosexuality' to refer to same sex relationships between men and boys, I will use the term to refer to all same sex relationships, inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community. LGBTQIA+ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, queer, intersex, asexual individuals and the plus refers to other sexual orientations not included in this acronym. Trans\* is "used primarily . . . to open up transgender or trans to a greater range of meanings . . . includ[ing] not only such terms as transgender, transsexual, trans man, and trans woman that are prefixed by trans-, but also identities such as genderqueer, neutriots, intersex, agender, two-spirit, cross-dresser, and genderfluid" (Tompkins, 2014, 26–27).

<sup>86</sup> Aristotle does reference *paiderastia* a few times; however, most of his discussion focuses on improper erotic behavior and on justice in marital relations.

<sup>87</sup> For a contrasting view of *erōs* that will align more closely with my recommendation, I reference Plato's handling of *erōs* in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*.



he is naturally a civic being, to the extent that the household [*oikos*] is something prior to and more necessary than a city, and to the extent that producing offspring is something more widely shared among animals” (VIII.12 1162b). An Athenian *oikos* was typically much more inclusive (multi-generational and with additional members not necessarily related to the householder). On Aristotle’s account, marriage between a man and woman is natural, as is procreation within a marriage. Moreover, the best versions of marriage are those that resemble the aristocracy. Aristotle notes a difference between humans and animals: while both experience the need to have offspring, for animals it ends at procreation (VIII.12 1162b). Aristotle argues that for humans, however, the coupling is also for the sake of the necessities of life. He continues:

for from the beginning their functions are differentiated, so that the man’s are different from the woman’s, and so they complement each other, making what belongs to each available to both in common. These points suggest that both the element of the useful and that of the pleasant are present in this kind of friendship; but it might also be because of excellence, if husband and wife were to be decent characters, since there is an excellence that belongs to each, and it could be that each took delight in someone with that proper excellence.

The relationship that Aristotle describes is consistent with the norms of marriage in ancient Athens. We see a coupling between a man and wife that secures procreation as well as security and the other necessities of life. Once again, we see that humans, not being wholly self-sufficient, require relationships with others in order to live a good life. While these relationships form primarily from pleasure or utility, Aristotle argues that it is possible to have excellent relationships of this kind. In fact, much of what Aristotle writes about spouses involves issues of justice and injustice. Within marriage, Aristotle indicates that there can be excellence, and justice is one of the ways in which excellence is attained.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> At II.6 1107a, Aristotle notes that proper erotic relationships include having sex with women when and how one should. He also states that fine bodily pleasures are (rightfully) intensely desirable (VII.14 1154a). A properly moderate person will only engage in ethical erotic acts and will refrain from adultery and rape (V.1 1129b). Between

Within marriages, Aristotle holds that the spouses ought to strive for justice. He argues that this justice is the same as in the household, but different from political justice (V.6 1134b, V.2 1131a). Since the relationship mirrors an aristocracy, justice within the relationship ought to involve virtuous character (whenever possible) and the proper distribution of tasks. Among the unjust acts that can occur in a marriage Aristotle includes adultery (V.6 1134a, V.9 1137a).<sup>89</sup> Such actions, according to Aristotle, do not require being in a certain state. Rather, Aristotle states that while the behavior depends on the person, its injustice is not due to the person's being in a certain state.

Aristotle also discusses erotic relationships that are founded on pleasure alone. Aristotle notes that “the bodily pleasures ... have taken over the title of ‘pleasure’” (VII. 13 1154a).<sup>90</sup> Aristotle holds that the young tend to engage in *philia* for pleasure because they are guided by emotion; for the same reason, they are also erotically inclined. For Aristotle, “erotic friendship is for the larger part a matter of emotions, and because of pleasure” (VIII.3 1156b). An Aristotelian understanding of *erōs*, then, focuses primarily its basis in pleasure. It is because it is so based that the erotic feelings will dissolve if the relationship ceases to be pleasurable. Aristotle goes so far as to say that the young, motivated by pleasure, “love and quickly stop loving, often changing in the course of the same day” (VIII.3 1156b). Such erotic relationships are quick to develop and quick to end as they are dependent upon sustaining pleasure—something that is not lasting.

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a husband and wife, justice is attained when there is the proper balance of ruling and being ruled (V.6 1134b). For Aristotle, that would mean that the husband rules the wife and the wife rules over some household matters (VIII.10 1160b).

<sup>89</sup> At V.2 1131a Aristotle identifies adultery and similar unjust actions as counter-voluntary actions, whereas voluntary actions are ones that are voluntarily initiated.

<sup>90</sup> Here Aristotle also comments that pleasure is a good because “the happy person lives pleasantly.” While the common perception of ‘pleasure’ refers to bodily pleasure, Aristotle believes there are other types of pleasure including the pleasure of living the good life. Here we are concerned with erotic pleasure principally.

It is not Aristotle's view that relationships based on pleasure are inherently wrong. Instead, he categorizes erotic pleasures as belonging to the "bodily sort that are necessary" (VII.4 1147b25). Though such pleasures are necessary, like the pleasure associated with consuming food, they are subject to excess. The main criticism seems to be that erotic relationships become especially problematic when they are taken to excess or when they involve actions that are in themselves bad, such as adultery.<sup>91</sup> Aristotle considers such excess self-indulgence. The self-indulgent person, when it comes to excessive pleasures, is "more distressed than one should be at not getting what is present" (III.11 1118b).<sup>92</sup> According to Aristotle's taxonomy, erotic relationships become problematic when they involve injustice, excess, or self-indulgence (which may of course overlap). His criticism of *erōs*, then, does not seem to hinge on the experience or pursuit of pleasure in itself. He is critical only of abuses or excesses of it.<sup>93</sup> Aristotle's handling of *erōs* aligns with his handling of other pleasures, pains, and states and dispositions.

#### 4.3 PRIMARY *ERŌS*

As we have seen, Aristotle believes *erōs* is just when a husband and wife mirror the standards of an aristocracy. While we have seen the ways in which *erōs* may be problematic, Aristotle does

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<sup>91</sup> Or if they result in adultery, infidelity, or fornication. With fornication, Aristotle argues that badness is present from the start and is itself bad (without requiring excess). While he may not condemn erotic pleasures *writ large*, he would criticize fornication and other forms of excessive pleasure (EN II.6 1107a). With fornication, Aristotle goes so far as to say that simply fornicating with a woman is going astray (II.6 1107a). Another act that Aristotle condemns is rape (V.1 1129b), but he does not specify that rape is an expression of *erotic* desire. In that sense, at least, Aristotle's view may be more compatible with contemporary notions of rape as the expression of anger and violent intention.

<sup>92</sup> Elsewhere, Aristotle clarifies that committing adultery for the sake of profit is unjust rather than self-indulgent, while the person who spends money to commit adultery is self-indulgent (V.2 1130a).

<sup>93</sup> This point is affirmed at VII.4 1147b where Aristotle notes that of the things that cause pleasure, some are necessary, others desirable in themselves. These pleasures can be taken to excess. However, the bodily sort are necessary (which for Aristotle includes the need for sex). At VII.3 1147a Aristotle notes that the affective state of having an appetite for sex can "even cause kinds of madness. Clearly, then, we should say that the state of the unself-controlled is like these people's." In contrast, the moderate person would not commit adultery or rape (V.1 1129b).

not maintain that it is impossible to overcome strong desires; rather, he claims one can have certain traits “without being overcome by them”—among which he includes “outlandish sexual pleasure” (VII.5 1149a). The rightness of *erōs* seems to be similar to the other activities and pleasures. That is, we ought to find the mean between excess and defect with sexual acts just as with other activities. Despite this similarity between erotic and other activities, Aristotle largely limits *erōs* to instances of pleasure or utility and does not make the case that there is a mean with respect to *erōs*. At II.6 1107a, Aristotle states that fornication is not bad only when done in excess or deficiently such as with other activities; rather fornication is bad in itself. While Aristotle explicitly states that fornication and adultery are wrong in themselves, Aristotle maintains that some erotic relationships between a husband and wife are excellent. Because Aristotle limits his discussion of *erōs* to matters of utility and pleasure, with some account of justice, I show that Aristotle’s handling of *erōs* is incomplete when compared to his discussion of *philia*. On my view, Aristotle’s three forms of *philia* apply to *erōs*, too; Aristotle neglects the consideration of erotic relationships that may be based on virtuous character.

We have seen at length that Aristotle divides friendships into three types: utility, pleasure, and primary or complete friendships, which I sometimes call character-friendships. In each of these types of friendship, Aristotle requires a reciprocal well-wishing between the friends. When it comes to *erōs*, Aristotle divides the relationships into utility and pleasure (VII.3 1147b, 13 1154a; VIII.3 1156b, 4 1157a, 12 1162b; IX.1 1164a, and 7 1168a). Aristotle does not go so far as to say that *erōs* requires reciprocal well wishing; however, he does claim that *philia* and *erōs* are similar in kind in several key places (VIII.3 1156b, 4 1157a, 5 1157b, 6 1158a, 8 1159b, 11 1161a, and 12 1162b). Indeed, he even writes that *erōs* involves erotic friendship (IX.1 1164a), a notion worthy of further examination. Aristotle notes that erotic friendships may

involve conflicting motivations for being in the relationship, for example between a lover and a beloved when the lover loves the beloved out of pleasure and the beloved loves the lover because of usefulness (IX.1 1164a). These relationships are quick to dissolve because what one person wants from the relationship is different from what is received (IX.1 1164a). For Aristotle, erotic relationships are also easy to dissolve because they are reliant on pleasure or utility; hence the relationships end when they cease to be pleasant or useful. Thus far, Aristotle is consistent in his handling of *philia* and erotic friendships.

But a key area is missing: discussion of the complete or character based erotic relationships. I propose to construct an account of primary *erōs* on Aristotle's behalf as an application of the principle of charity: that is, Aristotle's account of relationships can be made *stronger* if he is provided with a full-fledged account of primary *erōs* that is consistent with his account of *philia*. I offer an account that is "Aristotelian in spirit." *Erōs* resembles *philia* in that both are relationships built on a loving feeling or emotion. The difference is in the source of that love. For *philia*, the love stems from mutual well-wishing (and in complete friendship the recognition of good character), while *erōs* is often inspired by bodily desires and pleasure. In the view I develop here, within complete *erōs*, lovers love one another out of mutual recognition of virtuous character. This recognition means that *erōs* can be a means by which one can sustain virtuous activities, learn more about oneself, and contemplate the virtues. If, as Aristotle maintains, *erōs* includes a type of erotic friendship, his account of *erōs* can and really ought to mirror his account of *philia*—or at least, an account of *erōs* that does so would not be un-Aristotelian.

To develop such an account, we need to acknowledge that there may be erotic relationships that are not formed solely on the basis of pleasure or utility; erotic friendships can

also be formed based on good character. As with *philia*, complete *erōs* would be a loving relationship formed out of recognition of virtuous character. These relationships would be difficult to form, as virtuous character is rare, but equally difficult to dissolve.<sup>94</sup> Just as with *philia*, complete *erōs* would be the type of *erōs* we should strive for and should cultivate when possible. Likewise, if the *polis* has an obligation to promote primary *philia* for the good of the *polis* and the individual citizens, the *polis* would also have the obligation to promote primary *erōs*. While Aristotle's view of *erōs*, on my reading, is incomplete, it is normative in that he urges justice between husband and wife, and criticizes fornication and rape.

#### 4.4 ARISTOTLE AND HETERONORMATIVITY

Aristotle provides an account of *erōs* that, with few exceptions, would be considered heteronormative today.<sup>95</sup> Aristotle suggests that the best erotic relationships are between a husband and wife, for the purpose of procreation, and fit within an aristocratic framework. While he does mention same sex relationships (*EN* VII.5 1428b, VIII.4 1157a, 5 1157b, 8 1159b, IX.1 1164a) he mainly discusses these relationships to demonstrate problems with *erōs*.

For example, at *EN* VIII.4 1157a, Aristotle argues that the relationship between the lover and the beloved is faulty because it often involves imbalanced expectations and unequal roles. In such relationships, according to Aristotle, the lover dotes on the beloved because of the pleasure the lover receives. The beloved, on the other hand, receives benefits from the lover because it is a

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<sup>94</sup> I focus here on primary *erōs* although a case could be made for erotic relationships based on virtuous character that involve people who are not perfectly virtuous or are still developing toward full virtue. Perhaps perfection is for the gods.

<sup>95</sup> "Heteronormative" refers to the normative (regulative) position that biological sex determines gender (i.e. biological men are masculine; biological females are feminine) and that the ideal relationship is between men and women, or heterosexual relationships. In a religious vein of heteronormativity, the argument would be that the normative heterosexual relationship is within the context of a lifelong marriage. See for example Schutte, 1997, 41.

useful arrangement. Because the goals are disparate, neither gets what they expect from the relationship. In these relationships, the lover and beloved are also taking pleasure in different things: “one of them takes pleasure in seeing the other, while *he* takes pleasure in being looked after by the lover” (VIII.4 1157a; see also IX.1 1164a). When erotic relationships between the lover and the beloved are founded in utility, Aristotle considers the couple unequal: the lover has benefits to bestow upon the beloved but the beloved has less to provide to the lover (VIII.8 1159b). In fact, Aristotle notes that many times what the lover bestows upon the beloved is not sufficient cause for the beloved to love the lover, and the relationship dissolves (VIII.8 1159b).<sup>96</sup> As with all erotic friendships based on utility or pleasure, these relationships dissolve when the usefulness or pleasure ceases to be present. There is one other instance where Aristotle mentions same sex relationships. At VII.5 1148b, he discusses what he calls morbid dispositions. These dispositions may be natural or habitual. One case of a morbid habitual disposition is “the disposition to sexual activity with other males.” Here, Aristotle is using *aprhodisíon* and not *erōs*. *Aphrodísíon* refers to sexual pleasure, so Aristotle’s criticism may be directed toward engaging in sexual pleasure and not necessarily because it is a same sex relationship. Hence such relationships are *de facto* inferior relationships compared to primary *philia* or, as I have argued, primary *erōs*. Aristotle’s apparent view of same sex relationships, so far as we can tell, is negative, and his view of *erōs* indicates a heteronormative prescription.

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<sup>96</sup> While Aristotle argues that there is insufficient cause to love the lover (EN VIII.4 1157a), I disagree. The beloved may love the lover for reasons of utility. This, however, does not refute Aristotle’s view that the relationships are quick to dissolve when the source of the love ceases. On my view, relationships between adults, including same sex couples, may not be doomed to such failure if they contribute to the development of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle, to his credit, recognized that power imbalances can taint the relationships.

#### 4.5 HETERONORMATIVITY AND HETEROGENDERISM

In the previous section I argued that Aristotle's view of *erōs* would be considered heteronormative today. According to Ofelia Schutte, a normative view of sexuality is one that defines "the propriety or impropriety of any instance of sexual activity" (1997, 41).<sup>97</sup> A normative view of heterosexuality, also known as heteronormativity, is one wherein sexual relationships outside of heterosexual relationships are deemed morally wrong. A heteronormative framework also presupposes a hetero-gender binary. Such a view posits two and only two genders (hence 'binary' used as a noun in the literature),<sup>98</sup> male and female, which are determined by biological sex.<sup>99</sup> Schutte describes this as "a regulative ideal that is taken to represent 'man' and 'woman' in their ideal characteristics" (1997, 41). Mainly, this construct argues that one's biological sex determines gendered characteristics. For example, being biologically female may lead to the assumption in a heteronormative society that the person will be docile, maternal, and compassionate.

Such characteristics are not problematic in themselves. It is, however, problematic to assume that one's biological sex determines absolutely one's personality, gender, or sexual

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<sup>97</sup> Schutte notes that we ought not assume that heterosexuality and normative sexuality are synonymous or interchangeable. One could experience a normative sexuality that does not give priority to heterosexuality. I, however, am looking mainly at heteronormativity—that is, normative sexuality that emphasizes heterosexuality, ideally for reproduction within a marriage, as the most proper sexual relationships. Schutte notices that such heteronormativity is common amongst patriarchal societies and religions (1997, 41) and follows up by stating that heteronormativity is common among contemporary cultures; however, non-heteronormative societies will have their own versions of normative sexual practices (1997, 42).

<sup>98</sup> According to Schutte, heteronormative societies are often privileged by patriarchal and religious societies (1997, 41). In male dominated societies, the heteronormative standards are often used to oppress and suppress women (1997, 43). In such an arrangement, the gender roles create the division of sexual labor, which, oftentimes, is inequitable for women when it comes to the distribution of power and compensation. As a side note, Schutte talks specifically about how the heteronormative gender binary disadvantages women; however, such a binary also will disadvantage men who are not gender 'conforming'.

<sup>99</sup> The claim that there are only two sexes, male and female, is biologically problematic; sex is more complicated than the presence of two chromosomes. Intersex individuals, for example, may have an atypical chromosomal makeup that may include more than two chromosomes. Even the presence of chromosomes does not guarantee that the stereotypical gender traits will be present. Moreover, the physiological details of human genitalia do not fall smoothly into two types.



orientation (1997, 44). On such a model, for example, Schutte says the assumption that an ideal gender role for women is that of a mother is an example of the “gender construct,” fulfilling for some; but it does not follow that all biological females will be fulfilled in such a role. The biological reproductive function of males and females is often cited as the motivation for this prescription. Being oriented toward the opposite sex is supposed to be “natural.” While it is empirically true that human reproduction requires the gametes from a male and a female, it does not follow that heterosexuality, or a hetero gender binary, is therefore normatively appropriate. Adrienne Rich, among others, argues that this presumption is incorrect; the normative prescription of heterosexuality is a political institution which compels people to be heterosexual, even if it is not an accurate representation of one’s sexual orientation or gender expression (1993, 145). For Rich, to presume otherwise limits the potential and opportunities for individuals. Under such compulsory heterosexuality, it is typically assumed that the male should be masculine and the female feminine, some may be more or less amenable to different gender expressions so long as both sexes and genders are represented in the relationship. Such a gender binary falls short of realistically describing, and prescribing, what a good life looks like for individuals, since there are numerous viable genders and non-heterosexual relationships.

In response to the normative hetero-gender binary, Z. Nicolazzo coined the term “compulsive heterogenderism”. That is, society pressures people to take a heterosexual normative approach to gender. While sexuality and gender may be seen as intertwined, and heteronormative approaches treat them as interchangeable, the hetero-based binaries are problematic. The binaries assume the unsubstantiated claim that there is a biological imperative that dictates how people will, and ought to, behave. Nicolazzo argues that the compulsion to present oneself as heterogendered, or heterosexual, is harmful to individuals who do not fall

neatly within the gender binary or are not heterosexual. Society pressures such individuals to fit within the hetero-binary, even when it is not consistent with their sense of self. The individual attempts to fit into this binary to be accepted and understood by others. However, they are denying (and being denied) the truth of their true identity (2017, 7-8). In enforcing compulsory heterogenderism, an individual's gender identity is erased and the individual is unable to interact in a society that appropriately reflects their gender expression.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler challenges the sex/gender distinction, in part on the grounds that both the terms 'female' and 'woman' are intended to give a stabilized categorization to something that is inherently subjective. Iris Marion Young rejects the sex/ gender binary and instead, adopts the lived bodily experience:

The lived body is a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is body-in-situation. For existentialist theory, *situation* denotes the produce of *facticity* and *Freedom*. The person always faces the material facts of her body and its relation to a given environment (2005, 16).

Considering individuals as lived bodies instead of as feminine, homo-, hetero-, or bi-sexual women (or any of the possible variations) enables us to give a representation of an individual's identity that represents the diversity of experiences, phenomena, perceptions, social constructions, etc. that result in a person's development. The individual, then, is able to be addressed as a comprehensive whole while maintaining the individual's subjective experiences—all without reducing her to her biological features. However, Young wants to maintain the use of gender, but primarily for the purposes of analyzing the social structures that contribute to the cultivation, development, and (unfortunately in some cases) oppression of the members of society (2005, 19-26).

While the existence, definition, and value of gender norms are still contested among feminist philosophers, a consistent thread is that social constructs and norms have the potential to

become problematic insofar as they attempt to restrict how an individual can and should develop. Specifically, by normalizing one's sex, personality, or sexual orientation, society runs the risk of limiting a person's opportunities. A further risk is the forcing of an individual to develop a life that is inauthentic with respect to her specific subjective experience. In a patriarchy, the gender asymmetry results in the imposition of a burden upon women who are denied, by social construct, sufficient opportunities to be independent, to have power, to be autonomous. Instead, they are systematically shaped to be socially and politically inferior in power, ever the weaker sex. A considerable problem here is that women cannot choose, but are forced into a life that is inconsistent with what they want. It is, moreover, a life that can put them at an extreme disadvantage: one of domestic slavery, economic and social oppression, inequality and disenfranchisement. This lack of privilege also brings with it a socially constructed sense of shame, inferiority, and lack of freedom and opportunity, as Simone de Beauvoir starkly described it decades ago (1989, 55, 284-5, 380-81).

The gender binary is such that social constructs endow upon some, mainly masculine heterosexual males, more power, autonomy, and freedom while rendering others powerless, subservient, dependent, and subject to oppression. This may be, in large part, the major problem with gender norms: not the attempt to categorize, *per se*, but that the attempt results in the devaluing of lived experiences. The gender binary creates a social construct that limits available options for all members, but especially those who are female or those who do not conform to gender or heterosexual norms. A patriarchal society resulting in harmful sexual and gender dichotomies only allows a small selection of people to cultivate and realize a fragment of their potential. Doing this limits one's ability to cultivate the intellectual and moral virtues and,

therefore, one's ability to attain *eudaimonia*.<sup>100</sup>

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir argues that “the body of woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world. But that body is not enough to define her as woman; there is no true living reality except as manifested by the conscious individual through activities and in the bosom of society” (1989, 37). In essence, she argues that the (incorrect) categorization of woman as inferior and man as superior is not founded in biology. The delineation comes, instead, from a reinforcement of social construct that defines women as weaker than, and inferior to, males. Beauvoir's conclusion shifted the analysis of women's oppression from biology and reproduction to the social constructs that define the expectations of the characters and abilities of women and men; such characteristics are the purview of gender.

‘Gender’ refers to characteristics beyond one's biology. In focusing on character traits, behaviors, attitudes, and so on, one can identify membership in an identity category independent of genetics. In many contemporary societies, gender is divided into feminine and masculine gender.<sup>101</sup> For example, the former is associated with being compassionate, nurturing, submissive, irrational, weak, and dependent; the latter with being independent, assertive, rational, strong, and so on. While potentially helpful in enabling individuals to descriptively refer to themselves as identifying with a gender category, gender roles can become oppressive when applied as norms—that is, when it is argued that there are gender expressions to which people *ought* to adhere, and when expressions that do not conform to that valued hierarchy are deemed deviant or inferior. A consequence is that sex and gender become conflated, reinforcing the previously identified flawed assumption that a woman's, or man's, potential is determined by

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<sup>100</sup> As I argue below, correctly understood sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity will contribute to flourishing. Interference with such identities will impede the attainment of *eudaimonia*.

<sup>101</sup> Unless otherwise noted, contemporary patriarchal societies are the point of discussion when I refer to ‘society’ or ‘culture’.

sex. Moreover, this approach reinforces the social construction of women and men as opposites which further lends to the power asymmetry resulting in the oppression of women.<sup>102</sup> As such, the heterogenderism is morally debased.

Having argued that gender is distinct from both sex and sexuality and is confused in its own right, the next step is to examine heteronormativity in further detail. Within a heteronormative construct, sexual intercourse between a man and a woman is established as ideal; deviations from this model are discouraged. It should be noted, however, that heteronormativity may have more criteria than just the sexes of the individuals involved. As Schutte notes, a society may prescribe criteria within the appropriate heterosexual relationships such that a heterosexual couple may still fall outside of the appropriate parameters and, in some respects, non-heterosexual couples may fall within the acceptable parameters. Hence in addition to the sex of the involved parties, the prescribed heteronormativity may require the presence of specific gender norms.

Rich argues that for compulsory heterosexuality, “is presumed as a ‘sexual preference’ of ‘most women,’ either implicitly or explicitly” (1993, 141). A point of concern for Rich is that compulsory heterosexuality erases and invalidates the experience of lesbians.<sup>103</sup> Such erasure denigrates the valid and true experiences of lesbians and, by categorizing lesbians as ‘other,’ puts them in the inequitable position of having to defend and explain their existence without a

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<sup>102</sup> Even if the intent is to identify women and men as complementary psychological or reproductive halves, the result is the same. See for example Schutte 2001, 43-4.

<sup>103</sup> Rich focuses primarily on the lesbian experience and what she calls ‘lesbian erasure.’ It is worth noting with Nicolazzo, that different identities within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum are not interchangeable (2017, 3-4). While we may be able to take certain generalities from Rich, such as that compulsory heteronormativity erases and denigrates non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities, we ought to be careful not to assume that the experience of a lesbian, gay man, and trans\* person are interchangeable. Rich makes a similar comment that we ought not assume lesbian encounters are interchangeable with, or included within, male homosexuality (1993, 145).

guarantee of acceptance (1993, 145).<sup>104</sup> Like Schutte, Rich argues that the heteronormative construct promotes male dominance at the expense of female authenticity and freedom (1993, 145-146). On my interpretation, this sexual inequality is morally fraught because it interferes with a person's ability to engage in virtuous activities that would lead to *eudaimonia*.<sup>105</sup>

#### 4.6 COMPULSORY HETERONORMATIVITY AND *EUDAIMONIA*

The criticism of heteronormativity mentioned above highlights an inequitable power dynamic as well as the erasure of an authentic identity. Within this general view is Schutte's complaint that heteronormativity and heterogenderism limit personal freedoms (1997, 56-57). My primary criticism is that heteronormativity and heterogenderism limit opportunities to engage in virtuous activities and relationships that contribute to *eudaimonia*.

I have argued that *erōs* ought to follow the same taxonomy as Aristotelian *philia* because *erōs* resembles *philia* and ought to include the possibility of erotic relationships that are founded on a recognition of virtuous character. In such relationships, the partners will have opportunities to engage in, and contemplate, virtuous activities with one another. Such engagement and contemplation will contribute to the activities that promote *eudaimonia*, just as was earlier argued is the case for *philia*. For this reason, the *polis* has an obligation to promote relationships—both *philia* and *erōs*—that contribute to flourishing. That is, the *polis* ought to provide a social construct that enables and encourages people to engage in both primary friendships and primary erotic relationships. Heteronormativity and heterogenderism limit an

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<sup>104</sup> Such compulsion would be damaging even *if* it resulted in acceptance; the compulsion is the problem, not necessarily its outcome.

<sup>105</sup> This is not to ignore the fact that, in a patriarchal heteronormative society, the harms go beyond the suppression of virtuous behaviors. In such a power dynamic many vicious acts are normalized, e.g., lack of property access, violence, sexual assault, etc. (Rich, 1993, 148-153).

individuals' ability to become authentically self-determining by forcing them to define themselves within the parameters of hetero norms. As Schutte states,

The political issue of the representation of heterosexuality and the continuous calls for the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, which are used to privilege heterosexual relations over other sexual options, permeates the social environment in which feminists must adopt lifestyles compatible with our desires for relationships, freedom, and happiness (1997, 56).<sup>106</sup>

By restricting individual freedoms, heteronormativity will limit the means through which one can develop dispositions and virtues. What ultimately matters, on my Aristotelian-inspired approach, ought to be the quality of one's character and not an unsubstantiated claim that biology determines gender. Instead of creating a social construct that dictates that people ought to have specific gender traits and sexual identities, flourishing is more likely to be achieved if we focus on encouraging intellectual and ethical virtues. Such virtues do not depend on sexual or gender identity; individuals need not be heteronormative or heterogendered to be capable of attaining the virtues. Rather, the virtuous traits are attained through habituation (ethical virtues) and intellectual instruction (intellectual virtues). As heteronormativity is not a criterion for flourishing, and can in fact impede flourishing, we ought not promote a heteronormative view of sexuality. We ought, instead, promote complete, or primary, *erōs*—and prevent heteronormative views from getting in its way—as such relationships will encourage people to contribute to the virtues in ways that are consistent with *eudaimonia*.

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<sup>106</sup> Nicolazzo argues similarly that marginalized people have to navigate their identities within the parameters of heterogenderism and not the ideal of being able to adhere to their own gender and sexual identity independent of a hetero-binary (2017, 2). Nicolazzo notes how the subjects in a study felt compelled to identify themselves in ways that fit heterogenderist norms at the expense of their authentic identity.

#### 4.7 PLATONIC *ERŌS*

Aristotle would have encountered views similar to mine. For example, Plato's own view of *erōs* would be considered non-heteronormative by today's standards. Plato's most detailed discussion of *erōs* occurs in the *Symposium* (*Symp.*) and the *Phaedrus* (*Phdr.*).<sup>107</sup> In the *Symposium*, Plato's Socrates attends a party wherein the guests are each charged with the task of providing an encomium on *erōs*. Socrates is slated to be the final speaker.<sup>108</sup> Earlier in the dialogue, Pausanias argues that *erōs* is divided into the Heavenly and Common loves. The Common love is directed towards both women and boys. Heavenly love, on the other hand, is a love of character that lasts a lifetime (183e). Heavenly love is the superior love and is such that if a person believes the person they love is of excellent character, yet turns out to be deceived, it is not shaming. This is because the source of the love was directed at perceived excellent character (185a). The love, here, is for excellence of character which means the motivations are correctly aimed at excellence.<sup>109</sup> This approach can be interpreted as non-heteronormative because the love that is being praised is of excellent character, not of a socially prescribed sex or gender.

A second non-heteronormative speech has sometimes been viewed as the West's first theorizing of sexuality. Plato's character Aristophanes, embroidering an ancient Orphic myth, describes the beginning of human history when humans were sphere-shaped with two faces, four legs, four arms, and two sets of genitals (189e). The species consisted of three sexes: male,

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<sup>107</sup> In *Republic* 5 Socrates argues that males and females are the same barring the exception that the male mounts and the female bears. For this reason, the sexes were to be trained and educated together. On this view, the biological properties are secondary and all souls are alike, which would render heteronormativity obsolete.

<sup>108</sup> The symposium is described by Apollodorus, who learned of it from Aristodemus. There are six individuals whom Aristodemus recalled present at the start of the party who are tasked with providing an encomium, which places Socrates sixth and final speech of these guests. After Socrates' speech, however, Alcibiades and his friends arrive and Alcibiades provides a speech praising (and at times criticizing) Socrates. Hence Socrates' speech on *erōs* becomes the penultimate speech.

<sup>109</sup> The connection to the love of excellence, or of the good, foreshadows what occurs later in the dialogue and ends up being a fundamental component of Socrates' account of *erōs*. We again see foreshadowing of Socrates' speech in Agathon's. Agathon argues that Love's home is in the characters and souls of good men. What Love is aimed at, then, is the beautiful souls and characters, not beautiful bodies (195e).



female, and androgynous. The males consisted of two males creating a whole sphere; the females consisted of two females to create the sphere; the androgynous individuals consisted of a male and female.<sup>110</sup> Fearing the strength of humans, but not wanting to lose out on the sacrifices they made, Zeus divided each human in half (190d). Missing their other halves, the two grasped at each other trying to become whole again. It is through this urge to be reunited with our natural half that people fall in love and pursue procreation (191a, 191c). For this reason, Aristophanes concludes there are three types of couplings: man with man; woman with woman; man with woman based on what the natural original whole would have been (191c-192c). Aristophanes' speech gives an origin myth for natural same sex relationships. On his account, it is natural for people to couple with either members of the same or opposite sex, depending on what would complete them.

Finally, we arrive at Socrates' speech. Socrates starts by engaging in a dialogue with Agathon where Socrates gets Agathon to agree that the good is beautiful. Socrates provides an account of *erōs* that he claims he learned from Diotima of Mantinea. Socrates, relaying Diotima's teaching, proceeds to split from the other speakers and argue that *Erōs* is not in fact a god, but a *daimon*, or great spirit that is neither beautiful nor ugly, neither good nor bad. Rather, it is an intermediate (202e-d). According to Diotima, "Wisdom is actually one of the most beautiful things, and Love [*erōs*] is love [*erōs*] in relation to what is beautiful, so that Love [*erōs*] is necessarily a philosopher, and as a philosopher, necessarily between wisdom and ignorance" (204b).<sup>111</sup> Here, we start to see the discussion of the beauty of wisdom and its erotic role. *Erōs*, Diotima claims, is "passionate for wisdom and resourceful in looking for it" (203d).

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<sup>110</sup> Although Aristophanes' view is primarily non-heteronormative, he (or his Orphic forebears) operates under the impression that biological sex (male) is the same as gender (masculine). As I will demonstrate, the heteronormativity stops at the integration of this binary.

<sup>111</sup> Translators use 'Love' to distinguish the god from the passion.

Unlike the previous speeches on *erōs*, Diotima says that it is not *erōs* that is beautiful; rather, it is the object of *erōs*, the thing loved, that is beautiful (204c). The lover of good or beautiful things really desires to possess and to retain goodness (205d-e). Love, on this account, is a desire to for the good and to always possess the good.<sup>112</sup>

The activity associated with permanent possession of the good is “giving birth in the beautiful, in relation to body and soul” (206c-e). On this account, all beings are pregnant in body and soul and want to give birth to the beautiful. In giving birth to the beautiful, one can attain a kind of immortality. Some men seek immortality through physical procreation, pursuing women and focusing only on physical birth. This is inferior, however, to those who are pregnant in their souls and conceive what it is fitting for the soul to conceive, namely, wisdom, virtue, moderation, and justice (208e). In pursuit of this, Diotima describes an ascent toward the Form of the Beautiful. First, one is attracted to a beautiful body and begets beautiful words (210a). One will then realize that all beautiful bodies partake in the form of the Beautiful. Then, one will progress to consider beautiful souls, more beautiful than physical bodies. Procreation with words will again happen, but this time it will be words that will make young men into better men, compelling them to contemplate the Form of the Beautiful (210b).<sup>113</sup> As one ascends, contemplation is on the Form of the Beautiful, realizing that Beauty is the cause of all beautiful things and is always beautiful in itself (211a). The life worth living, according to Diotima, is life dedicated to contemplating the Beautiful. She claims that it is

under these conditions alone, as he sees beauty with what has the power to see it, that he will succeed in bringing to birth, not phantoms of virtue, because he is not grasping a

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<sup>112</sup> Shortly, Socrates nods to Aristophanes’ speech. He claims that people do not desire to change from being a half into a whole; they desire the good (205d). What we are pursuing is the good in others and not seeking to find a second half. Despite opposing Aristophanes’ speech, Socrates’ account can still be viewed as non-heteronormative since the love is for goodness and not for a particular sex or gender determined by a social construct.

<sup>113</sup> When referring to men I am following the language of Diotima’s purported speech to Socrates. Plato himself writes *anthropos* of a human beings and *anēr* of a male—though only a few contemporary translators have given him credit for observing the distinction.

phantom, but true virtue, because he is grasping the truth; and that when he has given birth to and nurtured true virtue, it belongs to him to be loved by the gods, and to him, if to any human being, to be immortal. (212a)<sup>114</sup>

Aristotle often mentions and sometimes quotes Platonic dialogues, so he would have been familiar with non-heteronormative accounts of *erōs*. Such views are like my account in the sense that they are non-heteronormative, emphasize character rather than sex or gender, and have excellence or excellent activity as the goal. What Plato is arguing for is the love of goodness with the desire to procreate true virtue. I, similarly, argue that we should fall in love with people of good character and through that promote more good character, or virtue.

In the *Phaedrus* Socrates is exchanging speeches on *erōs* with Phaedrus. Socrates claims he is eager to hear a speech by Lysias about *erōs*. Specifically, Lysias argues that it is better to bestow favors on the non-lover rather than the lover (231). Socrates, believing Lysias' speech to lack truth, provides his own speeches on *erōs* and advances the true encomium to *erōs* in the second.<sup>115</sup> Socrates describes souls as charioteers driving winged chariots.<sup>116</sup> The gods have chariots where the horses are well behaved and equally matched. In other chariots, however, well-behaved horses are paired with poorly behaved ones (247a). The chariots with the poorly behaved horses have difficulty flying, injure their wings and are maimed due to incompetence (248a). The souls that follow the gods will see what is true and will be protected from any harm (248c). If, however, a soul experiences forgetfulness or incompetence, it loses its wings and falls to Earth (248c). Of these, the souls that have seen the truth will be reincarnated as a man who will become a lover of wisdom or of beauty or will be devoted to the Muses and love (248d). The soul, seeking to restore this deficiency of the wisdom it has forgotten, seeks out beauty to

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<sup>114</sup> All translations of the *Symposium* are Rowe's.

<sup>115</sup> Socrates rejects his own first speech, saying it does a disservice to *erōs* because of Phaedrus' influence. Thus I discuss only Socrates' second speech.

<sup>116</sup> This is an analogy for the parts of the soul. Plato discusses it further at 253c-255a.

recollect the previous state of knowledge of the truth. When the person catches a glimpse of true beauty, they will be reminded of true Beauty. Being reminded of this Beauty but being unable to contemplate it will result in a divine madness.<sup>117</sup> In experiencing the beauty of youthful boys, one may be prompted to be reminded of the true Beauty. After much effort and discomfort,<sup>118</sup> the wings are re-grown and one is again able to contemplate the Forms. The souls that followed the train of Zeus in the heavens before the fall “seek that the one they love should be someone like Zeus in respect of his soul; so they look to see whether he is naturally disposed towards philosophy and towards leadership, and when they have found him and fall in love they do everything to make him of such kind” (252e). Ultimately, it is this desire for wisdom that attracts one to the beautiful, and it is through experiencing the beautiful that one can attain wisdom. To this end, *erōs* is attracted to the beautiful which is ultimately a desire for wisdom.

Inspired by this desire for wisdom, one will be attracted to someone who is naturally disposed to philosophy and seeks wisdom. In lieu of sexual pleasures, Plato’s *erōs* is again focused on an intellectual pursuit. The attraction to a beautiful boy, for example, is not so much about the physical attributes of the boy as it is about the boy’s reminding one of the Form of Beauty.<sup>119</sup> The lover and beloved will engage in philosophical activity and will embark on a journey that will allow their souls to regain their wings, allowing them to contemplate the Forms again.

Platonic *erōs*, unlike Aristotle’s, is centered on the love of wisdom and the accompanying philosophic pursuits. For Plato, *erōs* does not require a normative sexuality; instead, it requires

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<sup>117</sup> In contrast to the first of Socrates’ speeches, he argues that madness is not necessarily evil. In fact, it can be a gift bestowed by the gods.

<sup>118</sup> Note the similarities between the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. In both, Socrates is arguing that an appreciation for beauty itself starts with beautiful bodies and ascends into appreciation of the Beautiful itself.

<sup>119</sup> While the initial attraction may be to physical beauty, it is a means to the end of contemplating true Beauty.

an intellectual desire and ability. My view shares some features with views entertained in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*—specifically, those that argue for an account of *erōs* that focuses on good character with the goal of intellectual contemplation. My view differs from these in the sense that I think that we need to cultivate both ethical and intellectual virtues and I take on the Aristotelian, and not Platonic, understanding of the virtues.

Because Plato emphasizes the love of the good and pregnancy of the soul, his view is open to relationships that are not restricted to opposite sex relationships. Plato suggests that the erotic desires that are most virtuous are those that are between two people who seek the good, or the Forms, through intellectual achievements, or philosophy.<sup>120</sup> Aristotle's view of primary *philia*, and as I would argue primary *erōs*, bears similarities to Plato's view of *erōs*. Both views look at wisdom as the key to flourishing. Likewise, both argue that loving relationships can facilitate the attainment of that wisdom. The difference is that Plato explicitly refers to it as *erōs* while Aristotle limits the scope to *philia*. I propose, then, that we adopt a view that blends Plato and Aristotle. The ideal erotic relationship is one that pursues ethical and intellectual virtues with the goal of attaining *eudaimonia*, independent of sex or gender roles. We ought to focus on the quality of the characters of the lovers and whether their behaviors and actions will contribute to *eudaimonia*. In the presence of a primary relationship, the lovers will be of good character and will have the intent of maintaining and maximizing one another's virtues. It is this reciprocal concern for the good, rather than a heteronormative prescription, that makes this a relationship that we should promote.

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<sup>120</sup> Frisbee Sheffield notes that, unlike Aristotle, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato does not have a concept of “love for another person ‘for their own sake, not our own’” (2011, 251). It would not be appropriate, if she is right, to infer that I am taking a view identical to Plato's. While Plato does provide accounts of non-heteronormative *erōs*, and his view of *erōs* is consistent with a relationship that works towards happiness through the good, he lacks the reciprocity of mutual well-wishing that Aristotle, I believe rightly, includes.

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 2, I argued that all three forms of *philia* can play a positive role in the attainment of virtues necessary for *eudaimonia*. Each brings the opportunity to cultivate ethical and intellectual virtues. I have also argued that *erōs* can fulfill this role. In order for *erōs* to contribute to the attainment of the virtues, it must be possible for individuals to fully develop their virtues without impediments from unjust social constructs. As the *polis* has an obligation to provide and promote the conditions that promote *eudaimonia*, the lawgivers of the *polis* have a duty to foster primary *philia* and primary *erōs*. As heteronormative and heterogendered social constructs are unjust, they will interfere with the attainment of *eudaimonia*. As such, the *polis* ought not take a heteronormative role. Rather, the *polis* ought to promote relationships that contribute to the development of virtues and the attainment of *eudaimonia*. The best attainable *polis* ought to seek ways to ensure that society fosters flourishing relationships of all kinds, including LGBTQIA+ relationships.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### 5.1 CONCLUSION

In the *Ethica Nicomachea*, Aristotle argues that all humans aim for the chief human good (I.1 1094a; 1.1). As such, all activities and intellectual pursuits are motivated by the quest for identifying and achieving this good. Aristotle concludes that the chief good is flourishing (*eudaimonia*), though he notes that people may disagree about what flourishing consists of (I.4 1095a, V.6 1176a; 1.1). For Aristotle, flourishing is virtuous activity and the most flourishing or self-sufficient life is the life of contemplation. In order to engage in virtuous activity, one requires the opportunities to habituate ethical character as well as intellectual virtues. *Philia*, for Aristotle, can facilitate the development of these virtues. *Philia* provides the opportunity to develop good character traits via habituation as well as the opportunity for excellent contemplation with a friend.

Over the past few decades, philosophers have been paying closer attention to the role of *philia* in Aristotle's works. Most of the focus has been on the role that the three forms of *phila*—utility, pleasure, and primary—play in Aristotle's philosophy (1.4). In dividing friendship into these three types, Aristotle delineated the ways in which friendships can contribute to one's life. The most important role is the role that primary friendships play with respect to *eudaimonia*. In chapter 2.5-6, I analyze the role *philia* plays in the self-sufficient life. This is a primary area of focus to resolve the potential problem that could arise if *philia* were only instrumentally valuable. Primary friendships enable one to better understand ethical and intellectual virtues. Engaging in activities with a friend of good character, one who has a reciprocal desire for your well-being, affords one the opportunity to engage in and appreciate ethical activities. The friendship also allows one to fulfill the pleasure of knowing and contemplating oneself. Aristotle regards contemplation as the most pleasant activity, yet it is difficult to attain. The friend, acting

as a mirror to the self, and being in a sense of the same soul, provides an irreplaceable occasion for virtuous contemplation of one's own virtue. As well-wishing is reciprocal, both friends benefit from this arrangement and increase their understanding of their own virtuous dispositions. It is through these friendships that one is able to fully develop character traits that contribute to *eudaimonia*. In short, the primary friend provides opportunities, according to Aristotle, that are not readily available in other interpersonal interactions.<sup>121</sup>

In addition to helping with the virtues, the self-sufficient or happiest life is improved by the presence of primary friends. Even the most blessed life will be improved by the presence of friends, since even the most blessed person would not choose to live without friends. The pleasure friends provide is one of the external goods that contributes to the *eudaimōn* life. Because *philia* plays a pivotal role in the attainment and maintenance of *eudaimonia*, we ought to include primary friendships as a means to *eudaimonia*. In recognizing the value of *philia* and the connection to *eudaimonia*, one is equipping oneself with the external goods and prospects for becoming fully *eudaimōn*.

Just as it is natural for humans to seek out friends, Aristotle holds that humans are by nature political, or civic, animals (3.1). For Aristotle, this means that humans are herding animals who share a common goal. Unlike other political animals, humans have the capacity for speech. On Aristotle's account, it is speech that enables humans to understand and express what is pleasant and painful, allowing them to make decisions based on what will bring them pleasure or help them to avoid pain. While non-human animals can experience pleasures and pains and communicate those states, they lack the ability reason about them. Additionally, they lack the human ability to understand higher-order pleasures such as justice and injustice. Because

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<sup>121</sup> While Aristotle limits these opportunities to *philia*, on my view primary *erōs* can also provide such opportunities.



humans' use of language is combined with a rational faculty, their *logos* enables them to consider the higher-order states which, in Aristotle's view, makes humans the *most* political of animals, able to make normative judgments about how life ought to be lived. That is, they can consider whether some proposed action or activity contributes to justice or injustice (3.1). As part of their political nature, humans form *poleis* to secure justice and other goods. Without the *polis*, humans would not have the adequate conditions under which *eudaimonia* can be achieved; humans are not naturally self-sufficient (3.2). Compensating for this deficit, however, requires the correct *polis*. Flourishing will not be possible without what Aristotle considers the best *polis* attainable by human beings.

For Aristotle, there are three potential *poleis* that can be considered ideal: kingship, aristocracy, and polity (3.5). The most attainable is the aristocracy, wherein the most excellent and virtuous individuals rule with the goal of promoting the chief good for citizens. Since the *polis* exists for the sake of justice, and the aristocracy promotes the chief good, the ideal *polis* will be constituted as an environment conducive to the realization of *eudaimonia*. By pursuing the goal of promoting the good life and providing the conditions under which *eudaimonia* and other goods can be acquired, citizens within the aristocracy can live the *eudaimōn* life, the ultimate goal of the best *polis*, ensuring that citizens have the best lives possible (3.6). The well-ordered *polis*, then, will consist of laws, social structures and customs, and education that contribute to *eudaimonia* for those capable of achieving it. The more frequently the citizens have opportunities to engage in good and virtuous activities, the more likely it is that they will develop good and virtuous dispositions.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> This applies to both ethical and intellectual virtues.

Even the most virtuous and self-sufficient person will require a *polis* to supply and keep secure the day-to-day necessities of life (3.6). Additionally, if the *polis* facilitates virtuous citizens, the citizens will benefit from being able to engage in the activities of the virtues with one another. It does not follow, however, that all citizens would be virtuous, even in an ideal *polis*, nor does it guarantee that good citizens will be good people. Such goodness is determined by ethical and intellectual excellence; mere adherence to the laws of the *polis* may be sufficient for being a good citizen, but insufficient for attaining *eudaimonia*. This is seen most clearly in instances of defective *poleis* where poorly conceived laws lead law-abiding citizens into activities and actions less than virtuous.

In the best type of *polis*, following just laws and regulations may, however, facilitate the attainment of virtue. In doing good actions, as dictated by good laws, citizens habituate themselves to good behavior. By providing incentives to follow the laws, the *polis* is more likely to succeed in encouraging individuals to act virtuously. In habituating themselves to good behavior, the citizens will be more likely to actually become good (3.7).

For Aristotle, the best *polis* has the good life as its end goal. Yet it goes beyond mere habituation and education promoted by good laws. Even the self-sufficient and *eudaimōn* individual will have need of the *polis* to provide the external requirements including shelter, military protection, livelihood, comfort, and companionship. To secure all this, the best attainable *polis* will be led by political experts who can write and enforce laws that contribute to *eudaimonia*. These experts, like the *polis* itself, will have human flourishing as their goal.

Since the *polis* aims for the chief good, it ought to arrange society in a way that contributes to flourishing. Because primary friendships contribute to the achievement of *eudaimonia*, the *polis* has an obligation to foster and protect primary friendships (2.5). That is,

the *polis* ought to provide multiple ways for citizens to develop virtues and to interact, thereby promoting the formation and maintenance of primary friendships. In the aristocratic *polis*, civic friendship ensures mutual well-wishing (Cooper, 2005, 74-75). In promoting civic friendship, the *polis* safeguards the prospect that as many citizens as possible will meet the conditions for attaining *eudaimonia*. By protecting primary friendships, the *polis* encourages citizens to work toward the common goal of securing the chief good. Each person desires the chief good not only individually but for others as well.

While Aristotle devotes a significant amount of time to discussing the role of *philia* with respect to *eudaimonia*, he says very little of substance about *erōs*, another type of loving relationship (4.2). In Aristotle's time, the three primary forms of erotic relationships were marriages between men and women, *paidēraistia*, and relationships with *heterairai*. In most of what Aristotle says about *erōs*, an aristocratic relationship between a husband and wife is the ideal. On his interpretation, this type of erotic friendship is beneficial because both the husband and wife play their appropriate roles. The husband rules over the household while the wife takes care of children and household management. In such marriages, the spouses are assumed to strive for justice as a guiding principle (4.2). While Aristotle does not go into detail about the role of *erōs* with respect to *eudaimonia*, what he describes for marriages is analogous to the role of *philia*. Moreover, the relationship he posits has a virtuous spouse exercising rule, which increases the likelihood that the other spouse will maximize virtuous behaviors as well.

Aristotle discusses erotic relationships that are for pleasure or utility, mirroring correlative friendly relationships (4.2). That is, the erotic relationships of pleasure and utility will be formed because of their perceived goals usefulness and pleasure. When the benefit or pleasure ceases, the relationships will dissolve. For Aristotle, most erotic relationships are formed out of

pleasure. Like other pleasures, however, erotic desire can be taken to excess, thereby becoming vicious; thus Aristotle condemns such sexual acts as adultery, fornication, and rape. For Aristotle, then, erotic relationships are good when they follow aristocracy and are bad when they involve excess or injustice (4.2). While Aristotle does not make an argument about positive erotic relationships (beyond the aristocratic marriage), his criticism of erotic relationships focuses on deviations from virtuous behavior, not on the nature of *erōs* itself.

I regard Aristotle's taxonomy of *erōs* as incomplete (4.3). While he mentions the similarities between *philia* and *erōs* based on utility and pleasure, he omits any discussion of the possibility of *erōs* based on character, or primary *erōs*. On my view, Aristotle's handling of *erōs* can be completed by including primary *erōs* in his taxonomy. If we accept that there is primary *erōs*, we can expand the account of prescribed relationships to include the argument that, like primary *philia*, primary *erōs* contributes to the development of virtues and is thus an important part of developing the dispositions fundamental to attaining *eudaimonia*. For this reason, just as the *polis* has an obligation to foster primary *philia*, it has the obligation to foster primary *erōs*. Both primary *philia* and *erōs* provide external goods that make *eudaimonia* possible as well as facilitating virtuous activities including contemplation. What we ought to look for in erotic relationships, then, is the presence of mutual well-wishing and dispositions consistent with good character. The question whether an erotic relationship is appropriate depends on the quality of the relationship and whether it contributes to *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle's view, insofar as we know it from his ethical treatises, is lacking in a further way. By recommending that there be an aristocratic relationship between a husband and wife, Aristotle limits the types of relationships that may be encouraged. While the emphasis on aristocracy implies an adherence to virtuous character, an equally important part of Aristotle's

recommendation is that there are naturally occurring roles for men and women and that the proper erotic relationships adhere to these roles (4.4). Such relationships would, in contemporary times, be deemed heteronormative. That is, they promote a sexual norm that depends on a heterosexual relationship between a man and woman. Also inherent in Aristotle's view is what Nicolazzo criticizes as heterogenderism, the view that biological sex determines natural gender roles.

Heteronormativity and heterogenderism are destructive of human happiness because they provide an inaccurate account of biological, sexual, and gender identities (4.5). Full expressions of sexual and gender identities challenge the heteronormative and heterogendered prescriptions that are ill equipped to accurately explain the variety of identities that we now know exist. This heterobinary is also harmful because it erases or denigrates non-hetero gender and sexual identities, rendering individuals unable to pursue lives consistent with their personal experience of identity. There is a tradition, especially in patriarchal societies, of bestowing more power on men while limiting women's freedoms and oppressing them (as well as marginalizing other non-conformists). By limiting gender and sexual identities and engaging in oppression, the heteronormative approach removes the possibility of individual choice.

On my reading, heteronormativity and heterogenderism should be rejected for the reasons just mentioned, but my main focus is on how they both impede the cultivation of virtues (4.6). By limiting relationships to heteronormative or heterogendered ones, individuals have diminished opportunities to engage in relationships that are fulfilling. What we ought to concentrate on instead of heteronormativity is the quality of relationships. While erotic relationships of pleasure and utility have limitations and make minimal contributions to the attainment of *eudaimonia*, primary erotic relationships play an important role in the attainment of

*eudaimonia* (4.3). Thus, when it comes to erotic relationships, our main concern ought to be with whether the relationships contribute to the attainment of *eudaimonia* and not with whether the couple adheres to heteronormative and heterogendered norms.

Because the *polis* has a general duty to establish and promote what contributes to *eudaimonia* for its citizens, it has a specific duty to ensure that both primary *philia* and primary *erōs* are encouraged. Because heteronormativity is oppressive to many citizens, primary relationships should be evaluated by the relationships' contribution to flourishing; sexual and gender identities should be irrelevant to the crafting of laws and social institutions for all citizens equally.<sup>123</sup> On my account, *erōs* has the same structure as *philia*. Consequently, the *polis* is obliged to promote a society that is inclusive of all erotic relationships (between consenting adults) that are conducive to the attainment of *eudaimonia*—just as it does in the case of *philia*.

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<sup>123</sup> Here I refer to the concern the *polis* pays to sexual orientation and gender identity. Its focus should be on cultivating virtues and not on gender or sexual norms. This does not mean that these identities are insignificant in themselves or to the individuals who have them. In fact, gender and sexual identities are often highly important to individuals, which is part of why heteronormativity and heterogenderism are damaging.

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