Abstract

In book VII of the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle offers a theory of friendship according to which friends are essential for human flourishing. Given that we are social creatures who by nature live together, Aristotle must establish what sort of cooperative relationships underlie our communal associations. Most scholarship on Aristotle’s ethics, including the topic of friendship, focuses on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. My dissertation aims to articulate Aristotle’s uniquely Eudemian views concerning *philia*. To this end, the project looks closely at three fundamental issues in Aristotle’s Eudemian account of friendship regarding which Aristotle makes different claims in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the first chapter, I consider what the types of friendship are and how they relate to one another (e.g., focally or by analogy). I argue, first, that each type of friendship is based on a fundamental way that we as humans are psychologically attracted to things as well as people, and, second, that the type of focal relationship that Aristotle applies to friendship in the *EE* is derivative; the two subordinate forms of friendship—friendships based on pleasure or utility—relate focally to the primary form of friendship—friendship based on character—in virtue of the relationships among the grounds of each type. In the second chapter, I take up the issue of whether friends of the primary sort must be virtuous. I defend the view that one must possess only some genuinely decent features of character in order to participate in primary *philia*, thus granting the possibility of character-based friendships for individuals who are qualifiedly enkratic and even qualifiedly akratic. In the third chapter, I investigate the role of friendship in human flourishing. The last of these issues is connected to the central argument of the *Eudemian Ethics*, since the treatise aims at providing a theory of the human good. As it turns out, the human good is a common good, shared between virtuous friends engaged in common virtuous activity.
To friends
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Introduction

“We consider a friend to be among the greatest of goods, and friendlessness and solitude to be most terrible, because all of life and voluntary association is with them.”¹ In this instance, Aristotle agrees with common opinion; friendship, he argues, occupies a prominent place in a flourishing human life. Given the attention Aristotle affords to friendship in his ethical treatises, the dearth of scholarship on Aristotle’s Eudemian theory of friendship, the divergence between his account in the *Eudemian Ethics* and that in *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the plausibility of various parts of his discussion of the phenomenon, Aristotle’s treatment of *philia* in *EE VII* deserves further investigation.

It is now commonplace in contemporary philosophical work on friendship to claim that friendship has received little attention among philosophers.² While it remains the case that it has yet to become a mainstream topic in value theory, and while there is still a contrast between the attention historically afforded to friendship and the current level of philosophical concern with the topic, there has been a discernible shift in interest concerning friendship in the last forty years.³ In those cases where it is discussed, friendship is often presented as a problem case for

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¹ *EE* 1234b32-4. The translations throughout are my own, but I draw on Rackham in the *Loeb* series and Solomon in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Barnes. I have also found Décarie (Montreal 1978), and Dirlmeier (Berlin 1984) useful. I consult the following Greek texts: Rackham (*Loeb*), Walzer and Mingay (*Oxford Classical Text*), Susemihl (*Teubner*). I rely by default on the editorial decisions of Walzer and Mingay.


³ Badhwar notes this trend in her Introduction to *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, p. 2.
normative ethical theories that demand impartiality. It is essential to friendship to be partial where your friends are concerned. Yet, intuitively, it seems that having friends is a valuable part of life, and so a plausible account of well-being, or human flourishing, including its ethical aspects, should take the role of friendship seriously. However partial to one another friends must be, that must be compatible with having a fully ethical character, and living a fully ethical life. Aristotle, in both the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics*, gives a rich and relevant account of friendship\(^4\) as a natural and necessary part of a flourishing, and ethical, human life.

Because Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* was thought spurious until the early twentieth century, and because the *Nicomachean Ethics* is regarded as Aristotle’s most mature ethical treatise, scholars have devoted little attention to the *Eudemian Ethics*.\(^5\) Furthermore, there is greater variation among the extant Eudemian manuscripts than among the Nicomachean ones, making study of the *EE* more philologically taxing: one has not only to interpret and analyze Aristotle’s arguments, but also—as a necessary antecedent to interpretation—to determine which manuscript

\(^4\) It is now well-established that Aristotle’s notion of *philia* is broader than our idea of friendship, as it includes familial and broader societal relationships, while friendship is, as we typically conceive of it, something that we enter into voluntarily with a particular individual.

\(^5\) There is a commentary on the *Eudemian Ethics* in the Clarendon Aristotle Series by Michael Woods (Oxford 1982), but it fails to include translation and discussion of book VII, the book on friendship, as well as book III (which deals with particular virtues, such as courage and moderation, and their opposed vices). He explains the rationale for this decision in the preface: “Of the five books of the *Eudemian Ethics* that do not overlap with the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the three translated in this volume are likely to be of the greatest interest to readers of the present day.”
to follow in cases of conflict.\textsuperscript{6} Where scholars mention the *Eudemian Ethics*, they tend to assimilate the views found there to those found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, or cherry-pick excerpts from the Eudeman text to support a certain interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. We should not assume, however, that Aristotle’s ethical works present unified or even completely consistent accounts of, e.g., friendship.

Just as the *EE* has yet to receive the scholarly attention its importance warrants so too the topic of *philia*, or friendship, in Aristotle, both in the *EE* and in the *NE*, has traditionally been neglected. Given the prominence of the topic in Aristotle’s ethical thought and the extent of his treatment of it in his ethical writings, we could expect to see more scholarly interest in questions concerning Aristotle’s ideas about friendship and how they relate to his larger ethical project. While there has been some recent work concerning friendship in Aristotle (see, e.g., well-cited articles by John Cooper and Jennifer Whiting), this work has mostly addressed Aristotle’s Nicomachean views. I provide a careful reading of *Eudeman Ethics* VII. Throughout my discussion I draw contrasts with the Nicomachean account, highlighting the importance of treating the Eudeman one independently and separately.

There is much to be gained from a detailed study of *EE* VII. Anthony Kenny notwithstanding, there is scholarly consensus that the *Eudemian Ethics* antedates the *Nicomachean Ethics*.\textsuperscript{7} If we, as I think we should, accept that the *Nicomachean Ethics*

\textsuperscript{6} As Rackham points out in the *Loeb* edition, the two best manuscripts of Aristotle (the 10\textsuperscript{th} c. Laurentianus and the 12\textsuperscript{th} c. Parisiensis) fail to contain the *Eudemian Ethics*.

\textsuperscript{7} Anthony Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics: A study of the relationship between the Eudeman and Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*. While I do not find Kenny’s case for
Ethics is Aristotle’s later, more mature ethical treatise, it proves fruitful to explore connections between the EE and other treatises that are generally thought to have been written before the Nicomachean Ethics. For instance, while Aristotle claims in both the NE and the EE that there are three types of friendship, in EE VII Aristotle says that these types are focally related (i.e., related pros hen), while in the NE he says that they are related by analogy. The concept of focal meaning is central to Aristotle’s early metaphysical views, and so a thorough reconstruction of EE VII aids us in understanding certain aspects of Aristotle’s early metaphysics: the Eudemian account of friendship may well in fact be the original context in which Aristotle developed the theory of focal meaning. Another way in which my results are of scholarly benefit is in arriving at a broader, more complete understanding of the possibility of development within Aristotle’s ethical thinking. If, as I argue, the Eudemian account of friendship diverges in important ways from that of the Nicomachean Ethics, it may turn out that Aristotle’s thinking about eudaimonia, the overarching topic of both treatises, underwent revision during his career.8

the ordering of the ethical treatises convincing, I am persuaded by his arguments that the common books (NE V, VI, VII = EE IV, V, VI) were originally composed for inclusion in the Eudemian Ethics. Throughout, I treat the common books as a proper part of Aristotle’s Eudemian treatise.

8 Werner Jaeger, in Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development, proposes three stages of Aristotle’s thought. Early in his career, argues Jaeger, Aristotle accepted Platonic metaphysics; as his thinking progressed, Aristotle abandoned Platonic commitments. G.E.L. Owen presents an opposing picture according to which Aristotle earlier embraced markedly anti-Platonic views, eventually ending his career in sympathy with Platonic ideas. Others have pointed out that we should be cautious about making developmental claims, since Aristotle tended to revise material continuously. I suggest that Aristotle revised his thinking about friendship in the Eudemian Ethics; many of his arguments in Nicomachean Ethics VIII and IX are distinct. For a more detailed description of debates over the development of Aristotle’s ethical thinking, see John Cooper, “The Magna Moralia
In the debate over the relationship between the EE and the NE, I think scholars are too quick to conflate being a later composition with being a better (more plausible, more defensible) composition. While there are reasons for this, I contend that we should take seriously Aristotle’s Eudeman arguments whether or not they were written later than their Nicomachean counterparts. Even if the Eudemian Ethics came first, it might contain the better account of philia. Perhaps, for example, Aristotle noticed inconsistencies in the EE between, on the one hand, his account of friendship and, on the other, assorted separate ethical and metaphysical commitments. Perhaps he revised his account of friendship in order to revise inconsistencies that were not internal to that account, but that nonetheless stood in tension with other aspects of his holistic system of thought at the time. The resultant account of philia that we find in the Nicomachean Ethics may be weaker as an account of philia, or contain other difficulties, even while it resolves a different set of worries that were present in the Eudemian treatise. And, although I do think that some discrepancies between the two ethical treatises may support developmental interpretations, we should remain highly cautious about concluding that Aristotle’s ethical views changed in a marked way over time, given that the Eudemian Ethics may have been under steady revision, perhaps even right up until Aristotle composed the Nicomachean Ethics.

Lastly, I think that contemporary moral philosophers will benefit from an investigation and evaluation of Aristotle’s theory of friendship as presented in the Eudemian Ethics. Aristotle’s Eudemian theory is robust and defensible, even—and

sometimes especially—where it differs from the Nicomachean, and it offers us one plausible way to take friendship seriously as a component of human well-being. Studying it leads to valuable insights that might be missed otherwise.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters, each concerned with a central interpretive issue over which the *NE* and the *EE* seem to disagree. The first issue concerns Aristotle’s argument that there are three kinds of friendships, and it offers an explanation of how the seemingly disparate varieties of relationships that qualify as friendships form a unity. The second is what the character requirements are for individuals to be engaged in the primary form of friendship—i.e., friendship that Aristotle claims is based on character or virtue. The third topic concerns the value to human beings of having friends and the place of friendship, as Aristotle sees it, in leading a good life. In each of these parts, I focus, as I have said, on the account of friendship Aristotle presents in the *Eudemian Ethics*, but at some of the places that there are interesting contrasts between the two ethical works I also address the *Nicomachean*, and, to a much lesser extent, the *Magna Moralia* counterparts.

In the first chapter, I discuss Aristotle’s argument that there are three types of friendship, one based on mutual pleasure, one on mutual utility or advantage, and one on one’s own and the friend’s good characters, the last of which is also primary friendship. Unlike in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle asserts directly that there are three distinct ways for something to be lovable—being pleasant, being useful, and being good, Aristotle begins in the *Eudemian Ethics* with a puzzle (*aporia*): is what we love the good or the pleasant? There is no mention of loving what is useful at this point in the text; utility as a basis for friendship surfaces later. A
complicated argument follows in which Aristotle makes the observation that we love both the good and the apparent good. Being useful is, as it turns out, one way of being genuinely good, and so we also love those things that are useful. Aristotle concludes his explanation with the claim that just as we love inanimate objects in one of these three ways, so too we love people on account of pleasure, utility or goodness. Of friends in general, he writes at EE 1236a14-15: “And one becomes a friend when, while receiving love, he returns it, and both are in some way aware of this.” Being friends thus requires reciprocity of love, which itself requires that an individual be aware of another’s affection for her. I cannot return love that I receive from someone else if I am not aware that I am receiving it. I go on to explain how these three types of friendship are related to one another on Aristotle’s Eudemian account. Aristotle claims that the subordinate forms of friendship relate focally to the primary form, but it is difficult to make sense of what he must have in mind in applying focal meaning to philia, since it does not apply, in the case of philia, in the same way that it applies to the medical or health—Aristotle’s standard examples of pros hen predication.

In the second chapter, I take up the vexed issue of whether, on Aristotle’s theory, two individuals must themselves be perfectly virtuous in order to engage in the primary form of friendship. If so, it seems Aristotle is very pessimistic about the ability of most people to form character friendships. However, I argue, Aristotle’s view is not so restrictive. Although the agents involved in the highest form of friendship must meet certain character requirements, they need not be perfectly virtuous. In order to flesh out precisely what features of character are necessary for the highest form of friendship, I rely heavily on Aristotle’s discussions of eunoia.
(goodwill) and homonoia (unanimity or like-mindedness) in Eudemian Ethics VII 7. Primary friendship requires goodwill and like-mindedness. Individuals must be capable both of deliberating and deciding in common upon a course of action, and following through on their joint decision, to have a character friendship.

Surprisingly, those of us who are enkratic and even akratic may participate in primary friendships, so long as the domains in which we suffer these failings of accordance between our non-rational desires and our decisions do not share overlap with the domain that grounds our friendship.

In the third chapter, I reconstruct the solution Aristotle gives in EE VII 12 to the puzzle of why the good, and hence self-sufficient, person needs friends. We might be tempted to think that Aristotle is asking how it could be that one who is self-sufficient—and so by definition in need of nothing—is in need of friends. However, this is not Aristotle’s worry. Rather, as becomes clear, Aristotle argues that we are not capable of being individually self-sufficient. I argue that the solution Aristotle gives suggests that he is in fact not concerned to include friendship merely within the flourishing life of an individual. Friends are necessary to leading a good life, thinks Aristotle, because living actively and as an end (telos) involves living together. One upshot of this interpretation is that the central argument of Aristotle’s Eudemian Ethics makes distinctive the good of living a flourishing life together with others from the good of individual flourishing. We are social creatures, unlike, e.g., god, and, as such, our well-being is necessarily not self-contained, but crucially involves others.
Chapter One: The Unity of Philia

Both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* reveal a threefold distinction among the types of friendships, but in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle divides friendships into kinds by examining different kinds of human desires, which correspond to different kinds of attraction. In what follows, I first explicate Aristotle’s Eudemian argument for the conclusion that there are three kinds of friendships, those based on character or virtue, those based on utility, and those based on pleasure. Aristotle goes about arguing for this threefold distinction among friendships by examining the ways that we can be attracted to things more generally. (I use ‘love’, ‘like’, and ‘be attracted to’ interchangeably. The Greek verb that I translate in these three ways is *philein*.) We can be attracted to things, first, because they are genuinely and unqualifiedly good, second, because they are good for us in particular given our current condition and circumstances, and third, because they are pleasant. These are the only three kinds of attraction, psychologically speaking, that Aristotle recognizes, and so we are attracted to both objects and people in these ways. Friendships arise when two people are mutually attracted to one another, in one of these three ways, both parties become aware of this mutual attraction and, on that basis, wish and act well with respect to one another. Aristotle’s corresponding Nicomachean argument for the three types of friendship *does not* rely on explicit claims about how we relate psychologically to the objects we like.

Once I complete my reconstruction of Aristotle’s argument, I question why we should think that these three grounds establish three different kinds of friendship. Why should we think that because friendships arise in three different ways—because
there are three different causes\(^9\) of the phenomenon—that there are three separate kinds of friendship? I resolve this concern by arguing that these grounds for friendship, based in the three ways we can love things, not only bring about \textit{philia}, but also sustain it.

Having established how Aristotle delineates three kinds of friendship, I then consider the way in which the three types of friendship relate. In the \textit{Eudemian Ethics}, Aristotle argues forcefully that all three types of friendship are genuine, contra many of his predecessors and contemporaries, who would balk at including pleasure and utility-based relations among friendships.\(^10\) But because all friendships do not fit under a single account, it is difficult to see why all three varieties should get to count as genuine friendships. Aristotle maintains that friendship exhibits focal unity. He claims that the two subordinate kinds of friendship—those based on utility or pleasure—relate to the primary kind—that based on character—\textit{pros hen} (towards or in relation to one thing), as, for example, the account of medical instrument relates to that of the doctor. The account of a medical instrument necessarily makes reference to a doctor, since it’s the instrument the doctor would use. I argue that the focal unity at play in the case of friendship is a \textit{derivative} version of focal unity, as the bases of each subordinate type of friendship are themselves directly focally related to the basis

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\(^9\) I do not mean to use the term “cause” here in any Aristotelian sense.

\(^{10}\) At 1236a25-32, for instance, Aristotle writes: “So that also in the case of friendship, they cannot take into account all of the observed facts (\textit{ta phainomena}). For as one account does not fit, they think that the other kinds of friendship are not friendships at all; but really they are, although not in the same way…But in reality there are a plurality of kinds of friendships: this was one of the things said already, as we have distinguished three uses of the term friendship—one has been defined on the basis of goodness, another on the basis of utility, another on pleasure.” Cf. 1236b17-23, 1237b7-9.
of the primary type of friendship. Because friendships are not focally related in the same way as medical things (again, Aristotle’s stock example of pros hen predication in the Metaphysics), it is difficult to see why this is the kind of relation that Aristotle applies to friendships. However, it becomes clearer how Aristotle thinks philia is a pros hen predicate once we consider that he draws this conclusion directly following his argument that there are three kinds of friendship. In contrast, as I go on to explain, the view Aristotle presents in the Nicomachean Ethics posits a looser account of how the types of friendship relate. The NE has it that the two subordinate forms of friendship relate only by resemblance (kath’ homoiotêta)\textsuperscript{11} to the primary form; consequently, the individuals involved in one of the subordinate kinds of friendship are friends merely incidentally (kata sumbebêkos).\textsuperscript{12} As a result, I shall argue, Aristotle places less value on the friendly interactions that arise from the two subordinate forms of friendship in the NE than he does in the EE—though, to be sure, in both texts the most valuable common activities spring from the primary form of friendship.

§ I. Aristotle’s Argument for the Kinds of Philia

Aristotle’s discussion of friendship in Eudemian Ethics VII opens with a series of questions, among them the related questions of whether there is one kind of friendship or more than one kind, and, if there is more than one kind, how many there are.\textsuperscript{13} Echoing almost verbatim his claim from a passage in Book I, Chapter 8\textsuperscript{14} in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{11} NE 1157a1-2, a31-2, 1157b5, 1158b5-7.
\textsuperscript{12} NE 1156a16-17, 1156b11, 1157a35-6, 1157b4-5.
\textsuperscript{13} EE 1234b19-20.
\end{footnotesize}
which he criticizes Plato’s Form of the Good, Aristotle points out at 1236a7 that there
are different ways for something to be or seem to be good (that is, the term “good” is
used pleonachōs). Some of the different sorts of goods, or apparent goods, are the
objects of desire or wish, which are also the objects we love. Just as we like objects
on account of one of the ways of being or seeming good, we like people, too, for the
same kinds of reasons, as being good, pleasant or useful.

In order to answer the questions he offers at the start of Book Seven,
eventually culminating in the distinction among classes of friendships on the grounds
of character, utility or pleasure, Aristotle presents an aporia at 1235b18-30 about how
we are attracted to things.

There is also a puzzle (aporia) as to whether what is loved is the
pleasant or the good. If we love what we desire (epithumia) . . . and
desire (epithumia) is for what is pleasant, according to this the pleasant
is loved, but if [what is loved] is what we rationally wish for
(boulometha), it is the good; but the pleasant and the good are
different. We must therefore try to get clear on these issues and those
related to them, taking as a starting point the following. The thing
desired (to orekton) and wished for (boulêton) is either the good or the
apparent good. Therefore also the pleasant is desired, for it is an
apparent good; for some believe (dokei) it to be good, while to others it
appears good even though they do not believe it so (for appearance
(phantasia) and belief (doxa) are not in the same part of the soul). So
then it is clear that both the good and the pleasant are loved.

14 EE 1217b25-6; cf. 1218b4, where Aristotle again reiterates the claim that the good
is multiform.
15 EE 1235b24-30.
16 In the Lysis, Plato considers on what basis one becomes a friend to another. At
221d2-4 Socrates asks whether it can really be the case that desire is the cause of
friendship. In Plato’s case, however, the assumption is that desire indicates a
deficiency or lack, and so, if desire produces friendship, that implies that friends are
attracted to one another in virtue of their complementarity or opposition. Many of the
aporiae that Aristotle takes up and attempts to resolve in his discussions of philia in
both the EE and the NE have their roots in the Lysis.
If we love what we appetitively desire, and appetitive desire (*epithumia*) is for the pleasant, then the pleasant is what we love, whereas, if we love what we rationally wish for (*boulometha*), the object of love is the good. The difficulty arises because Aristotle supposes that there must be a singular or in some way unified object of attraction towards which we experience love, and yet there are two distinct capacities—one of which is rational, the other of which is appetitive—that can give rise to love or attraction. Each of these capacities has its own corresponding object—our rational desires are directed towards what is good and our appetitive desires are for the pleasant.

In Book II Aristotle expressly divides the human soul into rational and non-rational parts, though this is not a strict division in the Platonic sense:

…let us set down that the soul has two parts that participate in reason, but they do not both participate in reason in the same way, but one of them by nature is such as to give orders and the other is such as to obey and listen; and if there is some part that is non-rational in a different way, let us leave out this part.\(^{17}\)

Aristotle here marks off the non-rational part of the human soul that is obedient and responsive to reason from reason strictly speaking. While both reason strictly speaking and the non-rational part of the soul that listens to reason participate in reason, they do so differently.\(^{18}\) The rational part of the soul is the seat of thought. It serves as a starting-point or principle (*archê*) for actions and is capable of controlling our desires and affections (*pathê*).\(^{19}\) The non-rational part of the soul produces our

\(^{17}\) *EE* 1219b28-32. Cf. *NE* I 13 1102a27ff.

\(^{18}\) For a very thorough and illuminating discussion of this distinction in Aristotle, especially as it compares to the way that Plato parses the varieties of human motivation, see Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, pp. 186-201.

\(^{19}\) *EE* 1220a1-2.
appetitive and spirited desires.\(^{20}\) The latter also contains within it several further parts, including capacities for growth and nutrition, which we share with other species. These shared capacities are not central in giving an account of human happiness, and so Aristotle sets them aside. In this discussion, when I refer to the non-rational part of the soul, I am referring to the part that is able to listen to reason. Both the rational part of the soul and the non-rational part of the soul can desire, and each desires in a way that’s unique to and characteristic of it. I will call the sort of desire that issues from reason ‘rational wish,’ and then use the term ‘non-rational desire’ to refer to

\(^{20}\) There is some disagreement over whether all desires issue from the part of the soul that is obedient to reason. In both this passage at *EE* II 1 and in the corresponding discussion in *NE* I 13, Aristotle uses the term *orexis* when he refers to desires. Broadie, in her commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, takes Aristotle to be making that claim that all desires issue from the part of the soul that listens to reason; the term “*orexis*” is a generic term for desire in Aristotle. Reason strictly speaking is incapable of generating desires on this construal. I think this cannot be right for several reasons. For one thing, Aristotle often uses *orexis* to refer solely to non-rational desires (see, e.g., 1241a18ff, where he uses *orexis* and *epithumia* interchangeably), so we need not force the generic technical use of *orexis* into these passages, especially since Aristotle also mentions *pathê* at *EE* 1220a2. For another, Aristotle thinks that there is the possibility of psychological conflict between rational desires and non-rational desires. Although he could still explain such cases if all desires stem from the part obedient to reason, this is a strained explanation. And, this also opens up the possibility of another type of psychological aberrance that Aristotle does not consider, but that we would expect him to consider if he thought that all desires issue from the non-rational part of the soul. If all of our desires come from the non-rational part of the soul, there is the possibility that someone reasons correctly but fails to have the non-rational soul part generate a motivating condition in accordance with that reason. Unlike in the explanation of *akrasia*, where there are two conflicting impulses, in this case the person’s reason is correct, but no conflict arises because there is a gap in desire-generation between reason strictly speaking and the part that obeys reason. Lastly, and most importantly for our purposes, as we will see, Aristotle’s argument for the three kinds of friendships crucially hinges on the premise that each of these parts of the soul that participates in reason can generate desires. He is explicitly committed to this claim in the Eudemian account of *philia*. 
desire that comes from the part of the soul that is not reason proper, but is responsive to reason.\textsuperscript{21}

Aristotle resolves the puzzle in \textit{EE} VII 2 by bringing together the objects of attraction. What unifies the objects is the assumption that all of our desires, rational and non-rational alike, are for either the good or the apparent good. The pleasant appears to us as good, Aristotle explains, even to those who do not believe it is good, because the capacity for forming beliefs belongs to the rational part of the soul while our impressions or appearances (\textit{phantasiai}) remain non-rational. Certain objects may thus continue to \textit{appear} good to us, or continue to strike us as good, even as we experience the occurrent belief that they are not in fact good. While being merely apparently good is no way of being genuinely good at all, apparent goodness is nonetheless related to goodness insofar as the non-rational soul part is drawn to pleasant things that strike us as good, whether or not we \textit{judge} those things to be good. This creates the possibility that there may be cases of psychological conflict during which an individual \textit{believes}, say, eating a tenth donut is not genuinely good while eating a tenth donut nevertheless simultaneously continues to \textit{appear} good. The claim that the pleasant is apparently good responds to the initial puzzle because it

\textsuperscript{21} Given the way that Aristotle shows how each kind of friendship is rooted in a mode of desiring, we might expect there to be a form of friendship that arises from a spirited attraction to someone, but Aristotle does not seem to think in \textit{EE} VII that \textit{thumos} generates attraction. That he recognizes \textit{thumos} as a source of desires in the \textit{EE} is evinced at 1225b25. This omission in our context is therefore puzzling and deserves further thought. In our \textit{aporia} (1235b18), Aristotle begins by stipulating that what we love is either the pleasant or the good, so it seems that \textit{thumos} is not a contender from the start, since the type of object towards which thumoeidic desires are directed is, for some reason, not a type of object towards which we feel love. The question is, why does Aristotle think that we cannot experience love on the basis of spirited desire?
brings together the pleasant, which strikes us as good because of the impressions or appearances that we have of the object in question, and the genuinely good, as things we love. At this point in the argument, Aristotle has shown that we can be attracted to two different sorts of things in two correspondingly different ways; we are rationally attracted to what is genuinely good, and we are non-rationally attracted to what is pleasant, and thus appears good. Of course, some of the things that appear pleasant are also genuinely good, but they need not be. To return to Aristotle’s claim that the good is spoken of in many ways, we can now see two ways in which things are said to be good, though of course one of those ways is merely based on what appears to be good.

Aristotle’s argument here, at the beginning of EE VII 2, relies on psychological claims about our desires. He offers an explanation of why both the good and the pleasant are loved: the good is loved because it is good and we rationally desire it as good, and the pleasant is loved because we non-rationally desire it, taking it to be good on the basis of appearing as such. The corresponding Nicomachean discussion, by way of contrast, stipulates that there are three sorts of love objects: what is good, what is pleasant and what is useful. Aristotle, in the NE, makes no explicit mention of our psychological capacities, but continues the discussion directly in terms of the object of love (to philēton). He further specifies that each person loves what appears to be good for him, not explicitly, at this point in the text, allowing for the possibility that there may be cases of psychological conflict.

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22 NE 1155b18-19.
during which an individual believes, say, eating a tenth donut is not genuinely good while eating a tenth donut nevertheless continues to appear good.\textsuperscript{23}

As the Nicomachean discussion proceeds, however, Aristotle is clear: we love what \textit{appears} good for us, which may or may not be what is genuinely good for us. The apparent good is in a sense the singular object of attraction. The \textit{EE}, in contrast, is relying on a stated assumption about our psychology that Aristotle takes as a starting point for responding to the initial puzzle: there are different objects of attraction, which are determined on the basis of our nature and accordingly tracked by our psychological capacities for desiring.

After replying to the puzzle about how we can be attracted to goodness and pleasure, Aristotle then introduces another distinction in the objects of attraction:

This being determined, we must make another assumption. For of the things that are good, some are good without qualification (\textit{haplōs}), while others are good for someone in particular (\textit{tini}), and not without qualification. And the same things are good without qualification and pleasant without qualification. For we say that the things that are advantageous for a healthy body are good for the body without qualification, but that the things good for a sick body are not.\textsuperscript{24}

Among the things that are good, some are good without qualification, while others are good merely for someone in particular, given the condition of her body and soul as well as the external circumstances in which she finds herself. Aristotle explains this distinction with a medical case: what is beneficial to a healthy body is good for the body without qualification, while what is good for a sick body—things like drugs and

\textsuperscript{23} I am not denying that Aristotle, in the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, allows for a similar kind of psychological conflict, though he does not, in the unique books of that text, make a similar explicit claim about the non-rational part of the soul continuing to perceive something as good in virtue of perceiving it as pleasant even while the rational part of the soul holds a contrary belief.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{EE} 1235b30-5.
surgical procedures—is not good without qualification, since it’s not good for a healthy body to undergo surgery. In each case, the healthy, well-functioning and optimally situated person serves as the normative standard—as the standard for what is good without qualification. In the case of health, then, what is good without qualification might include things like a moderate amount of food that includes variety, a certain amount of exercise, and so on. Crucially, this distinction applies to features of character as well. What is good for the virtuous person just is what is good without qualification, while what is good for the bad person is good merely for her in particular.

Aristotle confirms that the virtuous person—the person for whom unqualified goods are good—serves as the normative standard later in the second chapter of his book on friendship:

But what is sought for is that the things that are good without qualification are good for oneself. For the unqualified good is choiceworthy without qualification, but what is good for oneself is choiceworthy for oneself; and these should agree. This is produced by virtue; and the purpose of the political art is to bring it about in those in whom it does not yet exist.25

Here, Aristotle is clear: we should come to have the desires for and find choiceworthy the things that are unqualifiedly good. When these unqualified goods accord with what is good for us, we are virtuous.26 Consider again the case of the agent to whom eating ten donuts appears good, though she does not believe it to be good. Let us suppose that she consistently acts on the desire, stemming from this appearance, to eat ten donuts, contrary to her judgment that she should not consume so many donuts.

25 EE 1236b38-1237a3.
26 See also Cooper’s more elaborate discussion of this passage and the corresponding point that the things which are good without qualification are those that are good for the virtuous person in Reason and Human Good in Aristotle, pp. 128-132.
It might be good for this person who regularly overindulges in donuts to abstain from donuts entirely, even though the virtuous agent may occasionally, if the circumstance is suitable, eat a donut or two. The virtuous agent will desire to eat a couple of donuts when reasonable, while the person who is not virtuous may desire to eat ten donuts on any occasion during which she is presented with donuts. What is good without qualification in this case of donut consumption is eating a couple of donuts in particular situations, but what is good for the person who is struggling with excessive donut consumption will be eating no donuts.

I have now explained Aristotle’s two distinctions in ways of being good. The first is the distinction between the good and the apparent good, where the sole example of the latter is what is pleasant. Although being pleasant is not a way of being genuinely good, our psychological capacities are such as to be struck by the pleasant as good. The second is the distinction between what is good without qualification and what is good for someone in particular. Aristotle then continues, after discussing the second distinction, by identifying what is good for someone in particular with what is beneficial and useful. There is textual support for this identification from a later passage, at 1238a7-8, as Aristotle there explicitly equates being good for someone with being beneficial: “but if he is not good without qualification, he may be good for another because he is useful.” What is good for someone is what is useful or beneficial for her, given her current condition and circumstances, and this can come apart from what is good for the well-constituted and well-situated individual.
So, we can conclude that, according to Aristotle’s discussion in EE VII, there are three different ways we can be attracted to things. These three ways of liking things are linked up with the different ways that things can be or seem to be good. There are two ways of being genuinely good—being good without qualification, which, as we have seen, is good for the ideal agent, and being useful, which is good for someone in particular. We can like things for either of these ways of being good. We are also attracted to what is pleasant, which is apparently good. In this argument, Aristotle’s three ways of being attracted to things seems exhaustive—we are psychologically constituted in such a way that we are attracted to things for these three types of reasons alone.

It might seem strange to us that the only way something can be apparently good is by being pleasant. But in order for these three ways of liking something to be exhaustive, Aristotle must think that the apparent good and what is pleasant for us must be identical. Surely something non-pleasant can appear good to us for other reasons—for instance, we mistakenly believe it to be beneficial—and yet at the same time fail to be genuinely good in either of the two ways something can be genuinely good. Although it might initially seem counterintuitive to think that the pleasant and the apparent good correspond in this way, Aristotle has the resources to explain this identification. The set of problem cases in which something seems good to us on the basis of false beliefs are not actually cases in which something appears good to us. These cases of desiring or liking something may be accounted for by saying that, although the thing desired was not a genuine good nor pleasant for the person, she
nonetheless desired it as a genuinely good thing because she had mistaken beliefs about what was genuinely good for her.

For example, let’s say that I am at a friend’s house and I have a headache. My friend has a bottle of pills labeled “aspirin” in her medicine cabinet. Suppose that I can’t swallow pills and I detest the flavor of aspirin, so taking the medicine won’t be pleasant. I nonetheless form the desire to take an aspirin, believing it will get rid of my headache. As it turns out, the bottle contained old antibiotics which happen to make me much sicker. But this case highlights an important difference between mistakenly believing something to be good and perceiving it as good. As Aristotle points out at 1235b2-9, appearance and belief are not in the same part of the soul. Those things that merely appear good, but are not genuinely good, do so precisely because they are pleasant and the non-rational part of my soul is drawn to the pleasant. In opposition to this is the aspirin case. I rationally desired the aspirin because I took it to be good for me; I believed it to be beneficial to me in my current circumstance. It so happened that I was wrong to believe this, but we can see how Aristotle has the tools to explain such a case by reference to the way the rational part of the soul desires. The rational part of the soul is not immune from errors and can believe falsely. But these false beliefs are not a matter of something appearing good. In the end, we can resolve the potential discrepancy between the apparent good and the pleasant in the EE, so this should cause no difficulty for Aristotle’s argument. We love things on the basis of three, and only these three, grounds.

One might worry about committing to the claim that Aristotle uses to phainomenon agathon in such a restricted way; surely it must be possible to rationally
wish for something that is merely apparently good. In *Nicomachean Ethics* III 4, for instance, Aristotle indicates that we can rationally wish for both the good and the apparent good. For the person who is already virtuous, these things coincide, but for those who are not virtuous, what is wished for is the apparent good. If we can rationally wish for the apparent good in the *EE*, then this would present a difficulty for my response to the aspirin case, and, potentially, for the conclusion that Aristotle’s distinction among three kinds of attraction is exhaustive. While Aristotle need not deny, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, that one can develop a rational wish on the basis of an appearance of goodness, he is careful to reserve use of *to phainomenon agathon* for the object of non-rational desire. Once a rational wish is in place, one desires the object *as* good on the basis of *judging* it to be good. The rational wish is not for what appears good, but for what one believes to be good. This wishing is compatible with having a corresponding simultaneous non-rational attraction to the very same object in virtue of an appearance, and it is this non-rational response that remains directed towards the apparent good.

The locution *to phainomenon agathon* surfaces only three times in the *EE*, at 1227a22, 1235b26, and 1236a10, the last two of which occur in his friendship discussion. In the first instance, which occurs in Book II, Aristotle explains, in the course of determining what we deliberate about, that the good is the end by nature, but, contra nature, the apparent good can also be an end. As the passage continues, Aristotle makes a similar claim about wishing, but he uses only the good (*to agathon*) and evil (*to kakon*) when describing how one wishes for what is good by nature and what is evil against nature. He nowhere says in the course of this discussion
concerning deliberation and wish that we wish for the apparent good. In asserting that the apparent good may be an end, Aristotle has not committed himself to thinking that mistakenly judging something to be good counts as treating that thing as an apparent good. Insofar as the apparent good may be an end, it might be that we treat the object of non-rational desire, which strikes us as pleasant, as an end when deliberating, or, having been struck in this way non-rationally, we rationally come to a judgment that the object in question is good on the basis of this appearance. Perhaps only once the corresponding judgment is in place can we deliberate about how to attain the object, but this is compatible with the use of to phainomenon agathon to refer solely to the object of non-rational desire. The second occurrence, at 1235b26, is our central case where Aristotle explicitly allocates appearances to the non-rational part of the soul and beliefs to reason strictly-speaking. Later, in the course of his argument that there are three kinds of philia, at 1236a10, Aristotle associates what is pleasant for someone in particular (tini) with what is apparently good, in contrast with what is good and therefore pleasant without qualification (haplòs).

One interesting upshot of the narrow use to which Aristotle puts to phainomenon agathon in the Eudemian Ethics is that one can make a very specific kind of mistake about one’s own attraction when the object of attraction fails to possess the property, which one judged it to possess, of being genuinely good.²⁷ This might seem like an undesirable result, but I think Aristotle’s Eudemian analysis of

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²⁷ I discuss the kinds of mistakes we might make in assessing a friend’s character in greater detail in the second chapter, where I outline the character requirements for primary philia.
these mistakes is plausible. Consider a case in which I meet someone at a party thrown by a mutual friend. I find this person witty and good-natured; she is funny but does not use humor in a way that insults anyone. We end up spending time together on a few subsequent occasions and I form the judgment that she is in fact both witty and good-natured, and we become friends. However, I then have occasion to witness her behaving differently at a number of other social gatherings. While she is still very funny, her quips are derisive and mean-spirited. After being exposed to this behavior repeatedly, I am forced to reassess my initial judgment. Supposing that this person is indeed somewhat nasty and vindictive (i.e., my reassessment is accurate), it turns out that the basis of my attraction was the mistaken judgment that she is witty and good-natured. Not only is it the case that we are no longer friends once I come to realize my error, but, Aristotle thinks, this is not and was never a case of genuine attraction at all. We were never friends. I was mistaken about being attracted in the first place. We can be attracted to things and people in only three ways in the EE.

I think there are two further points to make about this case, both of which make this way of rendering the view more palatable. First, this kind of mistake will not be common. More commonly, we may make a different kind of mistake, according to which we are non-rationally drawn to someone because we find that

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28 This case raises questions about how we assess others’ characters, and about the nature of one’s character, according to Aristotle. Because this person was witty and good-natured on some occasions, we might conclude that this reveals some part of her character, though we might, on the other hand, want to allow that Aristotle can analyze some actions as not springing from, and thus not exemplifying, one’s character, since it seems like we can and do sometimes act out of character. After all, very few of us are, e.g., good-natured all the time. For purposes of this case, however, I take for granted that the person in question is, for the most part, funny in an insulting and insensitive way; this is the correct assessment of her character.
person pleasant, but take ourselves to be rationally attracted on the basis of a positive assessment of the other’s character. Second, when we find out that someone we took to be a friend has a horrible character trait of which we were unaware, we do sometimes conclude that this relationship was never a friendship. It is not just that we cease interacting with the person, having decided to end the friendship; rather, we also, at least in some cases, are inclined to think that we were never really friends. And surely we can be mistaken about whether we are involved in a friendship with someone.

With the backbone of Aristotle’s argument for three kinds of *philia* laid out, it might seem that Aristotle is, as he is in the Nicomachean account, merely making a threefold distinction in the objects of affection into the good without qualification, the useful, and the pleasant.\(^\text{29}\) As we have seen, though, the two accounts differ markedly, as the *NE* version fails to make use of this distinction in human psychology.\(^\text{30}\) Furthermore, in the *NE*, Aristotle claims that the good and the pleasant are things we can love *as ends*, while the useful is just a means to the pleasant or the good. No comparable remark surfaces in the *EE* that would lead us to think that pleasure friendships are more closely related to character-based friendships than their utility-based counterparts.

\(^{29}\) Many scholars have taken these arguments to be equivalent. See, for instance, Julie Ward, “Focal Reference in Aristotle’s Account of *Philia*: Eudemian Ethics VII 2.”

\(^{30}\) In order to make this distinction, in the *Nicomachean* text, on the basis of the kinds of lovable objects, it would seem as though these objects have to be lovable to someone. But Aristotle does not elaborate on the way in which we may be drawn to these lovable objects. For all he says there, we might be attracted to all of the lovable objects by desire from either reason alone or the part of the soul obedient to reason alone.
This discrepancy is particularly interesting to note, since Aristotle is treating these forms of attraction, on the Eudemanian picture, as, at least in part, causal grounds for friendship, rather than as ends to which friendships aspire.\(^{31}\) This may indicate a shift in the way Aristotle differentiates the types of friendship, perhaps because he recognized that there might be difficulties conceiving of the grounds for the distinction as sources. Consider the case of primary, or character, friendship on the Eudemanian picture. Aristotle seems to think that what draws one person to another initially are good features of character that each person possesses. But this seems somewhat implausible. How often do we find ourselves in circumstances where someone around us gets the chance to exhibit her character virtues in a way that leaves little room for doubting that she genuinely possesses such virtues? Of course, one might reason, such friendships are rare anyway, and so this may not seem like a particularly pressing worry.

However, what Aristotle days in the *Eudemian Ethics* about the way character friendships form and are sustained over time is consistent with the notion that they come about slowly, as each party gradually comes to have confidence in her assessment of the other’s valuable features of character. Despite never claiming that these bases for attraction serve as ends of each kind of friendship, Aristotle seems to treat them as such in the course of his Eudemanian discussion. To return to highlighting some differences in these two accounts, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle introduces the useful as an object of attraction only after focusing on the two ways of loving that

\(^{31}\) As will become apparent shortly, Aristotle does not think that the grounds of friendships in the *Eudemian Ethics* are mere causes or sources, but he nowhere in our text indicates that they are ends.
are based on two different ways of desiring. Lastly, and perhaps most obviously, while the *NE* discussion is fairly brief and transparent, the *EE* discussion is lengthier, clearly *aporia*-based, and relies on the claim that the good is multivocal.\textsuperscript{32}

I have now detailed the three ways that Aristotle thinks we can be attracted to things and explained that these forms of attraction are exhaustive given the way they issue from our psychological capacities for desiring. Aristotle concludes at 1236a10-15 that,

\begin{quote}
...just as in the case of inanimate things it is possible for us to choose and love (*philein*) things on account of each of these things, so too in the case of a person; one person we love because of himself and on account of virtue, another because he is beneficial and useful, and another because he is pleasant and on account of pleasure. And one becomes a friend when, while receiving love, he returns it, and both are in some way aware of this.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

He here connects these forms of attraction with friendship. We can choose and like inanimate objects as well as people for each of these reasons—as being unqualifiedly good or virtuous, as being beneficial or useful, or as being pleasant. This attraction alone will not count as a friendship unless it is reciprocated liking that is mutually recognized. It is not enough for me to like you and you to like me, since we might not realize that this affection is mutual. What is required, in addition to the attraction we have to one another, is that each of us becomes aware of the other’s affection and,

\textsuperscript{32} The Nicomachean discussion is not in tension with the notion that there is more than one way for something to be good, but in this context Aristotle does not (explicitly, at least) take himself to be cashing out these differing ways of being good.\textsuperscript{33} Aristotle is again addressing an issue that Plato touches on in the *Lysis*. At 212a5ff Socrates claims that he does not know how one person becomes a friend to another. The question is whether loving or being loved makes one a friend. Here, Aristotle explains that, in order to become a friend, it is not sufficient either to love or to be loved; one must love, be loved, and, in virtue of her awareness of being loved, reciprocate the loving.
on that basis, returns the affection. And, as Aristotle makes clear later in the
discussion of friendship, this mutual and mutually reciprocated attraction of which
both parties are aware must also be accompanied by acts expressing one’s liking and
well-wishing. Given that these three ways of liking themselves are exhaustive,
psychologically speaking, we should conclude that Aristotle’s threefold distinction in
friendships, which is grounded in these three ways of liking, is also exhaustive.
These are the only ways we can be attracted to something, whether that thing is an
inanimate object or another human being.

What of the other kinds of friendship that Aristotle treats in his account of
philía? In order to maintain consistency, Aristotle must think that the other kinds of
friendship all fall under one of these three kinds, since these are the only three ways
of desiring and thus loving something. Aristotle makes clear when discussing the
other varieties of friendship that they are all subordinate to these initially introduced
cinds. Having an unequal or an equal friendship is not a distinction in kind because
the grounds of the friendship, whether equal or not, will still be goodness of
character, utility or pleasure. As for civic friendship, Aristotle makes clear
repeatedly that this is a type of utility friendship. Similarly, Aristotle’s initial
distinction between legal (nomikê) and ethical (êthikê) friendships indicates that these

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34 For instance, in his discussion of eunoia in EE VII 7, which I take up in the next
chapter, Aristotle explains that eunoia is not sufficient for friendship, since one must
also do the good that one wishes. One has to express her well-wishing in action.
This should be unsurprising, since it would be very tough to intuit that someone is
attracted to me in the absence of behavioral manifestations that stem from this
attraction. And friendship requires an awareness of this attraction and a return in
kind.

35 EE 1239a1-4.

36 See, e.g., 1242a7, 1242b22.
are both varieties of utility friendships.\(^{37}\) Thus, the initial distinction Aristotle makes among three kinds of friendship, as it is grounded in three ways of desiring or liking something, is successfully exhaustive. The grounds of friendship correspond to the three basic ways that we as humans are naturally attracted to objects, both inanimate and animate.

§ II. The Initiating and Sustaining Grounds of Friendship

I have detailed the way that Aristotle’s Eudemian account of friendship explains that there are three kinds of \textit{philia} by appeal to our psychological capacities for desiring. So what are these three different kinds of relationships going to look like on Aristotle’s account? I begin with the primary case of friendship based on virtues of character. In this sort of relationship, people are attracted to each other because they appreciate one another’s genuinely good features of character. I might, for example, find myself repeatedly on the field of battle with some fellow soldiers. Maybe one of these soldiers is consistently next to me in the battle formation, and we are in a position to witness each other acting courageously on several occasions. We also talk to one another about how we act, what we think about acting in certain ways in battle, and so forth, and we each come to the reasonable belief that the other is courageous. On this basis, then, we might like one another because we appreciate the genuinely good feature of courage that the other possesses. This case represents a sort of minimal version of primary friendship or character friendship. The friends are attracted to each other’s courage and this mutual attraction on the basis of courage

\(^{37}\) 1242b32.
causes the friendship to develop. Note that these individuals need not be perfectly virtuous; they need only possess some genuinely good character trait that can be appreciated. In the ideal case, on the other hand, two perfectly virtuous people will be attracted to one another on the basis of their perfect characters, and these individuals will desire to spend a lot of time with one another, living their lives together, acting virtuously together in a variety of ways. But this perfection is not necessary for a friendship to count as a case of character-based philia.

In both pleasure and utility friendships, there is similar variation among the particular grounds involved. I will describe two cases of pleasure friendships first, and then turn to a couple of cases of utility friendships. In one case of friendship based on pleasure, two people might become friends because, for example, they enjoy listening to and appreciating the same kinds of music. Let us say you and I are enrolled in a class together. One day after class, as you are putting on your ipod, I glance over and ask you what you are listening to. It turns out that you are listening to Lady Gaga. I am really excited by this discovery (I am really into Lady Gaga myself), and we get into a conversation about Gaga’s music. We then start to hang out after class in order to listen to The Fame Monster together and discuss the lyrics of Bad Romance. On the basis of this common interest that brings us both pleasure, we become friends.

38 The next chapter addresses in greater detail the requirements for a friendship of the primary kind in the Eudemian Ethics. For my purposes here, what is important is that the primary sort of friendship is possible for those who are not perfectly virtuous. As we have seen, this type of friendship is based on attraction to genuinely good features of character that the other possesses. As long as both my friend and I possess some genuinely valuable character trait—and as long as it is that trait to which each of us is attracted—we may form a character-based friendship.
In another case of pleasure-based friendships, according to Aristotle, people might become friends on the basis of erotic attraction. (That is, *eros*, for Aristotle, falls into the category of a pleasure friendship.) I might find certain features you possess sexually attractive. These features that I’m attracted to may even be genuinely good features of character, though certainly they need not be (I might just find you attractive because of your cool spiky haircut), but if I am not attracted to these genuinely good features as such, then this sort of attraction is still pleasure-based. It is incidental to my attraction that the cause also happens to be genuinely good. If two people are thus both physically attracted to one another, are aware of the mutuality of this affection, and reciprocate it accordingly, then they may have a pleasure friendship. This kind of relationship counts as a kind of friendship, for Aristotle, although it might seem counterintuitive to us, since we tend to distinguish sharply between friendships and romantic relationships. But, again, Aristotle’s notion of *philia* is much broader than our concept of friendship. And this claim is even less surprising now, since the kinds of *philia* correspond to all the ways we can be attracted to things.

I have discussed some cases of both character friendships and pleasure friendships. In utility friendships, people are attracted to each other because through their interactions they have some need satisfied.39 When people relate in a way that

39 This kind of *philia* has received much attention and is oft-criticized for its compatibility with having little or no affection for the friend herself, as opposed to those things that one can attain for oneself through the association. For a persuasive version of this difficulty, see Alexander Nehamas, “Aristotelian *Philia*, Modern Friendship?” While I am sympathetic to the worry that advantage-based relationships bear little resemblance to our contemporary notion of friendship in virtue of their attraction being (perhaps predominantly) instrumental, I am not here concerned with
involves meeting reciprocal needs, they may become utility friends, each friend receiving something they need in exchange for giving their friend something that person needs. Aristotle’s central examples of this sort of friendship involve commercial exchanges. Given my obsession with Lady Gaga, say, I may frequent a music store in town. There is a certain person I regularly interact with behind the counter when buying CDs and other Lady Gaga paraphernalia. On the basis of our frequent interactions, and because of the mutual satisfaction of desires (I give her money in exchange for Lady Gaga merchandise), we may form a friendship.

Or, I might become utility friends with my basketball coach. She helps me work on technique and guides me in practicing various maneuvers on the court. In return, she gets paid (coaching is her job), but she also gets to see the tangible positive influence that her coaching has on my basketball-playing abilities, and this may satisfy some desire she has to help people become better with respect to these abilities. We each receive some benefit during these interactions, and so might become friends on account of these exchanges. Though, to be sure, Aristotle does not think I am going to be friends with every person I interact with commercially or on a quotidian basis. I do not really care for the guy I buy my video games from at Best Buy, although I see him very often as well. The point is just that such repeated interactions might serve as the grounds for a friendship. And again, these relationships will not get to count as friendships unless both people actually have affection for one another, are aware of this affection, and return it in kind.

the way in which Aristotle’s conception of *philia* relates to our notion of friendship. I do think, however, that Aristotle is insistent that all of the varieties of mutual association he details in *Eudemian Ethics* VII count as cases of *philia.*
I have now completed a description of each of the three types of friendship. The way I have described these cases of friendship, as arising on the basis of different kinds of attractions, one may wonder why these differing ways that friendships might arise are sufficient to distinguish three kinds of relationships. Why should we think that a friendship that came about on the basis of Lady Gaga appreciation is substantially different from a friendship that came about through an attraction to acting courageously in battle? Certainly lots of phenomena may be brought about in more than one way, and this does not entail that the phenomena should be distinguished on the basis of these different causes. For example, I might play the guitar for pleasure, you might play the guitar for money, and someone else might play the guitar because it calms her down and enables her to sleep better. But it does not seem that, based on these different motivations, we should differentiate among kinds of guitar playing. So we might think that there is no need to individuate kinds of friendship on the basis of how these relationships come to be.

But think back to how Aristotle’s argument begins. These different objects (goodness, good-for-ness, pleasure) that ground each kind of friendship correspond to the ways we can like things. We can be attracted to things for these three kinds of reasons. These different ways we can like something are not merely ways we might come to like something. They are not merely the stimuli for attraction. They also sustain our attractions in these same ways over time, and, in so doing, they characterize the nature of these attractions.

In all three kinds of friendships, what holds these relationships together are pleasure, utility, or genuine goodness of character. Although there is some
heterogeneity within each kind of friendship (recall, for instance, that I could have a pleasure friendship based on a mutual love of Lady Gaga or based on sexual attraction), the grounds that sustain each kind are unified on the basis of our psychological capacities. The grounds are set by the ways we as humans can be attracted to things.

In order to reinforce the claim that these things on account of which we form friendships—unqualified goodness of character, utility, and pleasure—are more than just the impetus for a case of *philia*, consider what would happen to a friendship if its ground were to change. If, say, pleasure were merely what initiated a friendship, then, once the relationship is established, it should not matter whether the friends continue to reap pleasure from their interactions. But it does matter. If, in time, the grounds of a friendship change, the nature of the relationship will also change. One thing that might happen is that the friendship might end. This is particularly likely in cases of pleasure friendships among young people.\(^{40}\) Recall the case of pleasure friendship in which I am sexually attracted to you on the basis of your awesome spiky haircut. If this was truly what grounded the friendship, and you change your hairstyle, then our friendship will dissolve. The pleasant feature that grounded my attraction for you was something fleeting and inessential, and now that it is gone, I do not have the same affection for you.

Another thing that might happen when the grounds of a friendship change is that the friendship may undergo a change in kind. Think back to my friendship of

\(^{40}\) At 1236a38-b1 Aristotle explains that friendships based on pleasure are common among young people, since they particularly sensitive to pleasant things and their characters are very changeable, as they are yet nascent and unformed.
utility with the clerk at the music store. Let us suppose that we start discussing in some depth our tastes in music and media more generally. It turns out that we have similar taste and so begin to hang out outside the music store. Eventually, after squandering an excessive amount of my income at the music store, I have to stop going there to buy music. I cut myself off. But my music clerk friend and I continue to hang out all the time and listen to music together. What grounds our friendship now is pleasure. I am no longer seeking to fulfill my desire to acquire more music, so my music store friend isn’t providing for me in this way any more. But I enjoy hanging out with her and I take pleasure in the activities we now do together. The nature of my interactions with this friend have changed substantially. I no longer expect her to fulfill some need of mine, and I no longer look to fulfill some need of hers; instead, we spend time enjoying (taking pleasure in) certain activities together.

I think there will also be cases in which what began as a pleasure friendship turns into a character friendship. In fact, I think many character friendships probably start out this way because it can be difficult to assess someone’s character through a few interactions with the person. As mentioned earlier, it is not often that we find ourselves in circumstances where someone around us gets the chance to exhibit her character virtues in a way that leaves little room for doubting that she genuinely possesses such virtues. Perhaps, instead, many people are initially attracted to one another on the basis of pleasure, and then, over time, through repeated encounters, they come to realize that their friend is a virtuous person, or has some genuinely admirable stable features of character. If I come to like my friend on the basis of this recognition—that is, if I start to love her for these genuinely good features of
character—and if she does the same with respect to me, then this will alter the nature of the friendship. What began as, say, a friendship based on appreciating Lady Gaga may become a case of character friendship, which is more stable than pleasure friendship and involves acting virtuously together in a way that contributes to our flourishing.

So the grounds for the different kinds of friendships are not merely causes, although of course they do bring about these friendships, but they are also the foundations for each kind of friendship; they are what sustain friendships. And they do this sustaining in three substantially different ways, as each kind of attraction is rooted in our psychological capacities for desiring.

I have argued that Aristotle’s distinction among three kinds of friendship rests on a more fundamental threefold distinction among the ways we can find things attractive. We can be attracted to both things and people because they are good without qualification, good for us given our circumstances, or pleasant (and hence apparently good). I claimed that these forms of friendship must be exhaustive, since their grounds are exhaustive. I then took up the concern that we need not think there are three kinds of friendship just because friendships come to be in three different ways. I showed that Aristotle’s distinction does more than present three ways that friendship might come about; it also tracks three ongoing patterns of attraction. The grounds of virtue, pleasure and utility not only provide the impetus for friendships, but they anchor friendships in three unique ways, shaping and informing the kinds of activities we do with our friends in each case.
§ III. Focal Meaning: Connecting the Three Kinds of Friendship

As we have seen, Aristotle is concerned in the *Eudemian Ethics* to make clear that the two subordinate forms of *philia* (those based on pleasure and utility) still count as genuine kinds of friendship. Strikingly, an explicit claim that all three kinds of friendship are in some sense genuine friendships is absent from the Nicomachean discussion. (To be sure, Aristotle does mention at *NE* 1157a25-30 that we should call people friends who are drawn to one another on the basis of utility as well as pleasure, since these parties are commonly called friends. But this is the only claim of its kind in the *NE* and we might take Aristotle here as merely acquiescing to a norm of locution.)

While both ethical treatises agree that *philia* is not a *kath’ hen* predicate, that is, friendship fails to admit of a single account, they conceive of the way the types of friendship relate differently.\(^{41}\) In *Eudemian Ethics* VII 2, Aristotle claims that the three types of friendship are focally related (*pros hen*), whereas, in the Nicomachean account, he specifies that they are related by resemblance.\(^{42}\) That the *NE* account does not simply amount to the focal relationship of the *EE* has been advanced only recently, as commentators have commonly taken the *NE* description in terms of resemblance to lend itself to focal analysis.\(^{43}\) In what follows, I try to make sense of

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\(^{41}\) Throughout this discussion, I refer to *pros hen* predication as focal reference or focal meaning, and the forms of *philia* thereby related, on some occasions, as constituting a focal unity. I do not intend to commit Aristotle to any theoretically-laden conception of unity when it comes to *philia*.

\(^{42}\) Aristotle makes the claim that the three types of *philia* are related by resemblance at *NE* 1156a17, 1156b11, 1157a36, 1157b4.

\(^{43}\) Those who have interpreted the *NE* account as espousing a focal analysis include Aspasius, Michael of Ephesus, and, more recently, Gauthier and Jolif. On the other hand, Cooper, Fortenbaugh, Walker, and Ward have recognized the distinction
Aristotle’s uniquely Eudemian claim that friendship is spoken of *pros hen* or *pros mian*—in relation to one thing. I show how attempts to relate the accounts of the two subordinate forms of friendship to the primary form are strained; *philia* does not readily admit of standard focal analysis. We can make sense of the way in which the two subordinate forms of *philia* relate focally to the primary form if we look to the argument Aristotle makes differentiating the three forms of friendship. The three kinds of *philia* relate focally in virtue of the focal relationship of their grounds. I also take into account Aristotle’s Nicomachean assertion that the three kinds of friendship are related by resemblance. Although he suggests and rejects other potential types of relation (genus-species, mere homonymy), Aristotle does not consider this option—the option of resemblance—for *philia* in the *Eudemian Ethics*.

There are two passages in *EE VII* where Aristotle makes explicit that the kinds of friendship are related *pros hen*; one is at 1236a15-22, and the other at 1236b21-6. I will focus primarily on the first passage because it is more extensive and I think will afford us a clearer idea of what Aristotle has in mind. The second passage is similar to, and entirely consistent with, the first, but it is abbreviated. The first passage is as follows:

> It follows, then, that there are three kinds of friendship, and that they are not so called in respect of a single account or as species of one genus, nor yet do they have the same name merely homonymously. For all these uses of the term are related to one particular kind of friendship which is primary—as with the medical; we speak of a

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between *pros hen* and *kath’ homoiotêta*. As I have already alluded to, we have several superficial reasons for thinking that the accounts differ. Most obviously, the *NE* discussion of *philia* nowhere uses the language that Aristotle typically employs to express focal meaning, even though this notion was still clearly an option in the *NE*. In Book I, Chapter 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that good is not a chance homonym, and he asks whether it is *pros hen* or *kat’ analogian*. 
medical mind and a medical hand and a medical instrument and a medical operation, but [we apply the term] properly to what is primary. The primary is that of which the account (logos) is in all (en pasin), for example a medical instrument is an instrument that a doctor would use, whereas the account of the instrument is not in that of the doctor.

The second passage reads:

Therefore, to use the term ‘friend’ only in the case of primary friendship is to do violence to the observed facts (ta phainomena), and forces [one] to talk paradoxes; though it is not possible to bring all [kinds of friendship] under one account. The only remaining alternative, therefore, is that in a sense the primary friendship alone is friendship, but in a sense all kinds are, not as homonyms standing in a mere chance relation with one another, nor under a single species, but rather in relation to one thing (pros hen).

In the first passage, Aristotle begins by claiming that the three kinds of friendship are not related according to one thing (kath’ hen) (i.e., friendship does not admit of one account), nor are they related as species of a single genus, nor are they merely homonymous. Instead, they are spoken of in relation to one thing (pros hen). Aristotle then offers the example of the medical. We speak of a medical hand, a medical instrument, and a medical task, but the primary case of the medical is the doctor. All of the other medical things are said to be medical in virtue of the doctor—e.g., the medical instrument is the instrument used by the doctor (qua doctor), the medical operation is the operation that the doctor performs, and so forth.

The ‘medical’ is one of Aristotle’s stock examples of pros hen predication (see, for instance, Meta. Γ’ 2), though in other cases usually the primary thing in question is not the doctor but the medical science or art. I do not think this causes any difficulties for our passage, however, since the doctor herself can be termed ‘medical’ precisely because she possesses medical knowledge. From the medical
case, it should be clear that, while friendship is indeed spoken of homonymously (as they are all called ‘friendship’), different uses of the term philia are not mere homonyms. Christopher Shields distinguishes between ‘discrete’ and ‘associated’ homonyms.\footnote{This occurs in his \textit{Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle}.} Discrete homonyms are unrelated, as a bank in which one stores money and the bank of a river. Associated homonyms have a closer relationship. It is clear, here, that philia is not a discrete homonym. Aristotle then explains more precisely the sense of primacy in use in this passage: the primary is that of which the account (logos) is in all the others. That is, for example, the account of doctor is contained in the account of medical instrument in the way we saw just a moment ago; the account of a medical instrument necessarily references, and in so doing includes, that of doctor—it is the instrument that a doctor uses. In unpacking a complete account of medical instrument, the full account of the primary instance of medical will feature as well.

Since Aristotle says explicitly in our text that the account of the primary instance is contained in the accounts of the subordinate instances, we should try to analyze \textit{pros hen} in terms of account containment. Though it is important to note that where he employs focal meaning in the \textit{Metaphysics} we do not find the strict account containment claim, so we might also question whether a more relaxed account of \textit{pros hen} predication is in order. According to an account containment reading, something counts as an instance of \textit{pros hen} predication if and only if there is one primary term, the account of which is contained in the other instances. Thus, according to a strict account containment reading, a first-pass attempt to spell out the accounts
corresponding to the three types of friendship might look something like the following: (a) Primary friendship: mutual and mutually recognized well wishing and well doing for the sake of the other; (b) Utility friendship: mutual and mutually recognized well wishing and well doing for the sake of the other on the condition that the other is useful; (c) Pleasure friendship: mutual and mutually recognized well wishing and well doing for the sake of the other on the condition that the other is pleasant to oneself. The account of the primary kind of friendship is fully contained within the accounts of the two subordinate kinds.

G.E.L. Owen thinks, however, that this sort of analysis will not work because it does not distinguish in each case between some other types of homonymy and *pros hen* homonymy. For example, he says, Aristotle often uses the case of a man and a statue of a man as an example of standard homonymy (and he does this in cases where the notion of focal meaning is also found without specifying that this case counts as an example of focal meaning). If account containment were not only necessary but also sufficient to capture what Aristotle had in mind in speaking of being related *pros hen*, then we would have to accept that the statue of a man, the account of which makes reference to ‘man’, and a man would be related not merely homonymously but also *pros hen*. The account of the statue (as one of a man) would make reference to that of the man but not vice versa, so this meets account containment but fails to be a case of focal meaning, thinks Owen.

Here are two ways of dealing with the difficulty Owen raises. One way of responding to Owen is to grant that the case of man and statue of a man are related

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pros hen. Aristotle nowhere explicitly rules this out, though it might be somewhat surprising if he thought this, since then every case of artistic representation would count as a case of pros hen predication; every statue and every painting would relate focally to its object. Another way of responding to Owen is to reject his notion of account containment. Perhaps, for Aristotle, the account of something with a function crucially includes that function.\textsuperscript{46} If that is the case, then we might think that cases of focal meaning require that the functions of the homonyms relate in some particular way. In the statue case, the function of a statue of man and the function of man proper do not seem relevantly related; there will not be any functional overlap. A statue’s function may have to do with exhibiting aesthetic value, pleasing people, etc., and so, even if the statue is one of a man, it will not include the function of man. Furthermore, we need not understand the account of man, including the function of man, to understand the account of a statue, even if the statue is representing a man.

To return to my first-pass accounts of the three types of friendship, we might also worry that these accounts are in conflict with Aristotle’s claim that the kinds of friendship are not related as species of one genus. It seems that, the way I have defined friendship in each case, they are all contained under the genus of “mutual and mutually recognized well wishing and well doing for the sake of the other.” This is one account common to all, so why not think Aristotle’s description of what it is for something to have focal meaning is in tension with his explicit claim, at the beginning of the passage, that the kinds of friendship are not related as species of a single genus? To think of it this way is a mistake. For one thing, primary friendship would

\textsuperscript{46} Christopher Shields suggests that Aristotle’s definitions do work something like this.
in that case instantiate the genus itself, which doesn’t make sense—there are no
individual instances that instantiate a genus without instantiating some species. For
another, if these were all species of one genus, there would be no priority among
them, but clearly there is: the account containment only goes in one direction. The
account of the primary kind of friendship is contained within that of the other kinds,
but not vice versa.

Another place to look in trying to construct accounts of the kinds of friendship
that display focal meaning is Aristotle’s initial argument for the three kinds of
friendship. He explains, as I have discussed, those things on account of which we
become friends—unqualified goodness, utility, and pleasure. It seems reasonable that
the basis of each type of friendship, serving, as it does, a central explanatory role,
would factor in (and perhaps fully constitute), an account of each type. The accounts
might look something like the following: (a) Primary friendship: mutual and mutually
recognized attraction on the basis of goodness of character; (b) Utility friendship:
mutual and mutually recognized attraction on the basis of utility; (c) Pleasure
friendship: mutual and mutually recognized attraction on the basis of pleasure.
Although these look better as accounts, independently, of each type of friendship, in
part because they rely on what Aristotle takes to be the features that in fact
individuate each form of friendship, they fail to exhibit focal reference, at least in a
direct way. The basis of the primary form of friendship—unqualified goodness of
character—does not occur in the accounts of the subordinate forms of friendship.
Furthermore, it looks as though we might cash out these three types of friendship
according to a genus-species relationship. The genus of friendship would be mutual
and mutually recognized attraction, and each of the kinds would amount to a species falling under this genus, differentiated in accordance with the three ways we as humans are attracted to things. It’s hard to see how Aristotle thinks focal meaning applies to friendship, especially given the uniquely Eudemian claim that cashes out focal meaning in terms of account containment.

Perhaps we should interpret Aristotle’s claim that the account of the primary case is “in all” of the subordinate cases more loosely in order to make sense of his Eudemian usage of focal meaning. Sticking with the idea that we might make progress by examining the grounds of friendships, it seems plausible that the ways that objects may be said to be good should relate focally. It looks, in our Eudemian text, as if Aristotle is trying to establish a tight connection between the three ways we can love something (and so the relationship that obtains among these ways of loving) and the relationship that obtains among the kinds of philia. Directly after establishing that there are three kinds of friendship based on the three ways we can be attracted to things and people, Aristotle states that these kinds of friendship are focally related. He does not give a separate argument to substantiate the claim; instead, he seems to think it follows from his argument for the threefold nature of loving that the kinds of friendship are focally unified (he uses ara here, which is inferential). In trying to understand how focal unity applies to these three ways of being good (in relation to our psychological capacities), it is clear that we need to understand what is apparently good and what is good for someone in particular in relation to what is good without qualification. That is, the apparent good and the good-for are both to be understood with respect to the unqualified good. The account of the apparent good (or pleasant),
for example, might be something like, “strikes the non-rational part of the soul as good.” The term “good” in this account could then be replaced with the full account of unqualified goodness and so, in this way, the account of the primary instance is contained within that of the subordinate instances. Similarly, making sense of good-for requires reference to good haplôs.

The ways we can respond to something or someone as good, and form attractions on these bases, are themselves straightforwardly focally related. Aristotle’s application of focal unity to the case of friendship is derivative, as it is based on these ways of desiring something (as good, pleasant, or useful). That is, it is not the case that the account of the primary form of friendship is itself contained within the accounts of the two subordinate forms of friendship. Rather, the grounds of the primary form of friendship are contained within each of the subordinate forms in virtue of being contained within their grounds. I think there remains some tension in this move, as it makes the focal meaning at play in friendship look different from Aristotle’s application of focal meaning to the medical case (Aristotle’s stock example of a pros hen predicate). First, it is clear that the case of the medical does not apply only in this derivative way; that is, the account of a medical instrument directly includes the central case of the doctor. We could unpack the account of doctor and it would be fully contained within that of a medical instrument. In the case of friendship, the full account of the primary form would not be contained in this way; instead, in order to understand, for instance, pleasure friendship, an account of pleasure friendship would rely on the pleasant, or the apparently good, which in turn relates focally to the unqualified good.
Second, the subordinate instances of the term ‘medical’ are more ontologically dependent on the primary case than the subordinate forms of friendship. If there were no doctor and there had never been a doctor—i.e., no person with the knowledge of medicine—then there would be no medical instruments or procedures. Possessing knowledge of the medical art—being a medical practitioner—is what makes it the case that other things are medical. If there were no instances of primary friendship, on the other hand, there could still be instances of the subordinate forms of friendship. The primary kind of friendship does not make it the case that there are subordinate forms of friendship. In a world populated wholly with far less-than-ideal humans, we would, due to our nature as social creatures, still form friendships. Perhaps none of these friendships would qualify as character friendships, but the existence of the phenomenon in general is not dependent on the existence of the primary case of the phenomenon.

Although there is no ontological dependence between the subordinate kinds of philia and the primary kind, Aristotle does indicate that we understand or identify the subordinate forms of friendship by virtue of their relationship to the primary form. At both 1237b7-9 and 1238a31-3, he claims that it is because of the primary kind of friendship that the other kinds are termed friendships. In the former passage, Aristotle’s suggestion is slightly stronger: not only is the primary form of philia responsible for the way we label the other cases, but it is responsible for how we understand them; although there is no ontological dependence, there is nonetheless an epistemological dependence.
In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, perhaps recognizing some of the difficulties in applying focal reference, Aristotle argues that the three kinds of friendship relate merely by resemblance or analogy. This move comes with a cost, however, as Aristotle concedes that the subordinate forms of *philia* are less deserving of the designation. Aristotle has not abandoned the concept of focal meaning at this point, as he uses it repeatedly in the text of the *NE*, though not in the discussion of friendship.\(^47\) He must think that it is still a viable form of relationship among terms, but not one that applies to the three kinds of friendship. At 1157a1-2 in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that the subordinate forms of *philia* resemble the primary form: “Friendship for pleasure bears some resemblance to this complete sort (i.e., primary friendship), since good people are also pleasant to each other.” The idea here is that the friendships of pleasure resemble the primary kind of friendship because both sorts share the feature of being pleasant for the friends involved. Similarly, friendships based on utility are useful for the friends and the primary, complete form of friendship is most useful because it is useful to individuals who are good. Thus each of the subordinate kinds of friendship shares a feature with the primary type, which is complete (*teleia*).\(^48\)

There is a further question of whether we can discern a more precise claim about the relation among the kinds of friendship in the *NE*. Fortenbaugh, for instance, thinks that there are two notions of resemblance present in Aristotle’s Nicomachean account. The kind I outlined above is one type of resemblance that Fortenbaugh sees in the *NE* discussion of friendship. The other is a pair-based

\(^{47}\) See *NE* 1096b28, 1158a12, and 1171a12.  
\(^{48}\) See, e.g., *NE* 1156b7, 1156b34.
analogical resemblance, according to which the subordinate kinds of friendship resemble the primary kind in the way that the friends relate to the basis of the friendship: goodness is related to friendships of character just as pleasure is related to friendships of pleasure just as advantage is related to friendships of utility. In each subordinate pair, the associations formed by the friends are analogous to the primary case because they are based on either pleasure or utility just as character friendship is based on the virtuous characters of the individuals involved. Both of these ways in which the subordinate forms of friendship may resemble the primary kind of friendship seem to fit Aristotle’s understanding of how the types of friendships relate. Unlike in the case of focal meaning, resemblance applies without difficulty.

Aristotle argues in the EE that although the kinds of friendship are not related as species of a genus, they are related in a sufficiently close-knit way such that all three qualify as genuine friendships. The type of relationship involved must be robust enough to defend the idea that all three kinds of friendship deserve to be called friendships. While Aristotle does not reject the claim that all three types of friendship truly count as friendships in the NE, he does not argue for it. Rather, he seems to accept, as a matter of ordinary usage, that people just do apply the term ‘friendship’ to all of these kinds of associations.\(^49\) As I have indicated, resemblance is a weaker way of being connected than being focally related. I think, as a result, that Aristotle’s Nicomachean picture of the subordinate kinds of friendship is more pessimistic. Even though we call relationships formed on the basis of pleasure or utility ‘friendships’, the resemblance they bear to the primary kind hardly establishes that

\(^{49}\) NE 1157a25-30.
the three kinds share anything beyond superficial characteristics, and the friends involved in such subordinate relationships qualify as friends only incidentally (kata sumbebêkos). So what does this mean for the value of these friendships? In the *Eudemian Ethics*, the activities that friends involved in a pleasure or utility friendship perform together may still be quite valuable and contribute to living well. Some instances of pleasure or utility friendship may be very solid and long-lasting (though, even in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle notes that this is not standard for the subordinate cases), even if the individuals involved never come to be attracted to one another in virtue of genuinely valuable character traits. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I think Aristotle wholly disvalues the sorts of activities that non-primary friends participate in. These kinds of friends and the activities they perform may be inevitable because of our nature—we just will, as a matter of fact, form friendships of these kinds, but they aren’t valuable in the way they were in the *EE*; they don’t facilitate independently valuable common activities.

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50 *NE* 1157b4.
Chapter Two: The Character Requirements for Primary Friendship

In his account of *philia* in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle seems to indicate that only those individuals who are virtuous may engage in the primary, character-based form of *philia*. In order to be attracted to the truly good features of character that one’s friend possesses, that friend must *actually* have some genuinely valuable features of character. Aristotle explains at 1237a9-11 that, because the primary form of *philia* is in accordance with virtue (*kat’ aretên*), the friends who engage in that form of *philia* must themselves be good without qualification (*haplôs agathoi*). Unfortunately, one might worry, if people must be unqualifiedly good to engage in the highest kind of *philia*, then, on Aristotle’s view, the vast majority of us are incapable of forming character friendships. I shall argue, however, that Aristotle’s view is more nuanced than this; he allows that individuals who have at least some genuinely valuable features of character can engage in primary *philia*. In what follows, I determine more precisely what requirements Aristotle thinks we must meet in order to be friends in the primary way. As it turns out, even individuals who are *akratic* in a qualified way may participate in primary friendship.

While surveying common opinions about *philia* in the first chapter of book seven, Aristotle initially mentions the issue: “For to some it seems that it is not possible for bad people to be friends, but only good ones.” As becomes clear, he is committed to a qualified version of this claim: outright vicious people—people who are vicious in every respect—are unable to be character friends with anyone, since they both fail to offer others any basis for character attraction and, in their ignorance

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51 *EE* 1235a31-2.
of what is genuinely good, fail to be attracted to others’ truly valuable character traits. As I argued in the first chapter, primary friendship is grounded in a rational attraction to genuine goodness. In a similar passage in the NE, Aristotle asks, “For instance, does friendship arise among all sorts of people, or can people not be friends if they are vicious?”

To explicate what sort of character is minimally necessary for primary philia, I consider, in the first section, what Aristotle says about why wholly vicious people cannot be friends in this way. In the second section, I examine the requirement that friends are like-minded, as Aristotle indicates that individuals engaged in a friendship of the primary kind will have homonoia. From this, I derive the following character requirements for primary philia: friends of the primary sort may be continent (enkratic), as these individuals are capable of deciding rightly together with a friend and following through on their correct decisions. More surprisingly, akratic, or weak-willed, individuals may also be eligible for primary philia, as long as the domain in which they are akratic is not the domain which grounds their friendship. In fact, even an individual who possesses some particular genuine vice may be eligible for primary friendship as long as the vice is not salient to the domain in which the individuals are friends. What is important for building and sustaining a character-based friendship,

52 NE 1155b11-12.
53 I think that whether or not a vice precludes primary friendship will depend on the vice in question. For example, a philosopher who is cowardly may be capable of forming a primary friendship with another philosopher. These friends regularly engage in joint philosophical activity and the vice never surfaces in their activities. However, in contrast, a vice like akolasia might pervade several domains, impinging upon an individual’s ability to engage in primary philia. The more pervasive the vice—the more it systematically impacts practical reasoning and daily life—the less likely it is that one is capable of forming a character-based friendship.
in the *Eudemian Ethics*, is ultimately the capacity to act jointly with a friend, which itself presupposes that the friends can deliberate and decide together upon a joint course of action. In the third section, I consider Aristotle’s remarks about goodwill (*eunoia*), which is also necessary for primary friendship. Having *eunoia* towards another person is a matter of wishing good things to that person for her sake, where the good things in question are, at least in the ideal case and perhaps even in all cases, good without qualification. That is, on one construal of *eunoia*, the friend who receives this well-wishing must be good *haplôs*.

In the fourth and final section, I present and then diffuse a worry for the account I have sketched. Given that Aristotle thinks that the virtues of character and *phronêsis* are interentailing, we should endorse the Unity of the Virtues, which is the thesis that it is not possible to possess one or some subset of genuine virtue(s); either one possesses all of the virtues of character or none of them. Without entering into a lengthy discussion of the relationship between virtues of character and practical wisdom, I argue that Aristotle nowhere commits himself to the notion that the non-rational states of the soul that are partly or wholly constitutive of the character virtues entail *phronêsis* and so are interentailing. It is possible to sustain a substantially correct practical outlook in just one or a few domains but to lack *phronêsis*. Thus, the requirement that, in a given domain, the things that are good for one’s friend are unqualifiedly good sidesteps the issue of unity. It may be the case that, whether or not I am genuinely virtuous, as long as I am decent, a particular external good that is

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54 As I argue in the third chapter, the common virtuous activities of character friends, which issue from their shared state (*hexis*) of *philia*, constitute the joint good of living well together. Attaining this good is thus dependent upon being able to decide and act jointly in the right way.
good for the virtuous person is also good for me. For instance, physical fitness is
good not only for the genuinely courageous person—for the person who has
*phronēsis* and is courageous—but also for the person who has an accurate practical
outlook, and properly cultivated condition of the non-rational soul-part, in that
domain. Of course, the ideal case of primary friendship will be one in which two
perfectly virtuous friends deliberate, decide and act together, as well as wish for one
another those things which are good without qualification in every domain. But we
do not need to be perfectly virtuous to have a friendship based on character. As long
as we have knowledge of what is good in a given domain, we are in a position to form
friendships of the highest kind.

§ I. Why the Outright Vicious Cannot Participate in Primary *Philia*

As I established in the first chapter, Aristotle, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, thinks
there are three kinds of human attraction, based on three ways we take things to be
good, which ground three distinct varieties of *philia*. In the primary instance, we are
rationally attracted to those things that are genuinely good. We may also be attracted
to people who we find pleasant or useful in some respect, but these sorts of attraction
ground different kinds of friendships. When two individuals like one another on
account of the genuinely good features of character that each of them possesses, and
they wish and do well in relation to one another because of this mutual appreciation,
they may form a character friendship. Given the psychological underpinnings of
primary *philia*, it is unsurprising that outright vicious people are incapable of forming

55 Physical fitness might also be good for individuals who are qualifiedly *enkratic* and
*akratic* in a number of different domains.
this type of friendship: they will not be able to recognize and respond to the genuinely valuable character traits in others, nor, lacking in genuinely good features of character themselves, will they be able to serve as appropriate objects of attraction.

At EE 1236b10-16, Aristotle writes:

The bad may be each other’s friends from motives both of utility and of pleasure; but some say that they are not really friends, because the primary kind of friendship does not belong to them, since obviously a bad man will do wrong to a bad man, and those who wrong one another do not like one another. But as a matter of fact bad men do like one another, though not according to the primary form of friendship, since nothing prevents them from being friends in the other ways. On account of the pleasure, they put up with one another though they suffer harm.  

While bad individuals are capable of forming friendships based on utility or pleasure, they cannot form a friendship of the primary sort because, posits Aristotle, they will treat each other unjustly. These people need not be aware of the injustices they are inflicting or receiving. If one is truly vicious in every respect, she has false beliefs about the good, and so may take herself to be acting in her friend’s interests while she is in fact harming him. If her friend is also vicious, he may not realize he is suffering harm as a result of their interactions. It is because of their false beliefs about what is good that two wholly bad individuals can continue to like each other, despite suffering harm. But then, we might wonder, why does Aristotle claim that this sort of friendship fails to count as an instance of primary philia? These friends are both vicious and so possess no truly valuable character traits; nonetheless, they are

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56 This is another passage in which Aristotle’s discussion evinces heavy Platonic influence. In the Lysis, at 214b8-c3, Socrates asks whether those who do injustice and those who suffer injustice can be friends, assuming that the answer is no. Just a few lines later, at 214c8-d1, Socrates explains that the bad are not even similar to themselves; the bad cannot maintain internal agreement, much less agreement or likeness with another person.
attracted to each on the basis of character features that (a) each of them in fact possesses, and (b) they both (mistakenly) take to be good.

As John Cooper points out, what determines the kind of friendship two friends share is the state of mind that each of the partners has in relation to the other. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (in IX 3), Aristotle considers cases of deception in which one friend takes another to possess some genuinely good feature of character, e.g., *sophrosunê* (moderation), which she in fact fails to possess. So long as the friend’s attraction is grounded on this appreciation of moderation, she is approaching the relationship as a friendship of the primary kind. Of course, once she discovers that her friend lacks moderation, the friendship dissolves. But what is important, we might think, is that, even though one may be wrong about the value of her friend’s character, if what grounds a friendship is attraction to good features of character, then it counts as an instance of primary *philia*. Cooper explains:

> …the question of what type of friendship a given relationship belongs to would be settled by examining the conception of the person under which one is bound to him; if it is good qualities of the person’s character, and not pleasure or advantage to oneself, that causes one to like him, it will be a virtue-friendship, even though these qualities may be, and known to be, limited in their goodness and/or conjoined with other not so good, or even positively bad, personal characteristics.

If I conceive of my friend as a moral saint, it does not matter that she is actually a horribly vicious person; we can still be friends in the primary way. This seems to be in tension with Aristotle’s claim that bad people cannot be friends in the primary way; we should worry that Aristotle is being inconsistent in denying primary *philia* to

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vicious agents. Recall from the first chapter that, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, if one mistakenly believes, rationally, that her friend is good, but her friend is not in fact good, then the individuals involved were never genuinely friends in the first place. We can be mistaken about whether we are experiencing attraction on Aristotle’s Eudemian account.

We should also be concerned to distinguish between two ways that one might make a mistake or be deceived about the value of her friend’s character. One way to be mistaken, as we just saw, is to attribute to her genuinely good features of character that she does not possess. Importantly, another way to be mistaken about a friend’s goodness occurs when a vicious person, who has false beliefs about the good to begin with, is attracted to a person on the basis of character features that are not actually valuable.\(^5\) For example, if someone is immoderate (*akolastos*), and so believes it is good to indulge without limit in bodily pleasures, he is not in a position to recognize *sophrosunê* in anyone—or, at least, if he recognized this feature, he would not think it good. This is very different from the case in which a friend is aware of the value of moderation and, unwittingly believing an acquaintance exemplifies this virtue, forges a friendship with this person on the basis of her attraction to moderate people. Bad people are incapable of being attracted to genuinely good character traits because they are mistaken about what is good.

Surely, however, it is reasonable to think that some wholly vicious person might happen to be very skilled at tracking virtues in others, and may even be

\(^5\) There is then the further issue of whether or not the friend in fact possesses the feature(s) that have been attributed to her, but, in any case, what is relevant for our purposes is that the grounds for attraction are features that, while taken to be good, are not in fact good.
attracted to these virtues in some way. Perhaps, e.g., Thrasymachus has become excellent at spotting moderate individuals during feasts and makes a point of seeking them out and befriending them. He is attracted to their moderation because he likes to mock them, viewing their virtue as elevated foolishness. Although he reliably identifies virtues in others, and is attracted to virtuous features of character, the way that Thrasymachus is attracted to these features is not conducive to primary philia. He is attracted to virtuous people because he takes pleasure in harassing them; he is not attracted to them because he values their virtues. Because he does not believe that the virtues are good, he is incapable of being attracted to virtuous people considered as good.

Not only will bad people be ill-suited to primary philia because of their attraction to character features which are not in fact worthy of attraction, or attracted to valuable features of character in the wrong way, but they will also be incapable of attracting others for the appropriate reasons. Friendship is a matter of mutual attraction, and well-wishing and well-doing on the basis of such attraction. Both parties involved must exhibit some minimally decent character traits to serve as a basis for attraction. If someone is void of all redeemable character dispositions, no one could be attracted to her on the basis of goodness; there is no goodness there to appreciate. Bad people are thus incapable of primary philia on two counts related to the psychological bases for attraction: (1) because they have an inaccurate conception

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60 Given that bad people do not know what is good, they are, additionally, incapable of well-wishing and well-doing, except perhaps kata sumbebêkos. That is, since they have false beliefs about what is good, they could only incidentally wish good for someone else. I address this in more detail in the third section of this chapter, in which I lay out the character requirements for eunoia, one central component of primary philia.
of what is good, they cannot appreciate genuinely valuable features of character in
others qua good, and (2) they lack good traits of character which could serve as
grounds for others’ attraction.

So far I have merely explained one piece of Aristotle’s rationale for excluding
bad individuals from primary friendships. It remains to specify the requirements for
character friendship, but it is clear, from considerations having to do with the
psychology of human attraction, that, in order to be a candidate for primary philia,
one’s character must not be entirely devoid of value. In the following sections, I spell
out in detail further conditions for being friends in the primary way, according to
Aristotle, in service of delineating the boundaries of primary philia.

§ II. Homonoia

Aristotle claims that, in order to engage in the primary kind of philia, friends
must agree in both thought (dianoia) and desire (orexis) with respect to those
activities that they decide to undertake; that is, they must have unanimity or like-
mindedness (homonoia).61 Bad people fail to be friends in the primary way because
they are incapable of the appropriate sort of like-mindedness with other individuals;
they can only have homonoia in a non-natural and extended sense, which is not
enough to make them character friends, since they will fail to act together reliably

61 In his discussion of homonoia in EE VII 7, Aristotle initially contrasts orexis with
dianoia when making the claim that agreement between friends with respect to only
one of these is not sufficient for homonoia, and then switches to using epithumia once
he has introduced akrasia as the type of conflict he has in mind.
even when they have decided upon a course of action together.\textsuperscript{62} Aristotle explicitly limits homonoia to character friendships and, one might be tempted to think, he shows that being like-minded with another individual presupposes that both individuals are in internal agreement of the sort found only in the virtuous. I argue that Aristotle’s account of the homonoia found in philia can accommodate enkratic individuals—those individuals who decide upon the correct course of action, and act in accordance with this correct decision, but nonetheless experience non-rational desire to act otherwise—as long as the enkrateia is limited to a domain that does not pertain to the friendship. More surprisingly, I think Aristotle would even allow that certain qualifiedly akratic individuals can have homonoia of the kind relevant for forming friendships of the highest kind, though they, too, must only experience akrasia in a restricted domain. Aristotle stipulates at the beginning of his EE VII 7 discussion of homonoia that the sort of homonoia involved in friendship has to do with a specific domain of activities and so not every instance in which an individual deliberates, decides and acts will be salient.

Aristotle opens his discussion of homonoia with the claim that friends are like-minded and that those who are like-minded are friends; he is referring to friends of the primary sort here, as he often does throughout EE VII, which we learn later in the passage.\textsuperscript{63} He continues, directly following this claim, by explaining the scope of like-mindedness in friendship: homonoia in philia does not concern everything, but

\textsuperscript{62} At 1241a25-7 Aristotle explains that there is another way we speak of homonoia that applies to bad people (phauloi) who have agreement in thought and desire; however, the primary and natural use of the term, he claims, applies to those who are good.

\textsuperscript{63} 1241a25-6.
concerns only the things to-be-done (*ta prakta*) and the things that contribute to the friends’ living together (*to suzēn*). What exactly are these things to-be-done and that contribute to living together? I return to this question after completing my exegetical remarks about Aristotle’s description of *homonopia*.

Aristotle states that like-mindedness cannot be either mere agreement in thought (*dianoia*) or mere agreement in desire (*orexis*), since these can come apart, and this discord is not conducive to *homonobia*. I take it that Aristotle is not here making a remark about under what circumstances the individual can be said to have *homonobia* with herself,\(^{64}\) rather, the reason that internal discord between one’s own thoughts and desires is not conducive to *homonobia* is that, if a person is akratic without qualification, she cannot meet the more stringent requirements of being in agreement with another. That is, a friend who, despite deciding rightly, consistently acts contrary to her decision because she is moved by non-rational desires will be incapable of *homonobia* in friendship.\(^{65}\)

Aristotle does not explain his claim that it is not sufficient for *homonobia* to have mere agreement in thought or mere agreement in desire, but the idea must be

\(^{64}\) Though of course one might also think about this question. I suspect Aristotle would think that the way in which one can have *homonobia* with oneself is analogous to the way in which one can befriend oneself—i.e., insofar as the individual is a single unified subject, she cannot be said to be her own friend, but insofar as she has two (relevant) parts of soul, she can be a friend to herself, and be internally like-minded, to the extent that the parts agree in the relevant manner.

\(^{65}\) I go on to qualify this claim. For Aristotle, unqualified *akrasia* is *akrasia* with respect to bodily pleasures—the pleasures of taste and touch. This is not the same as global *akrasia*, or *akrasia* which pervades every domain of action. Aristotle does think that unqualified akratics will be incapable of the *homonobia* required in friendship, but this is because the unqualified akritic’s *akrasia* will necessarily impact *ta prakta* and the activities that constitute living together. Bodily pleasures are a daily part of life and so an unavoidable part of living together.
that *homonoia* is connected to our actions in a way that is important for acting with our friends. Why should it matter that friends agree internally—that their desires are internally consistent—unless these desires may result in actual differences in motivation? Thought or desire agreement alone will not reliably produce those actions upon which an individual has decided. If, in a given case of deciding, two friends agree merely in thought—they both have the same decisions (*prohaireses*)—but have different and aberrant non-rational desires, then either or both of them might act akratically, in accordance with their non-rational desires, and produce actions that do not accord with their decisions. On the other hand, if two friends agree merely in non-rational desires, they could also produce very different actions. For one thing, if the friends fail to deliberate together and together reach a decision about how to act, then there is no reason at all to expect their activity to be coordinated. As soon as the friends do decide together, then the agreement between them is not solely agreement in their non-rational desires; they have engaged in rationally determining how to act and so, in addition to epithumetic agreement, they now have prohairetic agreement. For another thing, there may be cases in which, e.g., one of the friends is viciously immoderate (*akolastos*), such that her non-rational desires as well as her decision are for a tenth donut, and the other friend is enkratic, such that her non-rational desires match those of her intemperate friend (she also wants a tenth donut), but she has the correct decision to abstain from the donut. The former friend will eat the tenth donut while the latter friend will not, despite the fact that they have the same non-rational desires. The friends will be moved by different considerations in each instance. It seems, then, that, in addition to agreeing in thoughts and desires, reliably acting in
agreement is an important upshot of *homonoia*. Why this should matter will become clear shortly.

One might wonder whether this requirement of agreement in decision and non-rational desire commits Aristotle to thinking that in every case in which two virtuous people who happen to be friends are deliberating and deciding, they come to the same decision (and of course have their non-rational desires accord with their decisions). Surely it seems reasonable that Aristotle would allow for the possibility of disagreement even between virtuous people; surely it is not the case that in each and every circumstance that calls for decision there is only one permissible action. If we interpret Aristotle’s requirement to entail this sort of agreement, then it looks like few friends will be able to meet the requirement, and yet he initially claimed that those who are friends (in the primary way) have *homonoia*.

We might just concede that virtuous friends’ decisions actually *do* agree in this way, but not because there is only one virtuous action in any given case where we must decide how to act. People tend to befriend those with whom they share interests and preferences, so we might expect that two virtuous people who are friends will share more preferences than, say, two virtuous people who are not friends. Aristotle stresses that it is characteristic of both pleasure friends and friends of the highest kind that the friends wish to live together, sharing their lives. Certainly we would not choose to share our lives with those people who have vastly different interests and preferences; we would rarely be in a position to do anything at all with these people, much less regularly act together.

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66 Maybe Aristotle hesitates to make this explicit because of external complications that can arise with implementing one’s *prohairesis*. 
Even if it turns out that those who are friends tend to share more preferences than those who are not friends, it remains reasonable to think that even the closest pair of virtue friends may not, in every single case, make the same decision. And why should they be expected to? If I am deciding what to have for breakfast when I wake up in the morning and my friend is not around, it should not matter what my friend, who lives a few houses down, is deciding to have for her breakfast. If I am deciding whether to read a book or practice a musical instrument for the next hour, and my friend is hungry and so trying to determine what to cook, then how could our decisions possibly be coordinated? These are independent decisions about independent courses of action. On the contrary, Aristotle’s idea is that the decisions in question are those that pertain to the friends, considered together. These decisions are not reached in the way described above, with each party deliberating and deciding on a course of action in isolation; instead, they deliberate together, as friends, and form a common decision about what to do. In this way, their decisions about what to do will in fact always agree, but it is precisely because they came to the decisions with each other, having reasoned in common about the best course of action.\footnote{There might be a worry here about individuating decisions. If me and my friend are deliberating about some joint action, and make a decision together, then in what sense is the decision mine or hers? We might worry that Aristotle must have something more independent in mind because he explicitly says that the decision of each friend must be in agreement; in the way I describe the decision, it sounds like it does not belong to each party proper, but only to the friendship—it belongs jointly to both of us, and so perhaps it does not make sense to speak of my decision agreeing with my friend’s decision. I think this worry ultimately fails; it is not the case that each friend lacks her own decision. Rather, the shared decision consists in part in the decision of each friend. In reaching an agreement about how to act, we decide both as individuals and as participants in the friendship.}
We can now return to the question of what *ta prakta* and the things that contribute to living together are. They are precisely those activities which two friends reliably engage in together; it is these very activities—the joint ones that have to do with living together—that help constitute a friendship.\(^{68}\) It is these common activities about which the individuals must decide together, and agree in decision; hence Aristotle makes certain to specify right away that *homonoia* has to do with these things. This also explains why the agreement in decision and non-rational desire, culminating in agreement in action, is necessary: the actions in question are joint activities that require the participation of both individuals. If one party fails to act in accordance with the decision, as we might expect the friend who is unqualifiedly akratic to, then the action of the collective is affected, and not merely the friend’s own action. There can be no joint activity without the contribution of each party, and so the activities that help to constitute friendship will be severely impaired if two friends do not have *homonoia*.

Understanding *homonoia* in the way I have proposed can make sense of Aristotle’s explanation of why bad men cannot have *homonoia*, or at least, they cannot have it in the primary sense. Like friendship, Aristotle claims that *homonoia* is not spoken of without qualification, but the primary and natural sense of *homonoia* is good.\(^{69}\) Aristotle attaches a lot of weight to this point: the term *homonoia* has strongly positive connotations in Greek. It is an extended and highly unnatural use of the term to apply it to like-mindedness with respect to vicious actions. Bad men can

\(^{68}\) In the next chapter of the dissertation, chapter three, I discuss more fully the importance of these common activities which express a friendship.

\(^{69}\) 1241a25-7.
have something resembling *homonoia* insofar as they can come to agreement in
decision and non-rational desire, but it is not *homonoia* proper because their
deliberation and decision-making, and hence their activity, is not done in common in
the right way. Aristotle says that bad men only agree in cases in which it is possible
for them both to attain the thing they aim at; in cases in which it is not possible for
them both to achieve what they aim at, they fight. Their agreement is contingent; they
do not deliberate and decide together, but rather they merely happen to have
accordance in their desires and decisions. They both tend to want the same sorts of
things. But because they failed to decide together, their agreement is easily foiled if
necessities of the situation are such that they cannot both have their desires fulfilled.

In his brief remarks on *homonoia* in VII 7, Aristotle brings up the akratic
person as an example of someone who lacks internal agreement in thought and
appetite.\(^70\) Given this, perhaps one might think it reasonable to assume that Aristotle
means here to rule out the akratic as capable of enough like-mindedness to participate
in a friendship of the highest sort. But this would be a mistake. Although all
instances of *akrasia* require, by definition, that decision and non-rational desires are
contrary to one another, individuals may be akratic in different ways. Some forms of
*akrasia* are compatible with the like-mindedness necessary for primary *philia*. First,
not all cases of *akrasia* are on a par with respect to seriousness of character defect.
Aristotle distinguishes between qualified and unqualified *akrasia*.\(^71\) When one is
driven to excess within the domain of action that concerns the necessary pleasures of

\(^70\) 1241a18-20.

\(^71\) In *NE* VII 4 = *EE* VI 4, Aristotle makes this distinction. In chapter 6, he continues
to explain why qualified forms of *akrasia* are not as shameful.
taste and touch, she is unqualifiedly akratic. She will be moved in all sorts of circumstances in which bodily pleasures feature to act contrary to her decision in virtue of her aberrant desires. In contrast, we must qualify cases of *akrasia* that involve wealth, honor, gain, and so forth.\(^7^2\) Aristotle makes clear that the former, unqualified form of *akrasia* is blameworthy, while *akrasia* concerning the pleasures that are non-necessary but choiceworthy in themselves is not blameworthy.\(^7^3\) This sort of localized tendency to act against one’s decision may not be very severe.

Second, one reason (the one important for determining whether some akratics may have *homonooia*)\(^7^4\) for thinking that qualified forms of *akrasia* may not be particularly detrimental features of character is that there may be far fewer instances of action in which they come up. Unlike in unqualified *akrasia*, which has to do with necessary pleasures—pleasures that we cannot avoid on a regular basis, if an individual is akratic with respect to, say, courage, she may not encounter many fear-inspiring battles, and so may not confront opportunities for her defect to surface. Although she can be said to have *akrasia* with respect to the domain of courage, if she is rarely presented with instances in which she would need to rely on the virtue of courage, her lack of courage may have little impact on her everyday endeavors. It is for this reason that the akratic with respect to courage is capable of *homonooia* in other domains, and thus a candidate for primary friendships (at least as far as the requirement of like-mindedness is concerned). Individuals who suffer from qualified

\(^7^2\) 1147b32-5.

\(^7^3\) 1147b30, 1148a22-6.

\(^7^4\) Qualified forms of *akrasia*, specifically spirited forms, are not as shameful as the unqualified form, since reason is not being dominated by brute appetite, in the qualified forms, but by something closer to itself.
forms of akrasia will not be able to maintain homonoia with other people when it comes to the domain in which they are akratic, but we should not conclude from this that qualifiedly akratic individuals cannot have homonoia at all. Surely I might cultivate a friendship based on intellectual pursuits with my friend who has akrasia in the realm of courage. I do not rely on this friend to act together with me on the battlefield; we do not spend our time performing actions together that test our courage. Her courage, or lack thereof, is irrelevant to our friendship. And the sort of like-mindedness that matters for philia is, as we saw, specific to the actions that constitute the friendship. As long as my friend is capable of deliberating and deciding with me on those activities that make up our living together, then her qualified akrasia in some limited realm does not matter.

Similarly, the person who reliably acts in accordance with her decision despite her conflicting non-rational desires—the enkratic—may be enkratic with respect to necessary pleasures or with respect to the choiceworthy pleasures. Enkrateia, just as with akrasia, may be irrelevant to the like-mindedness required of those who are friends in the primary way. But what if an individual is enkratic without qualification or enkratic in a particular domain that happens to be salient to the activities of her friendship? We should worry that, even though she acts in accordance with her decision most of the time, the standing contrary desires may, in some cases, interfere, causing her to fail to participate in an agreed-upon joint activity. To the extent that she acts consistently from reason, she can be counted upon to participate fully and appropriately in common activities. But she will not be capable of homonoia proper with her friend in the relevant domain. In some cases, her non-rational desires accord
with her decision and action; and in those cases where her desires differ, she is not often moved by them. This individual is pretty well off when it comes to being capable of joint deliberation, decision and action. Insofar as she has improvements to make, those may be brought about over time as a result of acting well together with her friend. Consistently acting as she and her friend have decided may further her progress towards the cultivation of desires that accord with her correct decisions.

Furthermore, if two friends find themselves battling temptations together, this might even strengthen the friendship, whether or not their friendship counts as a case of the primary kind.

I have been careful to stipulate that the reason it is possible for individuals with certain failings of character to have _homonoia_ with a friend is that friendships—even those of the primary kind—need not concern _every_ type of activity that these individuals regularly undertake. We participate in all sorts of activities that do not pertain to our friendships, and so our character difficulties in these domains may not impact our ability to be like-minded in the domain that grounds a friendship. In order to make this point about domain-specificity clear, I have focused on cases in which a single, particular domain grounds a friendship and the friends involved each suffer from single, particular form of character discord in a completely unrelated domain. But most friendships, especially those of the primary kind, will not consist solely of activities performed in one domain. It is somewhat stilted and artificial to characterize friendships as based on a single domain, though, of course, there may be such cases. A variety of domains will usually be salient to a given case of friendship, generating a way in which friendships may admit of degrees.
Let us suppose, e.g., that there are four domains relevant to the common activities expressing a given friendship. In three of the four domains, the friends both have consistent agreement in desire, decision and action; that is, the friends have homonoia with respect to those three domains. In the other domain, although the friends consistently act well together, one friend harbors conflicting non-rational desires. The friends lack homonoia in this domain in virtue of the one friend’s desires. In a more extreme case, the friend who experiences conflicting desires may also tend to act in accordance with those non-rational desires—that is, she might even be akratic in one of the domains relevant to the friendship. These cases are both clearly distinct from the parallel case in which the friends have agreement in every domain in which they act together, expressing the friendship. There is room to cash this out in terms of degrees; in the former two cases, the friends are primary friends to a lesser degree than in the case in which there is agreement in every relevant domain. But even in these two cases, the friends have homonoia in several domains (and let us suppose they meet the other character requirements for primary philia in those three other domains as well), so they are friends in the primary way, at least in those domains in which they satisfy the requirements.

To put the point another way, there are two ways that a domain might fail to inform a friendship of the primary kind. First, it might be that the friends never have occasion to interact in a particular domain. Think back to the example of intellectual friends who never interact in circumstances which would require courage. This

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75 There are related epistemic worries with enkrateia cases in particular, since it might be difficult for one to become aware of her friend’s persisting discordant desires. Once one is aware of one’s friend’s desires, how might that affect the friendship?
domain is not salient to their friendship in any way. Second, as we have now seen, friends might interact in a given domain in a way constitutive of their friendship, but it might be the case that one or both of the friends fails to meet one or more of the character requirements for primary *philia* in that domain. In that domain, then, the friends are not friends in the primary way.

That friendship admits of degrees in the way I have just described raises several further questions, which I do not attempt to resolve here. How should we describe the kind of friendship that obtains between two people when they meet the requirements for primary *philia* in one or more domain relevant to their friendship, but not *every* relevant domain? Do these friends have a primary friendship in one domain but, e.g., a pleasure friendship in another domain? How should we characterize their friendship as a whole? There are also epistemic issues that arise when isolating various domains of activities. With the case of the intellectual but cowardly friend in mind, suppose that I am fully virtuous and come to find out that my philosophizing friend is a coward. Although this failing was not and is still not relevant to the activities we perform together, we might worry that discovering this defect in my friend could affect the friendship, particularly if I previously took her to be wholly virtuous as well. For our purposes, what is important is that, in order to be friends in the primary way, individuals must have *homonoia* with one another in whatever domains inform their friendship.

*Homonoia* is a necessary feature of primary friendships. And while, like primary *philia* itself, it is most proper to good people, it can occur even among those of us who experience non-rational desires that are contrary to our reason. If these
desires do not have to do with the activities that express our friendship, then they do not impinge upon our *homonoia*. We do not need to be like-minded with a friend in *every* respect, but only when it comes to *ta prakta* and the other activities that we regularly perform together.

§ III. *Eunoia*

We saw in the preceding section that, although Aristotle requires friends of the primary kind to be like-minded, the requirement of *homonoia* is not as stringent as one might suspect upon cursory inspection. Friends need not be moral saints to be relevantly like-minded. Even individuals who are enkratic and qualifiedly akratic can be like-minded. In this section, I take up another requirement of primary friendship: goodwill (*eunoia*). Aristotle claims that there is a close relationship between goodwill and friendship of the primary kind. I argue that, as in the case of *homonoia*, Aristotle thinks that even qualifiedly enkraic and akratic individuals can have *eunoia*.

There has been much scholarly controversy surrounding Aristotle’s conception of goodwill (*eunoia*); in particular, there has been significant disagreement regarding the scope of its application. As one would expect, this controversy has dealt almost exclusively with the Nicomachean treatise. Some have influentially argued that Aristotle does not limit *eunoia* to friendships of the highest kind, but in fact thinks that friends of all three varieties wish and do well with respect to one another for the other’s sake; the sort of well-wishing that constitutes *eunoia* is characteristic of *philia* more generally on this view.⁷⁶ On the contrary, others maintain that it is only within the context of primary *philia* that friends wish each

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Cooper, “The Forms of Friendship.”
other well for the other’s own sake.\footnote{See, e.g., Nehamas, “Aristotelian \textit{Philia}, Modern Friendship.” Nehamas here usefully distinguishes, in the Nicomachean account, between ‘for the other’s sake’, on the one hand, and ‘for the other’s own sake’, on the other hand. It is only within a friendship of the highest kind that the friends wish each other well for other’s own sake.} In the \textit{Eudemian Ethics}, at VII 7 1241a1-15, Aristotle explicitly claims that \textit{eunoia} occurs only in the primary kind of friendship and nowhere does he indicate that there is a sense in which \textit{eunoia} occurs in all cases of \textit{philia}. In fact, chapter seven of his friendship discussion is the only place within the \textit{EE} where Aristotle expressly mentions \textit{eunoia} (though, to be sure, he will very occasionally use the verb cognate with this term, but it seems in these cases as though he is using it a bit more loosely).\footnote{As when, for example, at 1237b7 he explains that the smelly man must be content with our goodwill.}

Aristotle’s Nicomachean view is more complicated than this, as there Aristotle initially claims, at 1155b31-34, that, “people say that one ought to wish to a friend what is good, for his own sake; but those who wish what is good [to someone else] in this way people call \textit{eunous}, if the other person does not return the wish: for friendship is \textit{eunoia} when reciprocated.” This occurs at the very beginning of his discussion of \textit{philia}; he has not yet differentiated the three kinds of friendship. We have some reason to think, then, that Aristotle attributes \textit{eunoia} to the individuals involved in all kinds of friendships. However, in what follows, it seems that Aristotle continues by limiting \textit{eunoia}, as he does in the \textit{EE}, to primary friendships. I return to this discussion very briefly, but I focus primarily on Aristotle’s discussion of \textit{eunoia} in the \textit{Eudemian Ethics}. 
For our purposes, we should make sure to keep distinct the question of whether *eunoia, homonoia* or other central features of the primary kind of friendship can, or even must, be present in the subordinate kinds of friendships from the question of what character requirements one must minimally satisfy in order to participate in primary friendship. To be sure, these questions are related. Both questions are pertinent to, e.g., thinking about the relationship between Aristotle’s conception of *philia* and our modern conception of friendship.\(^7^9\) Insofar as Aristotle often associates the primary form of *philia* with virtuous individuals and the subordinate forms with agents who are lacking in virtue, it is easy to conflate these questions. However, our central concern is the latter question: what is necessary, with respect to the state and development of one’s character, for an agent to engage in a friendship of the highest kind? Given that Aristotle expressly states in the *Eudemian Ethics* that *eunoia* is necessary for and only occurs within the primary kind of *philia*, determining what sort of character one must possess to wish another well in the way constitutive of *eunoia* will help to elucidate another requirement of primary friendship. Friends must have goodwill in relation to one another in order for their friendship to count as a case of primary *philia*. So, then, what sort of character must one have to wish her friend well, and what sort of character must her friend have to be a suitable recipient of such wishing?

In attempting to get clear on Aristotle’s remarks concerning *eunoia*, a difficulty arises immediately. There are three passages in which Aristotle discusses *eunoia* or wishing good things to another (*boulesthai agatha*). Scholars have

\(^7^9\) See Nehamas, “Aristotelian *Philia*, Modern Friendship?”
traditionally treated these as interchangeable, conceiving of them as referring to the
same type of wishing. Aristotle seems to suggest that *eunoia*, which is explicitly
limited to primary *philia*, is wishing good things for another person for her own sake,
but, in another, distinct passage that is phrased in terms of *boulesthai agatha* (which
he later echoes in a second, very similar passage), he points out that wishing good
things for another (*boulesthai agatha*) is not distinctive of any one kind of *philia*, but
is found in all kinds. How are we to reconcile these three passages if we assume that
*eunoia* and *boulesthai agatha* are equivalent? It cannot be done. We must try to
differentiate between these two forms of well-wishing to preserve the consistency of
Aristotle’s Eudemian account.

In what follows, I sketch two ways of alleviating this tension by attempting to
distinguish *eunoia* and *boulesthai agatha*. Neither attempt is without fault, but, for
our purposes, what matters is that Aristotle thinks that *eunoia* is necessary for primary
friendship, and is therefore one of the character requirements for this highest form of
friendship—and, unlike *boulesthai agatha*, *eunoia* is only to be found within primary
friendship. That is, like *homonoeia*, *eunoia* is distinctive of character *philia*. I begin
with an explication of Aristotle’s account of *eunoia* proper before turning to briefer
discussions of each passage in which he mentions wishing good things for another
(*boulesthai agatha*).

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80 See, e.g., Cooper, “Forms.”
A. “It is relevant to our investigation to think also about homonoia and eunoia; for some people think that they are the same things, and others that they cannot exist without each other. Eunoia is neither wholly distinct from friendship nor the same thing. If friendship is divided into three kinds, it is not in the kind based on utility or the kind based on pleasure. For if one wishes good things (bouletai tagatha) to another because he is useful, it would not be because of him but because of himself, but it seems that…[lacuna] eunoia is not for the sake of the person who is feeling eunoia but for the sake of the person in regards to whom he feels eunoia; and if it were found in friendships of pleasure, people would feel kindly even towards inanimate objects. With the result that it is clear that eunoia concerns friendships based on character (ethiken philian). But it is characteristic of one who has eunoia only to wish [good things], while the friend also does the things that he wishes; for eunoia is the starting point of friendship. For every friend feels eunoia, but not everyone who has eunoia is a friend, for the person who feels eunoia is only at the starting point. Hence it is the starting point of friendship, but not friendship.”

In proffering an account of eunoia, Aristotle claims explicitly that friends involved in the subordinate kinds of friendships do not experience eunoia with respect to one another. I think it is very tempting, and quite plausible, to read this passage as demarcating eunoia, and thus restricting it to the primary kind of friendship, solely on the basis of whether or not one is wishing one’s friend good things for the sake of the friend. Aristotle here explains that eunoia is restricted to the highest form of friendship precisely because, when one wishes one’s friend well in the subordinate forms of friendship, one is doing so not because of the friend, but because of oneself. While it is clearly necessary that the well-wishing in question is for the sake of the friend, I introduce, in what follows, another, less obvious way to differentiate the wishing of goods according to the character status of the individuals involved. In short, I draw on Aristotle’s earlier distinction between things that are good without qualification (haplós) and things that are good for someone in particular.

81 EE 1241a1-14.
(tini) in a second attempt to make Aristotle’s remarks in this passage consistent with the other two passages in which he mentions wishing good things to another. Regardless of which way we separate merely wishing good things from eunoia proper, eunoia requires that one wish another well for the sake of that other person and not, or not merely, for her own sake.

Before moving on to discuss the other two salient passages and get clear on this issue in greater depth, there are two other important points to take away from Aristotle’s passage on eunoia. First, even though Aristotle says that eunoia is a starting point (archê) of friendship, this does not mean that it is merely the impetus for a friendship. Friends involved in primary friendship will wish good things to one another for the other’s sake as long as they are friends. This is analogous to the way I interpreted Aristotle’s different grounds for each type of friendship; the grounds not only spark attraction but sustain it. One not only experiences goodwill before she becomes friends with someone, but goodwill is an important expression of the continuing friendship.

Second, Aristotle frames his discussion of eunoia around the claim that it is not the same as friendship nor is it entirely different than friendship, and I think we can read his arguments against the involvement of eunoia in utility and pleasure friendships within this context; i.e., in showing how eunoia is related to, but is not itself, friendship, Aristotle first rules out that eunoia has to do with the two subordinate kinds of friendship. He concludes that it must, then, have something to do with character friendships, but, as he said initially, it cannot be the same as (character) friendship. One expects, at this point, to receive an argument along the
following lines. While wishing another person well for her sake is a part of, or a
beginning of, character friendships, it does not (yet) count as a character friendship
because friendships involve reciprocity.82 Friendships are about mutual well-wishing,
but eunoia is only one half of the equation. However, this is not the argument we get.
Instead, Aristotle focuses on action. The reason that eunoia is not (yet) friendship is
that eunoia is merely wishing well for the other’s sake, while friendship requires that
you act what you wish. Why would he make this claim about action here? The idea
is that acting in accordance with well-wishing indicates or expresses the feeling to the
other person, so that there is thus an opportunity created for them to recognize and
then reciprocate the well-wishing with their own well-doing. Friendship proper arises
when both parties are engaged in this reciprocal well-wishing and well-doing. The
problem, then, with mere reciprocal well-wishing, even when it is done for the sake
of the other, is that the individuals involved can fail to perceive what is going on, and
friendship requires not just mutual love but also mutual recognition of this mutual
love.83

So far, so good. But I think Aristotle has a second, related reason for stressing
that action is the factor that distinguishes eunoia from philia proper. As I have
mentioned in brief in fleshing out the requirement of homonoia, Aristotle is
concerned to ensure that, at least in the case of primary friendship, I am in a position
to act together with my friend. Having eunoia is the beginning of a friendship, but
primary friendships will consist in activities performed jointly. While it is important

82 In the Nicomachean Ethics, at 1155b31-4, Aristotle does make this claim that it
seems natural to anticipate, explaining that goodwill is different from friendship
because friendship requires reciprocation but goodwill may be one-sided.
83 1236a15.
to take steps to carry out my well-wishing towards my friend in order, in part, that she
becomes aware of my attitude towards her, and vice versa, it is also important
because, once we are both aware of the other’s attitude, we are now in a position to
begin deliberating and deciding in common; we are now in a position to act together
in the way that, as we will see in the third chapter, is constitutive of the value of
friendship.

I now take up the two passages in which Aristotle mentions wishing good
things to a friend.

B. “For a man seems to be a friend who wishes for another good things, of things that he believes to be good, not on account of himself but for the other’s sake; and in another way when a man wishes another’s existence—even though not bestowing goods, let alone existence—for that other’s own sake and not his own, he would especially be thought to be a friend; and in another way a man is a friend of one he desires to live with for the sake of his company and not for something else…”

Despite Aristotle’s use of the sometimes-endoxic “seem” in this passage, there
is good reason to think that Aristotle is endorsing these claims. Some friends wish
each other good things for the sake of the other, other friends want to live with one
another, others exhibit different weakly-differentiating features. Of particular
importance in the context of unpacking the requirements for eunoia is the first feature
that Aristotle lists as being a common characteristic of friendship: friends wish each
other good things, or things they take to be good, for the sake of the friend. But
Aristotle fails to explain in what type or types of philia this wishing of good things
occurs. Our last passage will be relevant to aligning this feature with the types of
philia.

84 1240a23-9.
Friendship does not admit of a single account, as I argued in the first chapter, but Aristotle often reports these features or characteristics (*horoi*) that tend to correspond with different kinds of friendship. However, I stress that this is not a straightforward set of properties that are definitive of each kind of friendship. What is distinctive, in each case, of a friendship-type is its basis. Instead, these are a rough accounting of common—though neither necessary nor sufficient, much less thoroughly explanatory—features of each kind of friendship. Friends tend to exhibit or express these wishes in relation to one another.

It is not clear in this passage, taken on its own, what Aristotle thinks the relationship is between each of these characteristics and each type of friendship. Is each feature cited supposed to occur within just one type of friendship, or might there be some overlap such that, e.g., in both pleasure and character friendships the friends wish to live together? As becomes clear at 1244a20-5, in the third and final passage I shall examine, there is not a strict correspondence between each feature and a single kind of friendship. Some features appear in one kind of *philia*, while others appear in all three kinds. Of course, when it comes to each feature, there may be a different explanation for its occurrence that is unique to each type. That is, e.g., there may be very different reasons for the wish to live together in pleasure friendships as opposed to character friendships. In the former case, friends may wish to live together because they are involved in an erotic relationship, while in the latter case, friends may want to live together because they enjoy participating in a variety of quotidian virtuous activities together. So these characteristics are neither necessary nor sufficient for any of the kinds of friendship, and they do not even correlate precisely with each
kind. They are, rather, features that most people, including Aristotle, attribute to friends of various types, some belonging to only one type of friends, others to more than one type.

Also noteworthy in this passage is a clause right in the first sentence. Aristotle is quick to mention at the outset that, when it comes to wishing good things to another for her own sake, one might make a mistake. He writes, “…good things, of things that he believes to be good,” implying that what is in fact good for one’s friend may not be what one believes to be good for one’s friend. Again, there may be several reasons why one makes a mistake of this kind. It may be due, as in the vicious person’s case, to ignorance about what is good, or it may be due to ignorance of the friend’s condition, which could result from something as innocuous as not yet knowing the friend very well. But, in any case, it is possible to wish things to a friend that I merely believe to be good, all the while inaccurately assessing what would be genuinely good for my friend. I do not need to know what is genuinely good for my friend in order to wish to her things that I take to be good. We still do not know in which kinds of friendship this feature may apply, but keeping this qualification in mind is relevant to one of the possible solutions that I consider to remedy the tension among this passage and the other two passages in EE VII in which Aristotle addresses wishing good things to one’s friend. I turn now to the third and final passage.

C. “And the defining characteristics of friendship in the arguments all belong to friendship in some sense, but not the same kind. It is a characteristic of the useful friend that one wishes the things good for him, and so of the benefactor, and in fact a friend of any kind (for this account of friendship is not distinctive); of another friend, that one
wishes his existence, of another that one wishes to live together; of the
friend on account of pleasure, that one shares his grief and joy.”

The first thing that one notices when reading this passage is that it very
closely mirrors the previous passage that listed some horoi. Unlike Passage B,
however, Aristotle here explicitly associates some of these features with particular
kinds of friendship. In friendships of pleasure, for example, he explains that it is
standard for friends to share in one another’s affective responses, like joy and grief.
More surprising is Aristotle’s claim that wishing good things to another is
characteristic of utility friendship, which he then broadens immediately to encompass
all kinds of friendship. In every type of friendship, friends wish good things to one
another. Although Aristotle does not say so explicitly, because this passage so
closely resembles the earlier passage and is building on it only by referencing the
kinds of friendship with which each feature may be associated, it is reasonable to
conclude that the wishing of goods that Aristotle mentions here is the same sort that
he has in mind in the earlier passage. That is, he may be thinking of wishing for
one’s friend for her own sake those things which one believes to be good for her. I
return to this possibility shortly, when I take up the two different ways we might try
to pull apart eunoein and boulesthai agatha.

While Aristotle connects some of these features with the particular kinds of
friendship he has delineated, he does not do so for every feature. Some features
remain unlinked to a particular kind of friendship in this passage, like wishing to live
together. Perhaps this is because there is no straightforward correlation with these

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85 1244a20-5.
features and the way that Aristotle has parsed the phenomenon. These features regularly cross boundaries, occurring in friendships of different Aristotelian kinds.

Upon considering these three passages (A, B, C) in conjunction, tension becomes apparent right away. In Passage A, Aristotle seems to restrict *eunoia*, which he indicates is wishing good things to a friend for her own sake, to primary friendships because in the other cases friends do not wish good things to each other for the sake of the other; they wish good things to the other person for their own self-interest, in order to gain something in return from the friend. Or so one might think. In Passage B, Aristotle claims that a friend wishes good things, or the things she believes to be good, to her friend for the other’s sake. Taken in combination with Passage C, Passage B is telling: in all kinds of friendship, friends wish one another good things for the sake of the other. But isn’t this the way that Aristotle excluded *eunoia* from subordinate kinds of friendship, by claiming that in those cases the friends do not wish one another well for the other’s sake? How are we to make these passages consistent with one another?

The obvious way of attempting to resolve this tension is to try to distinguish between merely wishing good things for a friend and *eunoia* proper. One might initially be tempted by the thought that the distinction concerns the difference between wishing good things for someone and wishing that the other person fare well. In the utility case, on this construal, one wishes good things for someone because one also wants good things for oneself, and helping the other to secure their good things is a good way of ensuring that one receives from the other person the goods that one needs. What is being exchanged are, e.g., material goods, so one might think that
wishing good things for someone is about wishing that they receive certain external
goods, while wishing them well (eunoia) is about wishing that the other individual
fares well, that her life goes well all things considered. Although making this
distinction on this sort of broad versus narrow scope of the goods in question when
one wishes good things to her friend is compatible with the text, it is nowhere
suggested.

A more plausible way of trying to distinguish between eunoia and wishing
good things for a friend is positing that it is only in the former case that friends wish
one another well for the other’s own sake. It is only in the case of primary friendship
that a friend wishes good things for her friend for the friend’s sake. Recall that in
Passage A, in explaining why there is no eunoia in utility friendships, Aristotle says
that if one wishes good things for another because he is useful, that is not eunoia
because one would be wishing these things not for his sake but for one’s own sake.
Thus it seems that although both eunoia and boulesthai agatha involve wishing
someone well, or wishing good things for them, eunoia requires that one do so for the
sake of the other person, while merely wishing good things does not require this.
Furthermore, this way of making the distinction would explain why Aristotle never
uses the language of having eunoia for a friend for the friend’s own sake, while he
does tack on this specification when he mentions wishing good things for a friend in
Passage B. We can wish good things to someone because it is in our own interests, or
we can do so because it is in the interests of the friend. In the case of utility
friendships, Aristotle argues, there is no eunoia because one’s well-wishing is self-
interested and, he goes on to explain, in order for well-wishing to count as eunoia, it
cannot be for the sake of the one who is doing the well-wishing; thus, *eunoia* seems to require not just that one wish another well for the other’s sake, but also that the one wishing well cannot at the same time be wishing the other well for one’s own sake. Passage A makes this clear: *eunoia* is not for the sake of the person who is experiencing it towards another. That is, *eunoia* is wishing another well for the sake of the other alone and not for the sake of anything else.

Given, though, that now, on this way of construing the distinction between *eunoia* and *boulesthai agatha*, it seems *eunoia* requires not just wishing another well for that other’s own sake, but also that there is no other thing for the sake of which one is wishing the other well, it is reasonable to think that there may be reciprocal well-wishing for the sake of the other in subordinate kinds of friendships. That is, while friendships of utility and pleasure would fail to include *eunoia*, they could nonetheless consistently include wishing one another well for the other’s sake, along with wishing one another well for the sake of, e.g., oneself. Despite being consistent with the claim that *eunoia* requires that one wish another well solely for the sake of the other, Aristotle seems to indicate rather explicitly that individuals in a utility friendship do not wish good things for the sake of the other in his argument in Passage A that utility friends lack *eunoia*. In fact, this lack is precisely what rules out the possibility of *eunoia* in utility friendships. Aristotle does not seem to allow room for one to wish another well for the sake of both herself and the other; his argument in Passage A implicitly relies on the premise that we wish someone well for the sake of some single subject, whether that is ourselves or the other.
Trying to explain what sort of well-wishing is in play when Aristotle talks of *eunoia* has generated much scholarly controversy, though the discussion centers on Aristotle’s claims in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As I briefly mentioned earlier, in the *NE*, Aristotle first indicates that *eunoia* is constitutive of friendships generally, but then goes on to make repeated claims that suggest that the two subordinate forms of friendship are brutally self-centered. The difficulty hinges on how we are to understand the way in which Aristotle uses for-the-sake-of, though not all scholars even agree that Aristotle must have something clear and technical in mind when he employs this locution.\(^8^6\) According to Cooper,

\[\text{...in wishing someone well, for his own sake, because he is pleasant or advantageous, one’s first commitment is to his retention of the property of pleasantness or advantageousness, and any good one wishes him to have, for his own sake, must be compatible with the retention of that special property under which, as his friend, one wishes him well in the first place.}\(^8^7\)

On this account of what it is to wish someone a good for her own sake, this sort of well-wishing is compatible with well-wishing for my own sake. That is, the for-the-sake-of relation is not singular in a way that would cause wishing well for your sake and wishing you well for my own sake to be mutually exclusive. Nehamas insightfully argues that there is a relevant distinction between wishing someone well for her sake and wishing someone well for her *own* sake, where, “only those who are

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\(^8^6\) For example, Pakaluk contends, “it is a mistake to assert, without fuller argument, that ‘for his sake’ at 1155b30-1 imports anything more than this, such as, for instance, a full-blown notion of ‘disinterested’ or ‘altruistic’ benevolence. Indeed, given the exploratory nature of this section, and Aristotle’s evident reliance on *endoxa*, as though he were considering the subject afresh, there is little reason to think that Aristotle regards ‘for his sake’, in its use here, as having any pre-theoretically clear and determinate meaning.”

\(^8^7\) Cooper, “Forms,” p. 326.
drawn to each other’s virtues care for what the other really is, and only they are capable of wishing each other well for the other’s own sake.”

In our Eudemian text, however, as we have seen, Aristotle is clear: in wishing another well for her, or her own, sake, one is thereby excluded from wishing her well for one’s own sake. According to this way of making these three passages consistent, *eunoia* and *boulethai agatha* are distinct because *eunoia* requires the wish to be for the sake of the other, while wishing goods things is more general and may be done for the sake of oneself. On this version of cashing out the distinction, Aristotle intentionally avoids associating wishing good things to another for the sake of the other with a particular kind of friendship in Passage B. It is therefore open to him to reserve wishing good things to another for the sake of the other for primary cases of friendship. In Passage C, where he explicitly claims that friends of all kinds wish good things to one another, he is concerned to refrain from asserting that this wishing is for the sake of the other. The issue with this interpretation is that consistency comes at the cost of failing to treat Passages B and C as parallel, which is counterintuitive. The structure and wording of the passages is very similar, but, if we adopt this construal, we are committed to denying that Aristotle’s choice of phrasing in Passage C, where he omits reference to the wishing in question being for the sake of the other, is shorthand for the first sentence of Passage B. Perhaps this is an acceptable cost, but Aristotle has afforded us another means of making these passages consistent. On either attempt at distinguishing *eunoia* and *boulethai agatha*, there is a bullet to bite.

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In the first chapter, I outlined Aristotle’s argument that there are three kinds of friendship. In the course of differentiating three kinds of friendship, Aristotle distinguishes different ways in which things can be or seem to be good. Employing the distinction between things that are good without qualification (*haplôs*) and good for a particular individual (*tini*), given her current condition and circumstances, I think we can separate the class of good things that one wishes in each kind of well-wishing. That is, according to the second way of differentiating *eunoia* and *bouleisthai agatha*, in order for an individual to possess *eunoia* proper in relation to another, the class of good things that she wishes must be those goods which are good *haplôs*. While, in contrast, wishing good things to another for the sake of the other does not require that the goods in question are good without qualification; they may be merely good for the particular recipient. This explains why Aristotle would limit *eunoia* to character-based friendships but at the same time allows that friends in every kind of friendship may wish each other goods, or what they believe to be goods, for the sake of the other. It is only in the primary kind of friendship that friends wish each other things that are good without qualification.

There are two kinds of requirements present in *eunoia* that set this sort of wishing of goods, which is unique to the primary kind of friendship, apart from the wishing of goods that pervades all three kinds of friendship. The first class of requirements concerns what kind of knowledge the wisher of goods must possess. In the case of *eunoia*, one must know what goods are in fact good *haplôs*, and one must know one’s friend quite well in order to know what things will be good for her. Depending on the kind of activities I perform with my friend, my knowledge of this
second sort may be robust in some areas and weaker in others. For instance, if my friend and I attend philosophy seminars together and often talk about philosophy, I may have fairly thorough and reliable knowledge about her philosophical abilities, positions, and so forth. But I do not have any evidence for forming beliefs about how she would behave in a situation that called for, e.g., courage. While we may be friends of the primary kind, I would fail to meet the second sort of knowledge requirement when it comes to my friend’s courage, or lack thereof. I could thus not wish good things for my friend in that domain in a way that counts as eunoia, though I could continue to wish that she, e.g., receive scholarly books in a timely fashion to facilitate her research. As Aristotle also made clear in Passage B, when I wish good things for my friend in the way that occurs in subordinate forms of friendship, I may make a mistake. Because I lack knowledge of either what is good without qualification or what is good for my friend, I may wish for her things that are not in fact good for her, but that I falsely believe to be good. I do not have eunoia in these cases, though I am wishing her things that I believe to be good for her, and I am doing so for her sake.

The second kind of requirement, on this reading, in addition to the two knowledge requirements stipulated, for eunoia, as distinct from the wishing of good things that is common to all forms of friendship, is that the goods that I wish to my friend—those things which are good without qualification—are in fact good for her. What is good for her and what is good without qualification must be the same in the relevant domain. To return to the example of my friend of the primary kind with whom I philosophize, in order for my wishing that her books arrive quickly to count
as an expression of *eunoia*, it must be the case that this wishing is both good without qualification and good for her. Notice that it also follows from this requirement and the previous two knowledge requirements that, in wishing these good things to my friend, I will also know that what is good *haplôs* is good for her. This knowledge may, psychologically speaking, influence my wishing of good things. For, recognizing the excellent use to which she puts the goods she receives, and that I wished for her, and so recognizing the correspondence between what is good *haplôs* and good *tini* in my friend’s case, I may be moved to continue wishing such things for my friend.

This second way of trying to make Passages A, B and C consistent by distinguishing *eunoia* and *boulesthai agatha* yields a far more restrictive account of *eunoia*. Shouldn’t it be possible to have *eunoia* towards a friend for whom the things that are good without qualification are not good? For example, if my friend is a heroin addict, shouldn’t my wishing for whatever goods will facilitate her recovery, when done for her own sake, count as a case of *eunoia*? The appeal to domain specificity in this instance will not mitigate this worry much. Conceding that one does not have *eunoia* but instead only wishes good things to her heroin addict friend in that domain is a stretch. Moreover, although this way of making the distinction, unlike the previous attempt, preserves the parallel between Passage B and Passage C, it creates tension with Passage A, since there Aristotle seems to explicitly rule out *eunoia* in utility friendships precisely on the grounds that the friends in those cases do not wish each other well for the other’s own sake.
It is difficult to decide which of these two alternatives one should prefer, as both have advantages and disadvantages. If one opts for the first reading, on the one hand, which stipulates that *eunoia* is wishing good things to another for the other’s sake alone, then we are able to read Passage A in the most natural way, understanding Aristotle’s exclusion of *eunoia* to utility friendships to be based on the fact that in those friendships the well-wishing is not for the sake of the other. We must, however, also think that Passages B and C are not parallel—that Aristotle quite intentionally excluded from Passage C the specification that the wishing of good things is for the sake of the other. If one selects the second interpretation, on the other hand, although Passages B and C are parallel, we have to find another, less obvious way to distinguish between *eunoia* and *boulesthai agatha*. In so doing, our interpretation of Passage A becomes more strained and the requirements for having *eunoia* become more restrictive and so less intuitively plausible.

Whichever option one chooses to try to preserve consistency among these passages by separating *eunoia* and *boulesthai agatha*, the conclusion confirms the results of the discussion concerning *homonooia*. Individuals who are enkratic or even qualifiedly akratic may possess *eunoia*. On the first reading, *eunoia* applies in a straightforward way. We can wish good things to a friend for the friend’s sake even if the friend is enkrtic or akratic. And the person who is akratic or enkrtic is capable of wishing to a friend things that are good for the friend’s sake. On the second reading, enkratic and akratic individuals have knowledge of what is good without qualification (even if they do not always act in accordance with this knowledge), and they may be appropriate recipients of *eunoia* as long as there is, in at
least one domain, correspondence between what is good without qualification and what is good for them. Of course, the domain in question will not be the domain in which the akratic individual is akratic, since this coming together would not occur in that domain. If my philosophizing friend is akratic with respect to courage, then what is good for her to withstand with respect to the pain involved in fear will not be the same as what it is good for the courageous agent to withstand. In this domain, then, wishing her what is good for her will come apart from wishing what is good haplôs. And so, in this domain, eunoia does not apply. I wish her good things, but only those things that are in fact good for her, given her current condition. On both accounts, eunoia requires wishing good things to a friend for the friend’s sake.

Dissecting Aristotle’s remarks regarding eunoia has resulted in the further character requirement that, at least in the Eudemian Ethics, in order to be friends in the primary way, the individuals involved in a friendship must wish one another well for the sake of the other. If one opts for the more stringent way of distinguishing eunoia and merely wishing good things to another, then three more character requirements that one must meet in order to participate in the primary form of friendship become apparent: (1) One must know what is good haplôs. This means that, as in the case of homonoia, outright vicious people will be unable to have eunoia, since they do not know what is unqualifiedly good. (2) One must know what is good for one’s friend, at least in some domain—i.e., while I may not know how

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89 This certainly applies to the people to whom one is attracted and with whom one is in fact friends, but it also applies to those for whom one wishes good things for the sake of the other without meeting the other requirements for friendship proper. Because eunoia is a starting-point for philia, individuals may have eunoia without being in a friendship.
my philosophizing friend would react in an earthquake, I know how she will make use of philosophy texts. (3) What is good haplôs and good for my friend must be the same thing in a given domain. That those things that are good haplôs be good for my friend might seem like an extremely difficult requirement to meet, but it need not be the case that everything that is good haplôs is good for my friend. Even so, I think we should be wary of saddling Aristotle with this account, especially because there is a dearth of explicit textual support.

§ IV. Primary Philia and Unity of the Virtues

I have argued that Aristotle does not limit friendship of the highest kind to those of us who are wholly virtuous. Primary friendships are open to everyone who satisfies the following conditions: (1) have some genuinely good feature(s) of character that can serve as the grounds for rational attraction; (2) be in a position to recognize genuinely valuable features of character in another person; (3) be capable of like-mindedness (homonoia) with another person in at least some domain, where this means capable of deliberating, deciding and acting together reliably in that domain; (4) be capable of goodwill (eunoia), which involves wishing another well for the other’s own sake, with another person in at least some domain. These criteria make perspicuous that having a friendship of the primary kind is compatible with being a qualifiedly enkratic or akratic individual, or even, in some very limited domains, a genuinely vicious individual. If one’s practical failings are not pervasive, but instead restricted to an area of action that falls outside the scope of the friendship, then it is open to her to participate in primary friendship. What matters, as we will
see in the next chapter, is whether she is capable of participating in joint virtuous activity together with her friend. She need not be capable of participating in every kind of joint virtuous activity.

There are two potentially pressing objections to the line of argument I am presenting. First, one might worry that limiting the scope of primary friendships is at odds with Aristotle’s remarks about the status and nature of the highest form of friendship. Don’t we expect friends of the highest kind to be closest to us in the way that our closest friends are closest to us? Two clarifications will resolve this difficulty. One thing to say is that this highlights another way in which Aristotelian philia and modern friendship come apart. While we tend to conflate emotional closeness with the best or highest kind of friendship, Aristotle has different grounds for demarcating the landscape of personal relationships. It is not that he does not care about the various pathê involved in friendship; it is merely that these pathê do not themselves distinguish various kinds of friendships, nor do they correspond to the value Aristotle affords each kind. Another thing to note is that Aristotle’s claims about the completeness or perfection of the primary kind of friendship are notably absent in the Eudemian discussion, though, to be sure, the Nicomachean account repeatedly describes the primary kind of philia in these terms. The primary kind of friendship is nowhere described as the most complete in the EE, so we can avoid

90 For example, at EE 1238a3-8, Aristotle seems to indicate that primary friends are good without qualification and good for each other, which may lead one to think that these friends must be wholly virtuous, or virtuous in every domain. More explicitly, at NE 1156b7-18, Aristotle makes a similar point about the coming together of goodness and good-for-ness in the case of primary friends. However, in the NE, this point is even stronger, as he begins, in this passage, by referring to primary friendship as “complete” (tëleia) friendship.
91 See, e.g., NE 1156b7, 34, 1158a11.
attributing to Aristotle the notion that, in order to be a friendship of the primary kind, individuals must share everything, that their friendship must span all domains of possible action. The scope of a primary friendship may not extend past the boundaries of a classroom, as in the case of the two philosophizing friends. It is the rational attraction to the genuine goodness of character that one sees in her friend that provides the foundation for primary friendship, and such attraction may be linked closely to a particular set of activities in a particular context.

A second difficulty for the set of criteria for primary friendship that I have laid out concerns the well-trodden thesis that all of the virtues are interentailing. If this is the case, and one cannot possess a single virtue proper, it looks to be very difficult to satisfy conditions (1) through (4), as outlined above, without being fully virtuous. If one must possess a genuinely good feature of character, then surely, according to this thesis, she must possess them all. That Aristotle endorses the unity of the virtues is attested to ubiquitously in the secondary literature. And, in EE V 13= NE VI 13, at 1144b32-1145a2, Aristotle explains that we, “cannot be fully (kuriôs) good without practical wisdom (phronēsis), or practically wise without virtue of character.” Continuing, he argues through the connection of phronēsis that all virtue stands and falls together; the virtues of character are inseparable because each requires and is required by phronēsis. I think, however, that the set of criteria I proposed can avoid

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tension with the unity of virtue. One may satisfy all of the criteria and not be virtuous in the strictest sense of the term. With respect to the first criterion, it is possible to possess some genuinely valuable and praiseworthy features of character without being virtuous proper. In fact, Aristotle describes the enkratic person in this way.93

Another thing to say is that, while it is indeed the case that one must have phronēsis in order to have virtues of character proper, one may approximate these virtues of character very closely even in the absence of phronēsis. For instance, my friend consistently makes the correct decisions when it comes to bodily pains and pleasures. She eats healthfully and does not experience conflicting non-rational desires when doing so. She has a correct practical outlook in the domain of moderation, even though she lacks phronēsis. This approximation will be sufficient to meet the demands of primary philia. In the Eudemian Ethics, the virtues of character belong to the non-rational part of the soul, and so phronēsis is external to these states of the soul.94 Aristotle does not claim that there must be unity when it comes to the states of the non-rational soul part; one might possess a non-rational state of soul akin to moderation but fail to possess other near-virtuous states of soul. My friend’s state of character may be, in all functional respects, the same as the virtue of moderation, but it will not count as moderation proper because she is not practically wise. This friend satisfies the character requirements for primary philia, at

93 On enkrateia, see Aristotle’s discussion in NE VII 9 = EE VI 9. In the following chapter, at 1152a26, Aristotle goes on to explain that the continent person follows reason more than most people are able to. This is because the enkratic has to overcome excessive desires for pleasant things, and these desires are quite strong.
94 In EE II 4 Aristotle argues that the virtues of character belong to the part of the soul capable of obeying reason, while virtues of the intellect belong to reason strictly-speaking.
least in the domain of moderation. Friendship of the highest kind is not restricted to those of us with perfect characters, though it does require that each friend possess a genuinely good state of character in the domains salient to their friendship. This state will not count as virtue proper unless the individuals have *phronēsis*, but it may be relevantly similar in all other respects.
Chapter Three: Aristotle on the Value of Friendship

In the first chapter I explored how Aristotle argues in the Eudemian Ethics that there are three kinds of *philia* and in the second chapter I determined the Eudemian requirements for primary friendship. Throughout, I have alluded to the importance of common activities that issue from the primary form of friendship. I now turn to elaborating this importance. As part of each of his discussions concerning friendship in his ethical works, Aristotle seeks to explain the value of friendship. The three explanations are markedly and interestingly different. At Magna Moralia II 15, Eudemian Ethics VII 12 and Nicomachean Ethics IX 9, Aristotle raises the following puzzle: given that the flourishing person is self-sufficient, and so in need of nothing, what need has she of friends?

In this final chapter, while I focus on Aristotle’s Eudemian answer, at the end I note places of contrast with the answers he offers in the MM and NE. Ultimately, such contrasts may be relevant to determining the historical relationship among these ethical treatises, though, as I have mentioned, the question of how Aristotle’s views may have developed is outside the scope of this project. Aristotle argues in the EE

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95 I do not address explicitly the controversy over authenticity of the Magna Moralia here, although I am in broad sympathy with the view that much of the MM is a genuine Aristotelian composition. See, e.g., John Cooper, “The Magna Moralia and Aristotle’s Moral Philosophy,” for a worked out defense of the claim that at least some parts (e.g., the discussion of justice) of the treatise are authentic and constructed prior to the Eudemian Ethics. In support of its authenticity, see also J. L. Ackrill, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Hans von Arnim.

96 This *aporia* has its roots in Plato’s Lysis, at 215a-b, where Socrates points out that, since a good person is self-sufficient and a self-sufficient person does not need anything, it is difficult to see how good people can be friends with other good people.

97 I have made comparative claims about the respective merits of each of Aristotle’s friendship discussions, but I do not take these claims to establish a clear priority between the Eudemian Ethics and the Nicomachean Ethics with respect to
that friendship is especially valuable for, and needed by, those who are virtuous because friends who are virtuous will be acting virtuously together and these activities done in common with a friend fulfill to an especially high degree the human aspiration for a good life. If read within the context of the main argument of the treatise this conclusion is striking. It implies that there are two human ends, one of which is aimed at by individuals as individuals, the other of which is an end aimed at by and shared between friends engaged in the primary form of friendship. Thus friendship and only friendship makes available to us one of the sorts of fulfillment that consists in achieving our natural ends.

I divide this chapter into four sections. In the first section, I explicate the puzzle. There is tension between, on the one hand, the idea that the good person is wholly self-sufficient and, on the other, the observation that the good person has friends. In the second section, I reconstruct Aristotle’s response to the difficulty. The flourishing person is self-sufficient in a qualified way; i.e., she is self-sufficient within a community. Living with a friend in a way that involves shared perception of the common virtuous activities of primary friendship is valuable not only for the virtuous individual, but also for the pair of virtuous friends, considered together. In the third section, I consider a worry for the notion that friendship is a shared state; responding to the worry results in rejecting two competing ways we might be tempted to understand what sort of thing Aristotle thinks friendship is—what “sharing” philosophical plausibility. However, in illuminating some of the differences between these accounts, I do mean to indicate the value of considering each account in isolation, as opposed to interpreting them in conjunction. I also think that, if we take the Eudemian Ethics to antedate the Nicomachean, we will be a better position to explain some of the differences that I have extracted.
activities might amount to, according to Aristotle’s conception. In the fourth and final section, I briefly compare the resolutions to our puzzle that Aristotle presents in the *Magna Moralia* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. While these responses bear some similarity to the solution in the *Eudemian Ethics*, it is clear that the solution proffered in *EE* VII 12 is unique.

§ I. The Aporia: Friendship and Self-Sufficiency

Aristotle’s discussion of the value of friendship occupies the first half of the very long chapter twelve of the Eudemian book on friendship down to 1245b19. He introduces *Eudemian Ethics* VII 12 by stating first that we must investigate the relationship between self-sufficiency and friendship. He then presents a puzzle (*aporia*), which can be summarized as follows: if the life with virtue (*met’ aretês*) is happy, but self-sufficient, what need would there be for a friend in the virtuous and happy life? Aristotle’s initial attempt to motivate the puzzle treats it as asking whether the good man will in fact have friends, as it is very natural to assume he definitely will. In a dialectical vein, Aristotle offers reason for thinking that the best man will in fact have the fewest friends. The virtuous person is most self-sufficient. If an individual is self-sufficient, he will not be deficient in any respect. It follows that he will not require friends in order to fill any deficiency and will thus have none, or so we might think if we consider the most self-sufficient being, god. God will have no friends because, being completely self-sufficient, he needs nothing at all, and so no friends. This argument proposes one potential way self-sufficiency and friendship might relate: one only needs friends insofar as one fails to be self-
sufficient. But if the happiest person is maximally self-sufficient, he will have the fewest friends and will at least seek no new friends. And that is counterintuitive and discordant with the facts of experience.

This argument would succeed if all friendships were friendships of utility in which the friends relied on one another to meet their needs. However, rather than accept the unpalatable conclusion that the virtuous person will have no friends, or at least no new ones, he denies that these friendships based on need are friendships in which the parties are truly friends, or friends in the primary way. In the case of primary or virtue friendships, there is some further explanation than mutual need for the occurrence of friendships. Aristotle goes on to tell us why the virtuous person is in a good position to develop true friendships and gestures towards a response to the puzzle, explaining that those who are virtuous will seek others to share enjoyment with (sunapolausomenous) and to benefit (they do not seek to be benefited). We most need friends who are worthy (axion) of living with us (suzên), but discerning which ones are worthy requires clear judgment, which we can exercise better when we are virtuous and not in need. The individual who is most virtuous and hence most self-sufficient is, according to this response, in the best position to form true friendships, since she is most capable of determining correctly which people to spend her time with.

The difficulty with which Aristotle begins the chapter, then, is this. We might be tempted to compare the virtuous person with the wholly self-sufficient god,

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98 In accordance with this line of thought, the happiest person may still have some friends from his pre-virtuous days, but, once he has become perfectly virtuous, he will form no new friendships (or so Aristotle would have us suppose on the basis of the comparison with god).
resulting in the conclusion that the virtuous person, being self-sufficient, will not have any (new) friends. But when we are virtuous, and so least in need, we just do seek others to share enjoyments and to live with: this is something deeply embedded in human nature itself. He then claims that the argument that concluded that the virtuous will not have friends said something true, but that the comparison with god may have misled us, by causing us to think that truth implies the argument’s conclusion. It is true that the virtuous person will not need friends on the grounds of advantage or pleasure, just as in the case of the god, but it is a mistake to think that, because the virtuous person is similar to god in this respect, he will also be similar to god in possessing no friends at all.

At the very end of his long argument in response to the puzzle concerning the value of friendship Aristotle explains the disanalogy: our well-being and happiness based on virtue involves something other than ourselves, but the well-being of god involves only himself.\(^99\) We have to act outwardly and in relation to and together with others in the activities that make up our well-being. God is his own happy activity, enclosed within himself. One goes astray, then, in thinking that, because god has no friends, so too the best and happiest person will have the fewest friends; we are not like god in the respect that grounds god’s friendlessness. The argument was wrong to think that the most self-sufficient person would not need others to live with (suzên). In fact, this is precisely why the comparison with god failed us. We are political animals; our self-sufficiency is achieved within the context of the communal

\(^99\) 1245b18-19.
life of a city-state. By nature, humans must live together, sharing their life-activities.

The problem that Aristotle confronts at the beginning of *Eudemian Ethics* VII 12, then, under the guise of these worries about self-sufficiency, seems to be the problem of explaining the value of friends in an individual’s happy life. God does not require friends as part of his flourishing, so we may be tempted to think that insofar as humans, taken individually, can approximate divinity, individual humans, too, will not need friends in order to live well. The response that he gives, however, makes it clear that the question he is addressing is not as narrow as this. His response indicates, in fact, as I will go on now to argue, that the role of friendship in human flourishing is not limited to the role friendship may play in an individual’s flourishing life. That is, Aristotle thinks that friendships are mutually valuable for the individuals involved in a friendship not one by one as separate persons, but for them taken as a unit, a pair. The question Aristotle addresses in our chapter seems to be, what is the

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100 See, e.g., *Politics* 1252b27-52a1, 1253a25-30, 1275b20. Also, at *NE* I 7, 1097b8-11, Aristotle explains that self-sufficiency is a matter of what suffices for life with family, friends, and other citizens, since “humans are by nature political.”

101 Aristotle makes this point about human nature explicit in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX 9, at 1169b17-19: “No one would choose to have all goods and yet be alone, since a human being is a political animal, tending by nature to live together with others. This will also be true, then, of the happy person.” However, he has set up the *aporia* rather differently in this context. At *NE* IX 9, rather than drawing a comparison with god, Aristotle points out that it is said that the self-sufficient person will already have all the goods, so it seems she will not need friends in addition (1169b5-6). After responding that it would be absurd for the happy person to have all the goods and yet lack friends, he offers an explanation of the original view’s origin: “the many think it is the useful people who are friends” (1169b23-4). And the happy person will not need useful friends or mere pleasure friendships, though she still needs friends with whom she can act virtuously. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle sets up the difficulty with the common view that happy people do not need friends, which is held by the many who assume that all friendships are friendships based on utility.
value of friendship in happy human living—living that prominently and centrally consists in lives *shared* with, led in common with, others?

§ II. Individual Living Well and Shared Living Well

I turn now to my interpretation of Aristotle’s response to the puzzle about why the good man needs friends in *EE* VII 12. In short, I argue that Aristotle draws a parallel between living well individually and living well together: just as living well is perceiving and cognizing one’s own virtuous activities, living well together is shared perception and cognition of joint virtuous activities—i.e., those virtuous activities done in common, as part of a common project with a shared goal.

According to Aristotle, humans are naturally suited to live together; we are social creatures. Living together means sharing some of your life-activities. We seek the shared end of living well together in the same way as we individually seek our individual good. The end of living well together is not subsumed under the end of living well individually, as part of a necessary condition for the latter.

After explaining why one might be tempted by the thought that the best and happiest man will have the fewest friends, since he most closely approximates god and god is friendless, Aristotle points us toward his own view:¹⁰²

¹⁰² Aryeh Kosman, in “Aristotle on the Desirability of Friends,” *Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2004), thinks that this long and complicated argument is still part of the *aporia*. On this reading, Aristotle spends much of the discussion setting up and articulating the puzzle before dispensing with it. The worry, on Kosman’s picture, is why I should value “communal consciousness” (*sunaisthēsis*), since, in desiring consciousness, what I desire is *my own* consciousness. This reading fails to carry the parallel between individual perceiving, which involves reflexivity, and shared perception (which also involves reflexivity) to its natural conclusion.
It is clear [how this argument misses the truth] if we grasp what living (zên) is in activity and as an end. It is apparent that it is perceiving (to aisthanesthai) and cognizing (to gnôrizein), so that also living together (suzên) is shared perceiving (to suaisthanesthai) and shared cognizing (to sungnôrizein). But self-perception and self-knowledge are most choiceworthy for each person…

Just as active living is perceiving and cognizing, active living together is perceiving together and cognizing together, that is, in a common and shared activity. When Aristotle makes the claim that self-perception and self-knowledge are most choiceworthy for an individual, we might expect that he would then make the corresponding parallel claim about shared perception and shared cognition that takes as its object the two people involved in a friendship considered together: just as it is most choiceworthy for me to know myself, so too it is most choiceworthy for the pair of us to know ourselves, the pair. In sticking with the parallel, we would expect him to claim that this sort of reflexive shared perception and cognition is most choiceworthy for the pair of friends taken together, but Aristotle fails to make this explicit. I want to argue, however, that he rightly endorses and is committed to the parallel claim that shared perception and shared cognition of the friendship is most choiceworthy for the pair of friends, even though he does not make that explicit.

In the first sentence of the quote above, Aristotle refers to “living in activity and as an end,” and, in the next sentence, he equates living in this way with perceiving and cognizing. In what follows Aristotle gives us an argument for this conclusion by associating living well with awareness of one’s own virtuous activity. Let me offer some reason for thinking that “living in activity and as an end” just is

103 1244b23-27.
living well or flourishing before I explicate the crux of Aristotle’s argument. Much earlier, in the first chapter of *EE II*, Aristotle provides the Eudemian version of the function (*ergon*) argument,\(^{104}\) which cashes out flourishing (*eudaimonia*) as fulfilling well our function, or essential natural work, as humans. Having posited that all goods are either internal or external to the soul and concluded that the best things are internal to the soul,\(^{105}\) he initially divides the contents of the soul into two groups. The first consists of states (*hexeis*) or capacities (*dunameis*), while the second group is activities (*energeiai*) and processes (*kinêseis*).\(^{106}\) He then claims that virtue is in the former category and that virtue is the best state or capacity of all (and only, he means) things that have some function (*ergon*).\(^{107}\) The function of each thing, Aristotle posits is its end (*telos*).\(^{108}\) It is that for the sake of which other things are done. Living as an end is therefore living out one’s function.

What about living in activity? In our passage from Book VII, it is tempting to read the *kai* separating living “in activity” and “as an end” as epexegetic, but does Aristotle expressly connect these notions? In *EE II* 1, at 1219a9, 11-13, Aristotle claims that the function of a thing is better than the corresponding state. He then goes on to assert that there are two ways the term “function” is used.\(^{109}\) In some cases the function of a thing is the use of that thing, as the function of, e.g., eyes is seeing.

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\(^{104}\) The better-known and oft-referenced version of this argument is in *NE I* 7; there, in short, Aristotle argues that happiness is activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. As Woods notes in his commentary, while both versions claim that happiness is an activity, unlike the Nicomachean version, the Eudemian version of the argument does not specify the nature of this activity; Aristotle does not refer to reasoning at all.

\(^{105}\) 1218b32-4, 1219a30.

\(^{106}\) *EE* 1218b36-7.

\(^{107}\) 1218b37-1219a1, 1219a32-33.

\(^{108}\) 1219a8.

\(^{109}\) 1219a13.
while in other cases the function of a thing is distinct from and a result of the use of them, as the function of house-building is a house. When the function of a thing is the use, this activity is better than the state which gives rise to it. The function of the soul is to making something alive; that is, living actively is the function of the soul. But earlier in the argument, at 1219a8-9, Aristotle explained, “And the function of each thing is its end; therefore, from these things it is clear that the function is better than the state; for the end is the best as being an end.” Living as an end just is living actively, or living in activity that expresses the best state of soul. Later in the argument, he draws a parallel with virtue of the soul: just as the function of the soul is actively living, the function of a virtuous soul is actively living well. But, as we saw, Aristotle claims that an end is the best; the greatest good is the thing for the sake of which all other things are. Living well, or eudaimonia, is the perfect good; it is the activity of the best soul. So, although living actively and as an end does not necessitate that one is living actively well or in accordance with the best end, actively living well is more of the nature of an end than mere active living. I am not committing myself to the conclusion that Aristotle, in speaking of “living actively and as an end,” must be referring to living well, or human flourishing, and nothing in my overall interpretation of his argument from Book VII hangs on this attribution, but it is certainly plausible, given the claims that Aristotle makes in Book II, that this is what he has mind. After all, living is for the sake of living well.

110 1219a13-17.
111 1219a17-18, 1219a31.
112 1219a24-25.
113 1219a34-5.
To return to VII 12, while it now seems reasonable to think that Aristotle is making claims about human flourishing in speaking in our original passage about perceiving and cognizing as living in activity and as an end, it is unclear why he thinks living in this way—living well—is perceiving and knowing. Aristotle claims at 1244b28-9 that living is some sort of knowing (gnôsin tina), and so we all desire to live because we all desire to know (i.e., to be engaged in the activity of knowing). He then posits that if one considered just knowledge by itself and its absence (as worth choosing or not), “then there would be no difference between another person’s knowing and oneself knowing.” But just as it is more choiceworthy (for anyone) for oneself to live, so too it is more choiceworthy for oneself to be doing the perceiving and knowing. Aristotle’s argument proceeds on the basis of a Pythagorean pair of series, where there are, in one series, the list of choiceworthy things—the good, the determinate, living—and, in the other series, the corresponding non-choiceworthy opposites. The argument runs:

For two things must be taken into consideration together, that life is desirable and that the good is desirable, and as a consequence that it is desirable for ourselves to possess a nature of that quality. If, then, of such a pair of corresponding series there is always one series of the choiceworthy, and the known and the perceived are in general constituted by their participation in the nature of the determined; so that to wish to perceive oneself is to wish that oneself is this sort of character—since, then, we are not each of these things in ourselves, but only by participation of these capacities in perceiving and knowing … for this reason one wishes always to live because one wishes

114 EE 1244b32.
115 Cf. Metaphysics I 5, 986a22-986b3, where Aristotle surveys the views of the Pythagoreans and notes that some members of the school divided the principles into two columns of contraries, as well as IV 2 and XII 7, 1072a30-36 where Aristotle also refers to a list of opposites, one side of which contains the good, thinking, the object(s) of thought, and that which is in itself desirable.
always to know, and this is because one wishes oneself to be the thing known [as good].\textsuperscript{116}

This sounds strange, since here it begins to become apparent that Aristotle is committed not only to the claim that it is choiceworthy to engage, oneself, in cognizing but also to the claim that this thing that is choiceworthy is to cognize oneself. Aristotle goes from the former claim to the latter without clearly justifying the move; what is most choiceworthy is a perception that involves oneself, both as subject and object. Why should we think that such a shift is justified?

Aristotle thinks a complete specification of the initial desire to perceive will make reference to oneself as the object of perception. To return to Aristotle’s earlier remark about living as perceiving, it seems that he intends to say that we want not only to live, but to be aware that we are living. Similarly, when Aristotle says that it is most choiceworthy to perceive oneself, what is most choiceworthy is awareness of oneself perceiving. An individual’s desire to perceive is not satisfied unless she perceives that she is perceiving. (Human desire to perceive thus differs from a non-rational animal’s related desire. It is enough for them, and all they are capable of, just to be actively perceiving things outside themselves—and then act on things that they learn in this way.) So, what is most choiceworthy, for us, is not just that some cognizing go on, but that one engages in the cognizing oneself, where that includes being aware of one’s cognizing.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{116}1244b34-1245a10.
\textsuperscript{117}In other words, Aristotle runs together objective and subjective desire satisfaction when it comes to activities of awareness.
What’s more, Aristotle indicates here that we wish to perceive ourselves as the sort of thing we wish to be and that being a certain sort of person in fact requires the activity of our capacities for awareness.\footnote{118} We desire not merely that our capacities for perceiving and cognizing are active, but that they are active in relation to ourselves as virtuous individuals. We seek the good by nature and in order to achieve it we must be aware. Living well requires being aware of oneself as the reliable author of virtuous action, and understanding and choosing such action because it is virtuous. When Aristotle draws a connection between living in activity and as an end, on the one hand, and perceiving and knowing, on the other, he must have in mind one’s own virtuous activity as the content of these activities of awareness: to be living fully, which is by nature choiceworthy for us, we must be perceiving and cognizing ourselves, as virtuous, in the perceptions and cognitions making up the virtuous actions of which our lives then consist. Aristotle’s Pythagorean Series argument thus explains why we should equate living well with perceiving and cognizing certain objects of awareness, in particular.

Now, Aristotle repeatedly makes the point that, by nature, humans are suited to communal living; we are social creatures. It is a common tenet of Aristotle’s ethics that we aim at the good in all we decide to do,\footnote{119} and this is no less true of activities decided upon and done in common with other agents. In fact, Aristotle claims that common activity is most especially of the nature of a goal.\footnote{120} To flesh out the parallel we began with, I want to argue that, just as perceiving and cognizing one’s own virtue

\footnote{118} 1244b36-1245a1.\footnote{119} See, e.g., the first sentence of the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} and the first sentence of the \textit{Politics}.\footnote{120} EE 1245b4.
is crucial to an individual’s flourishing, Aristotle thinks that shared perceiving
(sunaisthanesthai) and shared cognizing (suggnôrizein)\textsuperscript{121} of the virtuous activities
expressive of friendship is important for human flourishing more broadly. Just as in
the individual case in which a single instance of virtuous activity is given rise to by a
unified state (hexis) of the person doing the action, which is itself traceable to a
unified bearer of the state (one’s soul), so too there must be a state underlying friends’
shared activities which gives rise to those activities. If I am right, and Aristotle’s
parallel is consistent, so that there is a unified character state of friendship belonging
to the pair of people that are friends, then this may raise interesting questions for
other aspects of Aristotle’s moral psychology.

In fact, there is good evidence to support the claim that, for Aristotle, \textit{philìa} is
a state. To begin with, as I have alluded to, Aristotle routinely employs \textit{sun}-verbs
(compounds of the preposition for “with,” meaning “jointly,” in common, with a
variety of verbs) throughout his discussion of friendship, while such verbs are
otherwise not common in his ethical treatises. Friends not only perceive and cognize
together, as we have seen, but they also do everything from feasting together
(suneuôcheisthai)\textsuperscript{122} to contemplating together (suntheôrein),\textsuperscript{123} and in general they
are active together (sunergein).\textsuperscript{124} These activities are performed in a uniquely
common way. I can act courageously by myself or in common with a friend. But

\textsuperscript{121} This is a \textit{hapax legomenon}; the term only occurs here in all of extant Greek
literature, providing evidence that Aristotle coined it precisely in order to describe
this particular shared activity of awareness. It is notably absent from the comparable
discussions in the \textit{Magna Moralia} and the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}.

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{EE} 1245b5.
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{EE} 1245b5.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{EE} 1245b3.
there is something distinctive about acting in common; it is not merely a matter of one individual acting courageously alongside or in close proximity to another individual with mutual awareness of the other’s courageous activity. The goal of the activity is one that each individual recognizes as a goal that is, in a way, not individually achievable.\textsuperscript{125} For each case in which individuals act in common, there is a way we can describe the case such that it is impossible for a person to do that action without a partner.\textsuperscript{126} While I can act courageously as an individual, I cannot act courageously \textit{together} as an individual. This may be obvious, but it is worth emphasizing. The goal of a common activity is not, e.g., helping a fellow fallen soldier in battle, but rather helping-together-with-my-friend a fellow fallen soldier. So what the individuals engaged in a common activity are aware of is not the goal of acting courageously, but rather the goal of acting courageously together; they are aware of their joint participation in acting courageously together, and they want the good of \textit{that}, the joint action, as their good.

It is worth noting that conceiving of the activities constitutive of friendship in the way I am suggesting not only makes good sense of Aristotle’s claims in the \textit{Eudemian Ethics}, but it suggests a plausible line of resolution to contemporary

\textsuperscript{125} The account of common activity I offer here should not be confused with an account according to which the individuals involved in common activities cannot be described as acting in a complete way as individuals. There are certain activities that are necessarily performed in pairs—e.g., tango dancing. A tango dancer without a partner is not engaged in a complete activity; she is not tango dancing, since the dance requires a partner. A friend, on the other hand, can act courageously alone or together with her friend. In either instance of courageous activity, her action is complete.

\textsuperscript{126} I draw here on Margaret Gilbert, \textit{On Social Facts}, p. 156, in order to illuminate the concept of shared activity. Aristotle would not think that mere cases of acting alongside someone with awareness of the other’s action count as cases of acting together or common activity.
worries about the moral permissibility of partiality.\textsuperscript{127} We just do—as an integral part of our daily lives—treat the demands of our friends in a way that we do not treat the demands of strangers. But how is such blatant favoritism compatible with acting morally? Sarah Stroud provides one compelling way of modifying the terrain in this debate.\textsuperscript{128} Special concern for a friend is not primarily revealed in a brute favoring of the interests of my friend, but rather in devoting my time and efforts—my agency—to activities taken up in common with that friend. Viewing friendship as a centrally beneficence-bestowing two-part relationship is a mistake. As Aristotle argues, these relationships are centrally constituted by shared participation in joint activities, so asking why it is okay for me to favor my friend rather than a stranger is to place at the forefront a question that does not concern the central activities of friendship. Stroud writes:

I would suggest that these instances of co-agency are typical or even characteristic of personal relationships, and that they are much more salient in the moral psychology of such relationships than a simple favoring of your [friend’s] interests. As we might put it, rather picturesquely, ‘with’ is the preposition of choice between ‘I’ and ‘you’: it’s what I do with you, not what I do to or for you that we should be focusing on.\textsuperscript{129}


\textsuperscript{129} Stroud, p. 146.
She goes on to argue persuasively in this Aristotelian vein that such co-agency is germane to thinking about the moral permissibility of treating our friends in certain ways, since we share distinctively in common aims with our friends.

When two people reliably engage in common activities over time, and both wish and do well for the other, making possible for them the good of a shared activity, this may give rise to an underlying unified common state that then grounds and expresses itself in further good activities of that sort. In the individual case, Aristotle thinks that states of character are expressed in activities. For instance, when I perform a courageous action courageously, this act expresses the virtue of courage, and derives from that courageous state of my soul. Similarly, when friends act together, this activity expresses a singular state that belongs to the pair of souls, as a pair.

From this comparison we can conclude that, for Aristotle, *philia* is indeed a state belonging to the friends in common. More telling, perhaps, in this direction, is Aristotle’s explicit inclusion of *philia* among a list of virtues he details, in summary fashion, with their accompanying vices of excess and deficiency, at *EE* II 3, 1221a7. On the face of it, it seems Aristotle is straightforwardly claiming here that friendship itself is a virtue. However, there may be reason to think that Aristotle also used the term *philia* (and so, possibly, here as well) to refer to a more general notion of friendliness towards others. In his discussion of the particular virtues following the Book II table, one might read Aristotle’s use of *philia* and *philos* in this broader way, as he contrasts the individual who is a *philos* with both the one who is excessive in flattery and goes along with every pleasure—an ingratiating person, on the one hand;
and the one who exhibits animosity towards others’ desires and goes against every pleasure of theirs, on the other. Similarly, in the Nicomachean Ethics, at IV 6, 1126b19-22, Aristotle introduces the individual virtue that is “most like friendship (malista philia).” He refers to this intermediate as a state, albeit one without a proper name, in what precedes and follows. In this case, though, in contrast with the EE II 3 argument, it is clear that this state of an individual’s character, this friendliness which facilitates regular and appropriate social interaction quite generally, is distinct from the shared virtue of philia that Aristotle discusses in EE VII.

In the opening to his discussion of friendship in EE VII, a place where we would expect Aristotle to be precise in his use of philia, he says that friendship is an étikhê hexis, a state of character. And in the corresponding opening to the Nicomachean investigation of friendship, Aristotle explains that the next topic under consideration is philia, “for it is a virtue or with virtue (met’ aretês).” Aristotle would not claim that friendship even might be a virtue if it were not a state. In EE VII 2, at 1237a33-4, after explaining that primary friendship is the antiprohairesis (reciprocal decision) of things good and pleasant because they are good and pleasant, Aristotle claims that, “friendship itself is a state (hexis) from which such decision arises.” And, as this reciprocal decision involves two people, one would expect the

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130 EE 1233b30-4.
131 NE 1155a4.
132 This may also explain how friends who make this reciprocal decision with respect to each other have access to certain aspects of their friend’s mental activity. That is, given that antiprohairesis requires being aware that your friend is deciding in the same way with respect to you, we might wonder about how each person in the friendship comes by this awareness. But if the friends share a hexis from which this decision arises, this implies that they have very close mental contact.
state underlying this decision—i.e., the friendship—to be shared. This is further, even decisive, reason to think that, for Aristotle, there is in fact an underlying state of character that is identical to friendship, and that this state gives rise to the common activities of a friendship.

§ III. Sharing a State of Character

In the previous section, I argued that Aristotle conceives of friendship as a shared state, expressed in the common virtuous activities of friends. In this section, I will explore some worries for and ramifications of my proposal. One interesting question about the shared state of friendship is how it can account for the variety of common activities we do with our friends, since these activities all derive from that state as their psychological cause. If friendship is just a single state of character, and a single activity is an expression of a single state (I refer to this as one-to-one correspondence between activities and states), then it looks as though each instance of the friends’ common activity should express this same state of character: each case of common activity is expressive of the given friendship. In the individual case, a token courageous action expresses a courageous state of character. But now, in the friends’ case, a joint courageous action cannot, it would seem, express a joint courageous state of character. Each common act of courage will, like every other common act, merely express the friendship, not a common courage. If friendship is itself just a state of character, how are we to understand it as accommodating all the other states
of character that seem to underlie the various common virtuous activity types? In the joint case, clearly not all common activities are the same in kind; some are acts of courage, others express other virtues. How, then, can they all issue from a single state of character, the friendship? Would they not issue, instead, from those individually-possessed virtues?

Here are three possible ways to resolve this worry:

(1) Abandon the notion that there is a tight correspondence between activities and the states involved in producing those activities. Friends can act together, but when they do so these common activities issue from each individual’s state(s) of character. Friendship is a state of character, but (contrary to what I have been proposing) it is not a joint state of character. Each party in a friendship has an individual state of friendship from which activities done in common with a friend arise. These common activities may also express particular individual virtues in addition to the friendship. This option rejects the premise that there is a one-to-one correspondence between states (or capacities) and activities, and allows that a single activity, including a single common activity, may arise from more than one state. Once we reject the one-to-one correspondence claim, the worry dissolves because then we can say that common activities can arise from various combinations of individual character states. But this is achieved at the price of now regarding friendship as not a common state of character belonging to friends as pairs, but as a pair of individual states of friendship that are somehow co-actualized in common activity.
(2) Abandon the commitment to thinking of shared activities as irreducibly common. All activities are explanatorily reducible to the activities of individuals; common activity is wholly explainable in terms of individual activity. There is a one-to-one correspondence between states (or capacities) and activities, but states adhere individually in the souls of individuals and the activities for which they are responsible are individual activities. When friends act together, each friend performs an individual activity that arises from an individual state of character (e.g., courage, liberality). Friendship is not a state, but rather a relation that obtains between individuals. This option would then need to provide a story about what this relation consists in, but we need not consider here what sort of story it might tell.

(3) Hold onto both the commitment to a one-to-one correspondence between states and activities and the commitment to the irreducibility of common activity. States can be complex and contain other states (or capacities). This option maintains that there is a one-to-one correspondence between states and activities and that states may be shared between individuals in a way that allows for a complex joint state of friendship belonging to the pair of friends as a pair, that includes the individual character states of the individual friends involved in the friendship.

Let us consider, and explain further, each of these possibilities in turn. I think we should reject (1) and (2), and I defend (3). Option (1) has it that all states, properly speaking, belong to individuals. By retaining this claim, option (1) denies that there is a one-to-one correspondence between states and activities. This allows that common activities that friends do together can come from two states of character, one had by each friend. The notion that states are in the souls of individuals certainly
holds true for other states of character. For instance, courage, moderation, and liberality are all states of character that adhere individually in the souls of virtuous individuals. But, I will argue, contra (1), that there is nothing that makes it the case that states must be solely individual potentialities, present only in individual souls.

As we have already seen, Aristotle divides the things in the soul into two kinds, putting states \((hexeis)\) and potentialities \((dunameis)\) into one group and activities \((energeiai)\) and processes \((kinēseis)\) into the other group. In a similar passage at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 8, 1098b32ff, Aristotle considers whether the best sort of good, which he has already claimed is virtue, is found in merely having the virtue or in making use of it, implying that virtuous activity is activity that actualizes a virtuous state. States are, in this ethical context, acquired potentialities for certain kinds of activity.\(^{134}\) Given that virtuous activity issues from a virtuous state in this way, actualizing a potentiality, it is hard to see how distinct states could together be singularly actualized, as seems to be required when two friends perform a courageous act together, in an irreducibly common way.\(^{135}\) Because they are a particular sort of potentiality or capacity, we would expect states to resemble metaphysically other sorts of potentialities or capacities, such as the sense faculties.

At the end of *De Sensu* 7, in the context of addressing a difficulty about how we can simultaneously perceive two special perceptibles (e.g., black and white, or

\[^{134}\text{See also }\textit{Metaphysics}\ \Delta\ \text{19-20, where Aristotle explains that a having—a state—is a disposition, and a disposition can be in respect of potentiality (dunamis).}\]

\[^{135}\text{Perhaps one might object that in the case of teaching and learning (see, e.g., }\textit{De Anima}\ \text{II 5), the teacher’s active capacity and the learner’s passive capacity are involved in a single process (kinēsis). On this basis, one might conclude that two capacities can be singularly actualized. However, in this case of teaching and learning, the learner is not active, strictly speaking; only the teacher is acting so as to actualize a capacity. The learner’s capacity is actualized by the teacher.}\]
white and sweet), Aristotle makes clear both that, when it comes to the capacities for perception, there is a one-to-one correspondence between capacities and activities occurring at any given time, and that capacities may be potentially complex. He writes:

But we must here return to the question proposed above for discussion, whether it is possible or impossible to perceive several objects simultaneously; by “simultaneously” I mean perceiving the several objects in a time one and indivisible relatively to one another. First, then, can one perceive different things simultaneously but with different parts of the soul—in a time which is indivisible and forms a continuous whole? Or is it that, first, in the case of a single sense (take, e.g., sight), if we assume it to perceive one color with one part and another with another, it will have several parts the same in kind?¹³⁶

Aristotle considers a solution to the difficulty according to which simultaneously perceiving distinct special perceptibles requires separate corresponding aspects of the soul, since, the assumption is, a single activity comes from a single capacity.¹³⁷ If there are two simultaneous perceptual activities (e.g., seeing black and seeing white), they must each have their own proper capacity. Seeing white would occur when the capacity for seeing white is active, while seeing black would occur when the capacity for seeing black is active. These capacities might be active simultaneously, thus explaining how we can perceive both white and black simultaneously. But this is strange, since the sense of sight, with which we see all things, seems singular.

In the text that follows this passage, he continues to draw an analogy with the eyes, the organ of perception, and seeing, as there are two eyes, but one activity

¹³⁶ De Sensu 448b17-24.
¹³⁷ Aristotle makes this explicit at De Sensu 449a2: “…neither will an activity exist without its proper capacity, nor without activity will there be sensation.”
proper to them—seeing. If we posit different capacities to account for two simultaneous activities of the same sense—sight—then the number of senses of sight in the soul will proliferate, and this is clearly absurd. Instead, Aristotle’s solution retains the parallel with the eyes: just as the eyes together comprise the organ of sight, there is a single, complex capacity of the soul that gives rise to the unified activity of seeing even when more things than one are being seen. He then provides an elaboration of this argument that explains cases in which we simultaneously perceive different kinds of special perceptibles—i.e., those perceived through different organs of perception—such as white and sweet. Aristotle elaborates:

If then, as is the fact, the soul with one part perceives sweet, with another, white, either that which results from these is some one part, or else there is no such one resultant. But there must be something like this, inasmuch as the general capacity of sense-perception is one.

When we simultaneously perceive the sweetness and whiteness of a given object, we engage in a unified perceptual activity. Although there are distinct capacities that are responsible for perceiving whiteness (sight) and sweetness (taste), there must also be some other capacity which is such as to respond to objects that possess both of these features. Otherwise, thinks Aristotle, we would be lacking an appropriate explanation of just how we are able to perceive this white and sweet thing as a single object. Aristotle thus posits a unified, yet complex, perceptual capacity that is active in relation to objects that possess varied perceptible qualities.

This discussion illuminates two points that are important for our purposes. First, it reinforces the premise that a single activity derives from a single state or

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138 *De Sensu* 448b25-28.
139 *De Sensu* 449a5-7.
capacity: there is one-to-one correspondence between states or capacities and activities. An instance of common activity performed by friends should therefore come from a single state. Second, it makes explicit that a capacity can be composed of other capacities: the general sense faculty operates through the operation of the different senses, but it has a single proper act of its own in unifying these distinct activities. Since states are capacities, we can conclude that states may also be complex, composed, in this way, of other states. Even when this is the case, however, the overarching, unified state still has its own proper activity.

We should therefore reject option (1) and retain the notion that there is a tight correspondence between states and the activities they give rise to. If the common activities of friendship are common in the way I have described, then they must arise from a single, common underlying state.

According to option (2), the common activities of friends are ultimately analyzable into the activities of each individual friend. Although option (2) allows us to hold onto the notion that a given activity arises from a single state, it maintains that individuals are the subjects of all states and activities. All common activity is explanatorily reducible to individual activity. On this option, when two friends act courageously together, each friend performs a courageous action, issuing from an individual state of courage. The special commonality of the actions of friendship would then require a different explanation than the one I have been providing. I have tried to indicate that Aristotle does not conceive of common activity in this way, but this option is, for modern philosophers, intuitively very plausible. Michael Bratman, for example, has offered an account of shared intentional activity and shared
cooperative activity in terms of shared intention and “associated forms of mutual responsiveness.”

He reduces shared intention to a set of individual intentions that in various ways make reference to or involve the intentions of another agent. At base, for Bratman, the explanation of shared activity via shared intention is a matter of the roles that these shared intentions play, and individual intentions of the right sort—suitably public, interlocking—can play these roles. More generally, in any account of joint human action, it may seem intuitive that, at some level of explanation, we must say something about individual action.

It may be independently plausible that common activity involves individual activity, but Aristotle would deny, I think, that common activity can be entirely reduced to any mere combination of individual activities. An explanation of common activity would not be exhausted by any description of individual activity, though of course one can and should make reference to individual activity. Aside from considerations about how Aristotle thinks of common activity, to return to the text of EE VII, we should recall that Aristotle claims explicitly at the beginning of the book that friendship is a state of character. In combination with the evidence from Book II, where Aristotle lists philia among the virtues, we have good reason to reject the suggestion that friendship is a mere relation between two people. We should reject option (2), despite its initial appeal, because friendship is a state of character present in a soul or souls.

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141 Another reason to think that a mere relation between two people would not work as an account of friendship for Aristotle is that friendship of the primary sort is very stable and lasting. In claiming that friendship is a state, Aristotle has a ready explanation of this stability, since states are, by definition, stable.
The third option retains the idea that states and activities stand in a one-to-one correspondence and holds that friendship is a shared state of character which gives rise to irreducibly shared activity. In rejecting option (1) I defended the idea that there is a one-to-one correspondence between states and activities, and I introduced evidence for the claim that states can be complex. If states or capacities may include other states or capacities, then friendship may be a shared state involving, on the part of each friend, other states of character that are individually theirs. Friendship is a unified complex state, belonging to a pair of friends as a pair, but encompassing other states, possessed by each individually, from which the common activities of friends may arise, while also arising from the unified complex state itself. There are different sorts of friendships, defined by different sorts of common activities. In the development of a friendship, just as in the development of other states of character, there must be some formative period.\textsuperscript{142} In the case of friendship, this is a period during which friends reliably engage in certain kinds of activities together. In the case of primary or virtue friendship, those who are becoming friends will tend to perform virtuous actions together. One way to characterize the state is just as the tendency to perform those sorts of virtuous activities. All common activities of a friendship would then count as expressing the singular state of friendship, but thinking of friendship as a complex state would also explain how these common

\textsuperscript{142} At the beginning of \textit{Eudemian Ethics} II 2, Aristotle explains that character is developed by practice. Repeatedly acting in certain ways causes our character to develop in such a way as to more reliably produce these sorts of actions. Similarly, Aristotle undertakes a more lengthy discussion of the role of practice in acquiring virtue in the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, II 1-4, where he states, at 1103a32-b2, “For the things that we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing … we come to be just by doing just actions, moderate by doing moderate actions, courageous by doing courageous actions.”
activities have the character they have. Friends act, e.g., courageously together from the shared state of virtue friendship.

Attempting to resolve the difficulty about how common activities expressive of a friendship can also express other states of character clarifies the place of common virtuous activities in living well. An individual’s virtuous activities are constitutive of her flourishing. The common virtuous activities of a friendship are constitutive of the joint flourishing of the friends involved. One might worry that, if we accept that friendship is a complex character state, given rise to by repeated performance of common activities, as well as mutual awareness, well-wishing and well-doing, then it looks as though every time two friends act virtuously together, expressing their virtuous friendship state, these activities constitute their joint flourishing. But if the friendship state is common all the way down, then it is mysterious how acting virtuously together could contribute to the flourishing of an individual. These shared activities would constitute the flourishing of the pair, but nothing in them would be part of the two individuals’ flourishing—their individual virtuous acts. Imagine an extreme case in which two very close friends live together and act virtuously together all the time. They are flourishing together, but what can we say about their flourishing as individuals? It would follow on this understanding of the state of friendship that, though constantly acting virtuously together, and to an extreme extent not even acting virtuously each on their own, neither friend could count as individually flourishing in their own lives.

However, I have tried to make clear that, as friendship is a complex shared character state, it can encompass the character states of individuals; it is not common
all the way down. When two friends act courageously together from a virtue friendship, the expression of that friendship also involves the expression or activity of their individual states of courage that are subsumed under that friendship. Common virtuous activities in this way contribute both to individual and shared flourishing of virtuous or near-virtuous agents. This implies that the individuals involved in primary friendships must be antecedently virtuous or non-rationally approximating virtue in at least one domain, since acting virtuously together involves the activity of individual states of character.

We might also question what sort of subject can function as the bearer of this joint state. In the standard case, an individual’s soul is the bearer of her character states. In the case of friends, it is more difficult to see how the bearer of the state could be unified. Interestingly, perhaps this supports taking the well-known Aristotle quote from Diogenes Laertius seriously: “To the question, ‘What is a friend?’ [Aristotle’s] reply was, ‘A single soul living in two bodies.’”\textsuperscript{143} If we take the quote at face value, perhaps Aristotle in fact thinks that, \textit{qua} friends, two individuals may share a unified composite soul.\textsuperscript{144} In our text at \textit{EE} 1240b2, Aristotle also mentions the saying that true friends have one soul, though it is unclear whether he endorses this to any degree; he does not offer any discussion of the claim.

\textsuperscript{143} Diogenes Laertius, \textit{Lives of Eminent Philosophers} I 5, 20.
\textsuperscript{144} Kosman, p. 151, also draws on Aristotle’s saying as recounted by Diogenes, but he takes it to indicate that two friends form a “conscious community,” in which my own being is enhanced, both as subject and object, via cooperative interactions with my friend.
§ IV. Other Solutions: The *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Magna Moralia*

Early in this chapter I alluded to differences in Aristotle’s response to the puzzle about self-sufficiency among the ethical works—the *Eudemian Ethics*, the *Magna Moralia* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the *Magna Moralia*, friends are valuable because they enable us to secure self-knowledge, which is itself required for living well. Aristotle writes:

> 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 most 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 favor 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 someone else for a friend, the self-sufficing man will require friendship in order to know himself.145

The train of thought in the passage is clear. Self-knowledge is pleasant and one can only attain it through having a friend who is relevantly similar to oneself. So the self-sufficing man will need a friend in order to gain self-knowledge. However, if our conclusion is supposed to be that friendship is necessary for leading a flourishing life, it is not sufficient that it is pleasant. It is certainly not the case that all pleasant things are included as constituents of a flourishing life.

> It is reasonable to think that self-knowledge is required for flourishing because not only must one be engaged in the activities that are in fact best (e.g., acting courageously), but one must also know that one is acting in this way and one

must have chosen this sort of life—a life of virtuous activity—because it is this sort
of life.

Because it contributes to flourishing, self-knowledge will be very pleasant. As a constituent of the good man’s life, then, self-knowledge is good and therefore pleasant. But in the *MM* passage, Aristotle seems to be making a more general claim about the pleasantness of self-knowledge before relating this claim to the specific case of the self-sufficing man. The passage does not suggest that one’s self-knowledge is correlated with one’s degree of virtue such that only the flourishing individual will have self-knowledge, but this is what is required if what makes self-knowledge pleasant is its genuineness goodness. If one is a horrible person, knowledge of one’s horribleness is not pleasant. The *Magna Moralia* has a straightforward reply to the *aporia* about why the good man needs friends: friends facilitate self-knowledge, and self-knowledge is required for flourishing. But it does not in any way endorse or suggest Aristotle’s richer and deeper account of the virtue of friendship that the Eudemian argument presents.

There is a passage near the end of our argument in *Eudemian Ethics* VII 12 that harkens back to this argument in the *Magna Moralia*. Aristotle has just reiterated the claim that a friend is another self, and he concludes at 1245a35-7, “Therefore, to perceive a friend is necessarily in a way to perceive oneself, and in a way to know oneself.” One might think that Aristotle is pushing the *Magna Moralia* point: self-knowledge is valuable and, in perceiving my friend, I can come to perceive and to

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146 See John Cooper, “Friendship and the Good in Aristotle,” in *Reason and Emotion*, pp. 341-2, on this point. He explains that Aristotle thinks it is necessary to understand both the formal dictates of practical reason and one’s own motivations, including how one’s desires feature in one’s overall scheme of ends.
know myself. However, Aristotle has established the choiceworthiness of perceiving
and cognizing oneself much earlier in the Eudemian text, and, by this point, he has
brought up the range of common activities we can share with our friends, such as
musical study or philosophy. His point at 1245a35-7, then, has to do with perceiving
one’s friend and oneself as agents involved in a certain way in a common activity
with one another. As in the MM, a friend may facilitate self-awareness, but in the
Eudemian context the self-awareness in question is very specific. In acting together,
two friends perceive together and cognize together, but each friend also perceives the
other friend as an individual involved in a certain way in a common activity, and, in
so doing, comes to perceive herself as an individual involved in a common activity.

In the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle seems to offer three lines of response to
the puzzle about why the good man needs friends, none of which mention the role of
self-knowledge. Aristotle’s first response is that contemplation (theòria) is a pleasant
and maximally valuable activity. The virtuous agent finds contemplative pleasure
in the virtuous actions of her friends, which would be difficult with respect to one’s
own actions. I may not be in the best position to contemplate my own virtuous
activity while I am engaged in it since this may detract from my performance.
Contemplating it and performing it simultaneously may impede my activity. I can,
however, readily perceive and contemplate my friend’s virtuous activity while she is

147 EE 1244b26-1245a10.
149 NE 1169b32-1170a4.
150 I draw heavily on Jennifer Whiting, “The Nicomachean Account of Philia,” in The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics. Whiting concludes on p. 301, “So Aristotle’s point may have less to do with the difficulty of self-knowledge than with the difficulty of finding contemplative enjoyment in one’s own actions, which typically require one’s attention to be focused elsewhere.”
acting without impeding her activity, thus reaping contemplative pleasure. Aristotle’s second response in the *NE* is that it is difficult to be continuously active on one’s own, but it is pleasant to be active and the flourishing person must live pleasantly. The flourishing individual should seek out others with whom to act in order to be continuously active, and Aristotle says, at *NE* 1170a6-7, that, “his activity will be more continuous.”151 Perhaps this is because, without the stimulation of others, we would have trouble maintaining interest in the activities we enjoy.152 Aristotle may also prioritize the continuity of activity more generally on other grounds, as god is continuously active and so approximating the best thing there is should be very valuable itself. The third argument we get resembles the Eudemian argument. Aristotle says that living is in itself good and pleasant, and it is defined by the capacity for perception. Life is good because it has definite order, but it lacks this order in the case of the vicious person. This sounds very much like Aristotle’s Pythagorean Series argument in our Eudemian text, except that the second part of the argument, instead of turning to focus on acting together, concludes that perceiving one’s friend’s living is good because a friend is a second self and perceiving one’s own living is good.

To return to our passage from 1244b23-27, as humans, living in activity and as an end is perceiving and cognizing, living together in activity and as an end is

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151 A.W. Price, in *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford 1989), pp. 114-20, explicates Aristotle’s claim about continuity in terms of the cooperation of capacities. He explains on p. 117 that each friend’s activity “can be viewed as the exercise at once of a capacity of his own, and of a capacity (whether similar or complimentary) of the other’s.”

152 Cooper presents this as one reason why Aristotle may have thought that it is important to be continuously active. Aristotle does not give us an argument for the claim.
shared perceiving and shared cognizing, and, as the former is most choiceworthy for each individual, the latter is most choiceworthy for a pair of friends. Individual flourishing requires not only acting, e.g., courageously, but also being aware of one’s courageous actions as such, choosing them for that reason, and seeing them as reliably expressive of one’s character. Similarly, it is choiceworthy for humans to live together, perceiving and knowing their common virtuous activities as virtuous, together choosing them for their virtue, and recognizing them as reliably expressive of the virtuous friendship-state. This gives us a reason to form friendships in the first place (though Aristotle thinks we will do this anyway, since we are naturally suited to do so) and a reason to continue living with our friends, as we share in a human goal of living actively together. And this is most especially a reason for the best people to engage in friendship, since they will be involved in primary friendship and so sharing in the best kinds of common activity.

In responding to the initial puzzle about the place of friendship in a flourishing life, Aristotle argues that friendship is valuable because common virtuous activity, and shared perception and knowledge of this activity, is valuable for humans. For creatures like us, to live well is to live together. Unlike in god’s case, our well-being involves more than ourselves, so all of us, and especially the best of us, should cultivate and maintain friendships. When it comes to human flourishing, there are two related but nonetheless distinct goals: individual living well and living well together. As humans, we as individuals have reason to perform individual virtuous actions; it is good for the individual to do so. But we also have reason to perform common virtuous actions; it is good for us, as friends, to do so.
Bibliography


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