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Perfect Friendship in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

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We tend to think of Aristotle as the embodiment of cold, objective, and unimpassioned reason, critical, aloof and independent, self-possessed and self-sufficient, proposing contemplation of the pure intelligibles as the ultimate human happiness. It is perhaps surprising, then, to realize that two of the ten books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as they come to us, are devoted to *philia*, most frequently, and inadequately, translated by words full of human warmth, "love" or "friendship."¹ Aristotle sees *philia*, taken in the broadest sense of "mutual attraction and attachment," as that which ties together, along with justice, every form of natural and conventional relationship among human beings. "For in every association we find mutual rights of some sort as well as *philia*" (1159 b 26 f.).²

Depending upon the nature of the persons involved and the basis of their relationship, *philia* is distinguished by Aristotle into many different kinds. "*Aretê-philia*" draws together equals mutually attracted by each other's goodness; "pleasure-*philia*" unites pleasure seekers; "profit-*philia*", those who find association advantageous; "erotic *philia*" attracts the sensual lover (*erastês*) to the beloved; "marriage-*philia*" joins husband and wife; "filial *philia*" and "parental *philia*" bind children to parents and parents to children; "family-*philia*" unites brothers, sisters, and other close relations; "companion-*philia*" holds together fellow workers, shipmates, soldiers in a company; "civic *philia*" binds together fellow citizens, the

¹ As the commentators point out, there is no single word in modern languages that can be applied to the wide spectrum of relationships covered by the Greek *philia*. The English "love" is too strong for the relationship between business partners or fellow workers; while "friendship" is too weak for the relationship between husband and wife, or mother and child.

² All citations by Bekker number alone are from the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

ruler and the ruled; "hospitality-*philia*" links foreign guest-friends. For Aristotle, human beings are by nature interdependent, which implies a natural need for love or friendship. Man, he says, is first a "pairing animal" (*zōon syndyastikon*) and then a "political animal" (*zōon politikon*), a member of a *polis* with all its subsidiary associations (1162 a 16–19). To live apart from others, without love or friendship, an individual would have to be a god, or something less than human (*Politics* 1253 a 29).³

In Books VIII and IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle distinguishes the various forms of *philia* we have mentioned, grouping them into two large divisions, *philia* between equals and *philia* between unequals (1158 b 1–14). In the first group he distinguishes equals who are mutually attracted and attached by different motives—intrinsic goodness, pleasure, or usefulness (profit, advantage)—realizing of course that some relationships may be built upon more than one motive, others largely upon one of them alone. The second group, *philia* between unequals, includes such relationships as those between parents and children, the old and the young, husband and wife, ruler and ruled.

All of these types have some general characteristics implied by the term *philia*: (1) The basis of *philia* is good-will (*eunoia*), i.e., wishing the good of another, at least in some respect; (2) this feeling of good-will must be mutual, not one-sided; and (3) both parties must be aware of the other's good-will (1155 b 27—1156 a 5). (4) Moreover, the mutual good-will must be more than mere well-wishing: an operative disposition or readiness to expend effort in actively assisting the other (1167 a 7–10). Persons involved in *philia* (5) normally associate regularly (*suzēn, synhēmereuein*) and (6) derive some pleasure from this association (1158 a 1–10). Finally, (7) *philia* requires the possibility of some proportionate exchange, even between persons of unequal nature or status (1159 b 1–3; 1163 a 24 ff.).

³ It is true that for Aristotle one characteristic of human happiness is that the activity which constitutes its essence be, as far as possible, independent and self-sufficient (*autarkês*). But even this is qualified by man's social nature. In the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, while postulating that happiness, the ultimate human good, must be self-sufficient, Aristotle warns: "We speak of self-sufficiency not as involving only oneself alone, living a life in solitude, but also parents, children, wife, and, in general, *philoî* and fellow-citizens, since man is by nature a social animal" (*zōon politikon*: 1097 b 8–11). This passage challenges the view of commentators who tend (1) to exaggerate the self-sufficiency of Aristotle's supremely happy man (e.g., A. W. H. Adkins, "Friendship and 'Self-Sufficiency' in Homer and Aristotle," *CQ* N.S. 13, 1963, 44 f.) or (2) to minimize the connection between the books on *philia* and the rest of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (e.g., W. D. Ross, in his introduction to *The World's Classics* edition of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, London, 1954, xx f.). The importance of *philia* to the activity of contemplation (*theōria*) will be indicated later.

Granted that the various types of *philia* share all, or most, of these common characteristics in greater or lesser degree, still for Aristotle not all are *philia* in the same sense. How then are they related? In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle conceives the various *philia*-relationships as analogous: All may be called *philia*, but by analogy with, and resemblance to, one perfect relationship, which is *philia par excellence* (*prôtôs kai kyriôs*: 1157 a 29-32) and which alone properly deserves the name.⁴ In this discussion I shall concentrate upon the nature and characteristics of that prime analogue or archetype, perfect *philia*, as Aristotle presents it in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The responses and activities of *philia*, like all human emotion and action in Aristotle, must be evoked by some *telos*, some principle of attraction and fulfillment, some good perceived in or connected with the person who is the object of *philia*. Aristotle reduces all possible motives to the three we have mentioned: (1) The intrinsic goodness or excellence (*aretê*) of that person; (2) the person's ability to give pleasure; (3) the usefulness of that person to the other (1155 b 17 ff.). The three are not mutually exclusive, of course. And the last, usefulness, will in fact always be found subordinate to the others, since a person will be useful to another in so far as he helps the other achieve either goodness or pleasure, or both (1155 b 19-21). Of these three motives, Aristotle believes that only the mutual possession and recognition of *aretê*, *intrinsic excellence*, moral and intellectual, can provide the basis for perfect or complete *philia* (*teleia philia*). "The perfect form of *philia* is that between *good* persons, i.e. those who are like each other in *intrinsic excellence*" (*kat'aretên*: 1156 b 7 f.).

For Aristotle, a person achieves intrinsic excellence, the *aretê* which makes him a *good* human being, when he is habitually oriented, in moral character (*êthos*), emotion, and action response, toward what is good or noble (*to kalon*); and rejoices in the exercise of his noblest faculties, those of the intellect (*nous*), according to their proper virtues, particularly the activity of the virtue of wisdom in reflective study and contemplation of the noblest realities of the universe (*theôria*). Such a person is *good*, an excellent human being in the complete sense, possessing the moral and intellectual virtues described by Aristotle in the first six books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁵

⁴ See W. W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle's Analysis of Friendship: Function and Analogy, Resemblance, and Focal Meaning," *Phronesis* 20 (1975), 51-62.

⁵ It seems clear from Book IX (1169 b 3-1170 b 19) that intellectual virtues and activities hold the same priority for Aristotle in his discussion of *philia* as in the rest of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, so that the paradigm, perfect or complete *philia* at its fullest and best, is assumed to be that which exists between persons of completely developed moral

When two such fully-developed human beings first come to know each other, both being habitually responsive to what is good or noble (*to kalon*), their first response may be what Aristotle calls *eunoia*, "good-will," which is the beginning of *philia* (1167 a 7 ff.; 1155 b 31—1156 a 5). True good-will must (1) be elicited by awareness of what is excellent in the other person (1167 a 19 f.), and (2) must wish the other well *for his own sake* (1155 b 31—33). "For one who wants another to do well because he hopes to gain advantage through that other, seems to have good-will not for the other but rather for himself; just as no one is a friend who cultivates another because he may be useful" (*dia tina chrêsin*: 1167 a 15—18). Friendships based on profit and pleasure do not arise from true good-will (1167 a 13 f.).

If perfect *philia* is to develop, both good men must feel true good-will toward one another, and both must become *aware* of their mutual regard (1155 b 31—1156 a 5). But this is not enough. To mature into *philia*, the relationship must grow beyond mutual recognition of each other's excellence and mutually disinterested good-will, to the point where each (1) recognizes the other's goodness, not just objectively (*haplôs*) but as relevant to himself (*pros hauton*), and (2) not only wishes the other well but wants to implement that by actively doing good to the other for the other's sake, i.e., by conferring such benefits upon the other which will preserve or increase the other's intrinsic goodness.

This transition from passive good-will to an active desire to benefit the other comes through closer association and growing familiarity between the two good men (1167 a 10—12), accompanied by an intensification of what Aristotle calls *philêsis*, "friendly feeling," the emotional attachment of *philia* which involves active desire (*orexis*: 1166 b 32—34). For both

and intellectual *aretê*. This is not to deny that the type of *philia* based on *aretê* can exist also between persons whose *aretai*, moral and intellectual, are imperfect or only partly developed. Aristotle asserts, for example, that *aretê-philia* can exist between a man and woman (husband and wife) of good character (1162 a 25—27), though he believes that their natural functions (*erga*) are quite different (1162 a 22 f.); and we know from elsewhere that he considers the female-at-best to be incapable of achieving the same standard of *aretê* as the male-at-best, being both physically and intellectually inferior to him. See *Politics* 1260 a 5—24; *De generatione animalium* 728 a 18—22; 737 a 28; 766 a 17—23; 775 a 13—22; Tracy, *Physiological Theory and the Doctrine of the Mean in Plato and Aristotle* (Chicago, 1969), 318 f., 321 f., 328 f.; and note 10, below. Hence it would not be true to say that, for Aristotle, only philosophers can be *philoi kat' aretên*, though I assume he would maintain that only philosophers enjoy human *philia* at its most perfect and best, just as they enjoy human happiness at its most perfect and best. I am grateful to Richard Kraut for pointing out this problem.

perfect *philia* and *philia* of any sort, this "friendly feeling" must of course be mutual (*antiphilêsis*: 1155 b 27 f.).

However, intense mutual friendly sentiment between good men is apparently not enough for Aristotle. He believes perfect *philia* must go deeper than feeling. In perfect *philia* the two must also be intellectually aware of each other's intrinsic goodness and accept each other as *philoî* by deliberate choice. "Friendly feeling (*philêsis*) seems to arise from emotion, but *philia* from a fixed disposition . . . Mutual *philia* is accompanied by deliberate choice (*proairesis*),⁶ and choice depends upon a fixed disposition. And they want what is good for their friend for their friend's sake, not through mere feeling (*pathos*) but through a fixed disposition" (*hexis*: 1157 b 28-32).

Because each of the two is good objectively (*haplôs*), he is attractive to the other, who, as a good man, is habitually disposed toward what is noble or best. Each, in choosing the other for his intrinsic excellence to be his *philos*, identifies the other's *goodness* with his own, and desires now to preserve and increase the other's goodness *as* his own. "And in loving (*philountes*) a friend, they love that which is the good in relation to themselves (*to hautois agathon*): for the good man, in becoming beloved (*philos*) becomes the good to him by whom he is beloved. Each therefore loves (the other as) that which is good in relation to himself and so gives in return equally to the other, both in what he desires for the other and in pleasing the other" (1157 b 33-36). This is the essentially altruistic nature of true *philia*, which distinguishes it from all relationships based primarily upon the expectation of pleasure or profit. "Perfect *philia* is that between good men who are alike in their intrinsic excellence. For these desire good in the same way for each other with respect to that in which they are good; and they are good in *themselves*. But those desiring good for their friends for their *friends'* sake are most truly friends. For they feel this way because of what their friends *are* (*di' hautous*), and not because of some adventitious quality or circumstance (*kata symbebêkos*)" (1156 b 7-11).⁷

⁶ The rational nature of *proairesis* and its connection with the person's *êthikê hexis* is assumed from earlier descriptions in the *N.E.*, e.g., 1113 a 9-14, 1139 a 31-35, 1139 b 4 f.

⁷ Aristotle's insistence that true good-will and true *philia* be motivated by the intrinsic goodness of the other and desire the other's good for the other's sake, seems incompatible with Adkins' statement that in Aristotle "all three types of *philia* are equally selfish." See his article cited in note 3 above, page 39. On the other hand, it also seems incompatible with the position that finds essential altruism in all three types of *philia*. It is true that, for Aristotle, in some cases a relationship which began on the basis of pleasure or advantage may develop into a more altruistic relationship based on growing mutual recognition of the intrinsic worth of the other. He cites the case of husband and wife,

What moves two men to join deliberately in true *philia* and to work for the good of the other is ultimately their own habitual disposition to choose what is good or noble (*to kalon*). And if there is any element in their relationship that might be called "selfish," it consists in that each desires to do what is noblest and best (*ta kallista*: 1168 b 28-31). Aristotle recognizes nobility in the act of doing good for someone (1169 a 8 f.); and he compares the disinterested benefactor to the artist, who continues to love the recipient of his gifts as he does his own existence, without looking to profit or return (1167 b 31-1168 a 8). The good man will be willing to give up wealth, honors, power, and even his life for the sake of his friends, since he chooses nobility (*to kalon*) before all other goods (1169 a 16-35). A sharing association (*koinônia*) is essential to *philia* (1159 b 29 f.). In *philia* based on intrinsic goodness each partner is eager to do good for the other, and they vie with one another in this (1162 b 6-9). There is no "deal" or "contract" about mutual help, but each offers service to, or confers benefits upon, the other *for the other's sake*. Services or benefits rendered in return are not valued according to some objective measure (as in business arrangements) but according to the *intention* (*proairesis*) of the giver (1164 a 33-b 2). Among true friends it is not the value of the gift but the intention of the giver that counts.

In perfect *philia*, Aristotle explains, the good man loves his friend in the *same way* (though perhaps not to the same extent)⁸ that he loves himself (1166 a 1-33). For he desires and actively promotes the good of the other for the other's sake, just as he desires his own true good and acts to achieve it for the sake of that which is most truly himself, i.e., the intellectual part of himself. Secondly, he desires to preserve the existence, the life of his

united first for mutual pleasure and advantage, but coming to recognize the *aretê* of the other (1162 a 24-27); and the case of an erotic relationship where one party was motivated originally by pleasure, the other by advantage, but when these motives vanish the *philia* may persist: "if as a result of their close association they have come to love each other's character" (*ta êthê*: 1157 a 7-12). It seems clear, however, that in these cases the nature of the *philia* has changed from one based merely on pleasure and/or advantage to one based on recognition of intrinsic worth, which introduces the altruistic element of loving the other for the other's sake, for what he or she is, and not merely for the (selfish) pleasure or advantage that accrues to the partners through the other.

⁸ Apparently Aristotle holds that the good man cannot love another *as much as* he loves himself, since even one who desires to excel in virtuous activity chooses for himself "the noblest, that is, the greatest goods" (1168 b 25-30; cf. 1159 a 8-12). On the self-love of the good man and his choosing the "best" for himself, see 1169 a 16-b 1. By equating the "best" with the "noblest" Aristotle reconciles a rational self-love with the self-privation involved in giving up wealth, position, and life itself for one's *philoi*.

friend, for his friend's sake, just as he desires to preserve his own life or existence, and particularly the life of that which is noblest in him, i.e., the intellectual part of himself. Third, he enjoys the company of his friend as he enjoys his own company, having pleasant memories of the past and hopes for the future, and a mind well stocked with matter for reflection. Fourth, he desires the same things that his friend desires, just as interiorly he is of one mind with himself, and all the powers of his soul reach out in harmony toward the same objectives. Lastly, his shared awareness of his friend's joys and sorrows matches the keen consciousness of his own. Thus a good man feels the same way toward his friend as toward himself, so that, as Aristotle remarks, in this case it is true that "a friend is another self" (1166 a 31 f.).

The personal identification of two good men in *philia* will be closest and best, of course, when they are both equally talented, fully developed in moral and intellectual excellence, and equal in status or function in society. To this effect Aristotle quotes a popular tag, "*Philotês isotês*" (1157 b 36), and later adds "*kai homoiotês*" (1159 b 3),⁹ but qualifies it as applying most of all to *philia* between good men, equal and similar in excellence (*kat' aretên*). The equality and similarity of *aretê* demanded for perfect *philia* do in fact seem to lead Aristotle to deny the possibility of its existence even between persons so closely related as husband and wife, or father and son (1158 b 11 ff.). "For the *aretê* and the function of each of these is different, as is also the basis of their *philia*; therefore their emotional attachments (*philêseis*) and their *philiai* are also different. The same benefits are not exchanged in these relationships, nor should they be sought" (1158 b 17-21).¹⁰

On the other hand, when two men of equal status and similar *aretê* join in *philia*, the benefits exchanged between them will themselves be equally excellent, at least in intention, which contributes to the perfection of this kind of *philia* in making it most *enduring* (1156 b 33-35; cf. 1157 b 33-1158 a 1). Such *philia* is least likely to be broken up by quarrels or slander. Even when one partner succeeds in conferring objectively greater benefit upon the other, this occasions not complaint or recrimination but gratification, since he achieves what he sincerely desires, namely, the greatest

⁹ The spirit, if not the sense, of this jingle is caught by J. A. K. Thomson in his rendition "charity is not only parity, it is also similarity" (*The Ethics of Aristotle*, Penguin Books, 1955, 243).

¹⁰ Aristotle does not deny that true *philia*, i.e., that based on *aretê*, can exist, for example, between husband and wife (1162 a 25-27). But he sees the nature, function, and proper *aretê* of man and woman as being so different that they exclude the equality and similarity demanded for perfect *philia*. Cf. 1158 b 11-28, 1160 b 32-35, 1162 a 16-27, and note 5, above.

benefit for the other, whom he loves for the other's sake, not his own (1162 b 6-13). And since each knows thoroughly the intrinsic goodness of the other, neither is likely to believe slanderous reports about the other and withdraw his *philia* on that account (1157 a 20-24; 1158 b 9 f.).

But what makes *philia* between good men especially enduring is the fact that it is based upon what the two are essentially, i.e., upon their moral character (*êthos*) and intellect (*nous*) perfected by mature moral and intellectual *aretê*, which, like a second nature, constitutes the most permanent of dispositions (1156 b 11 f.). On the other hand, where profit or pleasure is the basis of *philia*, the partners do not love each other for what they are in themselves, but only in that some pleasure or profit comes to each from the other (1156 a 10-14). And this basis of attachment may change easily. As Aristotle says, "these *philiai* are based on a chance or adventitious circumstance (*kata symbebêkos*); for the *philos* is not beloved for being the man he is, but because one provides some benefit, another some pleasure. Such relationships, then, are easily broken off whenever the partners themselves change. For if ever they stop being mutually useful or pleasant they stop being *philoî*" (1156 a 16-21). Based on self-interested and changeable motives, such relationships can, in fact, be called *philiai* only by analogy, in so far as they resemble the usefulness and pleasure of perfect *philia* (1157 a 25-b 5; 1158 b 1-11).

For while perfect *philia* is essentially motivated by the *aretê* of the partners, Aristotle recognizes that such *philia* is also eminently pleasurable and useful, both objectively (*haplôs*) and with relation to the persons involved (*allêlois*: 1156 b 12-17; 1157 a 1-3; 1157 b 25-28). The pleasure and usefulness Aristotle has in mind here is not the gross type motivating those who associate for sensual gratification or expediency, but the pleasure that accompanies activity of the strictly human powers (especially the intellect) operating at their best (*met' aretês*: cf. 1175 a 20-28; 1176 a 17-19), and the usefulness that helps to achieve what is good or noble (*eis ta kala*: 1158 a 26-34). For these are the pleasure and the usefulness offered by the truly good man (*ho spoudaios*: 1158 a 33 f.).

The pleasure which a good man finds in association with another equally good, the enjoyment of his company, goes as deep as that which he derives from the consciousness of his own existence (1170 a 29-b 12; 1171 b 34 f.). For Aristotle equates existence with life activities, and human life specifically with the conscious activities of sense and intellect (1170 a 16-19). In a good man these faculties operate excellently (*kat' aretên*), so that their activities are accompanied, and perfected, by the noblest and best of pleasure, that which arises when the highest human faculties are activated upon their highest objects according to their proper

virtues (1176 b 15 ff.). Moreover, the good man is *conscious* of these activities of sense and intellect, conscious of his own existence, conscious that it is good; and the consciousness that one possesses what is by nature good gives true pleasure, so that the good man finds true pleasure in his own existence (1170 a 19-b 5). Therefore, he also finds his own existence *desirable*, being conscious that his life activities are both good and pleasant (1170 b 3-5).

Now, as we have seen, for Aristotle the good man is disposed toward an equally good *philos* as he is toward himself, since in his case a *philos* is "another self" (1170 b 5-7). Therefore, just as he finds his own existence desirable as being good and pleasant in itself, so he desires the existence of his *philos* as good and pleasant objectively (1170 b 7-10). Presumably, the consciousness of possessing, by mutual consent, the other good man as *his philos* brings him again the pleasure of possessing somehow what is objectively good.

It is essential to perfect *philia*, moreover, that the two good men live closely together, sharing their life activities equally. But the life activities specific to human beings are, as we have seen, those of sense perception and thought, so that the partners in perfect *philia* will spend much of their time in these activities, sharing their thoughts and perceptions. This is really what living closely together means for human beings, for in this way they share the consciousness of their existence (1170 b 10-14). However, since for the good man these activities are in themselves eminently pleasurable, he will doubtless communicate his own pleasure in them to his *philos*, and enjoy also the pleasure which his "other self" finds in his own.

Furthermore, Aristotle seems to believe that sharing their conscious activities augments the pleasure of the *philoï* to a degree not possible to either of them alone. First, he asserts that "we are able to contemplate others close to us better than ourselves, and their actions better than our own" (1169 b 33-35). The good man, then, will find even keener pleasure in this contemplation, since the activities of his *philos*, being other than his own, will be more clearly observable; being activities of another good man, they will be virtuous and similar to his own; being activities of his "other self," they will in that sense be his own and shared as his own. Clear consciousness of excellence somehow communicated to oneself gives rise to pleasure, and "the good man, as good, enjoys human acts excellently done (*kat' aretên*) . . . as the skilled musician finds pleasure in beautiful melodies. . . ." (1169 b 35-1170 a 4, 8-11).

Secondly, the pleasure enjoyed by two good men in perfect *philia* will be more continuous or sustained. For the activities that give rise to that pleasure will be more sustained because they are shared. "It is not easy to keep

up continuous activity by oneself; it is easier to do so with the aid of and in relation to other people. The good man's activity, therefore, which is pleasant in itself, will be more continuous if practised with friends. . . ." (1170 a 5-7, Rackham).

This also clarifies the sense in which Aristotle understands perfect *philia* to be *useful* or advantageous. It is useful, in fact *necessary*, for carrying on *best* the activities which are essential to human happiness, those of the intellectual as well as the moral life. For with the aid of *philoï* "men are better able both to think and to act" (*noêsai kai praxai*: 1155 a 14-16). Aristotle does not forget this even when, at the end of Book X, he is stressing the self-sufficiency of contemplative activity: "The wise man, even when alone, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow-workers; but still he is the most self-sufficient" (1177 a 32-b 1).¹¹ This is what we should expect, since for Aristotle man is essentially a *zôon politikon*, born to live with others and operating best in companionship (1169 b 16-19). Finally, *philia* is useful to good men in making them better. Sharing their lives and activities is a constant training and exercise in excellence (1170 a 11-13). For "the *philia* of good men is good, growing through their association; and they appear to grow better, sharing activities and correcting each other; for from each other they take on the impress of the traits they find pleasing in one another; whence the saying 'noble deeds from noble men'" (1172 a 11-14; cf. 1159 b 2-7).

With all the qualifications he demands for the realization of this ideal of perfect *philia*, one is tempted to question whether Aristotle himself believed that instances of perfect *philia* could actually be found to exist. The answer seems to be that he did believe they existed, but only rarely. *Philia* between men of fully developed moral and intellectual excellence is rare, first of all, because such men are rare (1156 b 24 f.). "It is not possible to have many *philoï* whom we prize for their own sake because of their intrinsic goodness. One would be fortunate to find even a few such"

¹¹ At the conclusion (page 45) of his article cited in note 3, above, A. W. H. Adkins translate the *isôs* of 1177 a 34 by an italicized "*perhaps*," apparently to imply that Aristotle really doubts the necessity of fellow-workers for carrying on better the activity of *theôria*. He goes on to suggest that "if one can practice *theôria* without *philoï*," then Aristotle believes that "behavior in accordance with *aretê* no longer requires associates, so that *aretê* and *philia* are no longer related," and philosophers operate in "splendid isolation," completely self-sufficient. A large conclusion to be supported by a single *isôs* = "perhaps." On the other hand, Rackham (Loeb, 615) translates the same *isôs* as "no doubt," and Thomson (*op. cit.*, 304) as "doubtless." The latter interpretation is supported by 1155 a 14-16, 1169 b 33-35, 1170 a 5-7, 1172 a 3-8. Adkins does not discuss these texts.

(1171 a 19 f.). Secondly, it takes long and close association to come to know another, to experience his intrinsic goodness, and learn to entrust oneself to him (1156 b 25–29; 1158 a 14 f.). Thirdly, even if there were many good men available, one could develop perfect *philia* with only a few, since one man cannot be deeply committed (*philos sphodra*) to many at the same time (1171 a 10–13); he cannot live closely together with many and share deeply the joys and sorrows of many (1170 b 33–1171 a 10). Finally, the good man's *philoï* should also be *philoï* of each other, spending their days in company with one another. But this is very difficult when many are involved (1171 a 4–6).

Did Aristotle know perfect *philia* in his own life? In a beautiful passage at the end of Book IX he seems to break away from the theoretical to the existential plane of his own experience in describing how living close to one another is for *philoï* the most desirable thing there is (1171 b 29–32): "For *philia* is a sharing (*koinônia*); and as a man is to himself, so is he to his *philos*. As the consciousness of his own existence, then, is desirable to him, so is the consciousness of the existence of his *philos*. And since this consciousness is activated in their living close to one another, it is reasonable that they desire this. Whatever constitutes existence for each group of men, whatever makes their life worth living, in this they wish to occupy themselves with their *philoï*. Accordingly, some drink or dice together, others exercise or hunt together, or engage together in pursuing wisdom (*symphilosophousin*), each group spending their days together in that which they love best of everything in life. For wishing to live closely with their *philoï*, they carry on and share those activities which constitute for them the good life" (1171 b 32—1172 a 8, reading Bekker's *eu zên* for the final *suzên* of the mss.).

In this reference to a group of *philoï* living close together and sharing the pursuit of wisdom we may perhaps detect a memory of Aristotle's years in the Academy, or a glimpse of life with his later associates. But one *philos* comes to mind above all others, Hermias of Atarneus, in whose honor Aristotle composed a hymn to *aretê*.¹²

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