

Chapter One

Contemplating Friendship in Aristotle's Ethics

Aristotle begins the *Nicomachean Ethics* by embracing the claim that all human activity aims at the good. Living from 384–322 BC, and having been a student in Plato's Academy for nearly twenty years before founding his own philosophical school in Athens, the Lyceum, in 335 BC, Aristotle identifies the highest human good as happiness (*eudaimonia*). Aristotle defines happiness as an activity of soul in accord with the reason of a serious person, and thus as an activity of soul in accord with virtue. Such a definition is problematic, however, because virtue is divided by Aristotle into two different types: moral virtue and intellectual virtue. Which of these virtues for Aristotle constitutes happiness is one of the most contested debates in the contemporary literature on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. On one side of this debate are ranged scholars such as J. L. Ackrill and David Bostock who hold that Aristotle has an "inclusive" view of happiness.¹ This means that the happy life requires the practice, in some form, of both the moral and the intellectual virtues. Scholars on the other side of the debate, such as C. D. C. Reeve and Thomas Nagel, believe that Aristotle has an "exclusive" or "dominant" view of happiness.² This view holds that happiness is grounded in the intellectual virtue of contemplation, which is separable from and superior to moral virtue. I argue that Aristotle's text comprehends both the "inclusive" and "exclusive" views of happiness attributed to it.

In acts of moral virtue, Aristotle argues, reason determines the mean and guides the passions to it, which is then usually followed by an external action of the body. Moral virtue is thus an internal motion of the soul that culminates in an action that is external. Actions, internal and external, that

“hit” the mean, as it were, are virtues, excesses and deficiencies are vices. For instance, with respect to the passion of fear, if the soul is disposed to feel an excess of fear it can lead to an act of cowardice, whereas to feel a deficiency of fear can lead to an act of recklessness. However, if the soul is disposed to feel a median amount of fear, this can lead to the active virtue of courage. Aristotle identifies and discusses eleven moral virtues and their corresponding vices: courage, moderation, generosity, magnificence, greatness of soul, ambition, gentleness, friendliness, truthfulness, wittiness, and justice.

Despite Aristotle's apparent embrace of the moral virtues, his analysis, I argue, brings to light significant problems with these phenomena. According to Aristotle, from the perspective of those who pursue them, the end of all the moral virtues is the noble, not the common good of the political community. As such, virtue incorporates a drive toward autonomy that abstracts from the political or law-dependent grounds of its existence. The problem of autonomy is illustrated in Aristotle's analyses of the virtues of courage and moderation. The second problem with moral virtue that Aristotle identifies is that it is grounded in significant inequality, both sociopolitical and psychological.

The problem of sociopolitical inequality is at the core of Aristotle's analyses of the virtues of generosity and magnificence. According to Aristotle, both generosity and magnificence are usually products of inherited wealth, and both the generous and the magnificent seek to be noble in their actions, rather than to benefit their recipients. Moreover, magnificence requires that the provision of public goods actually be in private hands. The problem of psychological inequality and its connection to the drive for an excessive autonomy is explored in Aristotle's account of greatness of soul. Great-souled persons, according to Aristotle, feel themselves to be at a height and regard the community as a platform to reveal their greatness. Moreover, such persons are also divided in soul; they are torn between their desire for the noble, and thus for virtue as its own reward, and their desire to be honored for being noble, and thus look on virtue as a means to reward.

By shedding light on the sociopolitical inequality that grounds moral virtue, Aristotle points to the need for justice as a corrective. I will therefore explore Aristotle's theory of justice, focusing on competing notions of equality that arise within it. I argue that for Aristotle, reciprocal justice can provide a constructed equality that allows political justice and the rule of law to come into being. Justice, therefore, seeks to redistribute goods in such a way as to achieve a greater balance among citizens, making meaningful political life possible.

Not only does the inequality at the root of moral virtue point to the need for justice, but the conflicts and tensions within the moral realm push the moral agent beyond that realm and into the realm of intellectual virtue. Aristotle identifies five intellectual virtues: art, science, intellect, prudence, and wisdom. Prudence, according to Aristotle, is that aspect of reason that determines the mean between excess and deficiency. Guiding the passions to the mean, prudence, although grounded in and sustained by the virtue of moderation, is also what brings the moral virtues into being. The other intellectual virtues, however, seem distinct from moral virtue. Art looks to the creation of beautiful or technically proficient products rather than the goodness of the producer, and science, intellect, and wisdom, grounded in scientific or theoretical reason, seek the true and the false irrespective of what is good and bad. Aristotle's analysis of intellectual virtue, therefore, illustrates that there are human virtues that are not moral virtues; there is an intellectual realm beyond or at least apart from the moral realm.

The potential implications of theoretical reason's pursuit of a type of knowledge that is distinct from moral knowledge will be an important question explored in this book. Aristotle suggests that because certain intellectual virtues can grasp truths that are distinct from what is morally right for human beings, lack of self-restraint (*akrasia*) is a possibility. The person who lacks self-restraint knows what is good but, experiencing excessive desires, does the opposite nonetheless. Aristotle discusses various possible causes of lack of self-restraint, but most interesting is the connection he makes between lack of self-restraint and the emergence of theoretical thinking. For the inexperienced philosopher, the passions in the soul can "slip the leash," as it were, put there by habit and prudential reason, as they surge toward what theoretical reason shows to be true rather than to what prudence has determined to be right. One possible solution Aristotle suggests to the problem of lack of self-restraint is the discovery and practice of a philosophy that thinks about human things in a universal way, namely political philosophy.

The second possible solution to lack of self-restraint is the phenomenon of friendship. In his philosophy of friendship, Aristotle characterizes complete or perfect friendship as a relationship in which two persons feel affection for each other due to their goodness. Adherence to moral virtue is, therefore, motivated by the desire to achieve recognition and affection from the friend based on the goodness of one's character. Moreover, Aristotle suggests that it is in perfect friendship that the unqualified good is manifested and grasped. Friendship, therefore, appears necessary to participate in

what Aristotle calls "contemplation," and which comes to light as essential to the highest human life accompanied by the highest human good: happiness. Aristotle speaks of contemplation in three senses. The first conceives of contemplation as the activity of the intellect (*nous*) grasping universal truths. The second suggests that contemplation is the activity of a "divine" intellect reflecting on the intellect's grasping of universal truth; it is self-reflection in the highest sense. The third, taking place within a philosophic friendship, conceives of contemplation as reflection on the goodness of the self through reflection on the goodness of the friend.

Two important questions that this book explores are: (1) can perfect friendship be comprehended within political friendship?, and (2) can perfect friendship be experienced by women? I argue that Aristotle's analysis of the political friendship between citizens of a timocracy (the just form of majority rule) indicates that it can resemble the perfect friendship between persons of moral excellence, while simultaneously allowing for an internal life of contemplation to be pursued. With respect to women and friendship, Aristotle suggests that in their activity of mothering, persons can experience and express a type of friendship that resembles or perhaps transcends the perfect friendship based on moral excellence. Moreover, I suggest that the maternal transcendence of self for the good of the other beyond the self points to women's entry into the political sphere with men, and makes women especially suited for the philosophic transcendence of self necessary for the activity of contemplation. Mothering and contemplating are closely linked.

Considering Aristotle's discussion of friendship, citizenship, the family, and contemplation in the latter books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I conclude that Aristotle's understanding of happiness comprehends both the "inclusive" and "exclusive" views that scholars have attributed to it. Aristotle argues that the practice of moral virtue, especially the virtue of moderation, guided by prudential reason, is what allows for and sustains intellectual virtue grounded in theoretical reason. Yet, theoretical reason, or contemplation, once it emerges, gives access to a realm of truth that is morally neutral. In other words, it is possible for intellectual virtue derived from theoretical reason to become separated off from and even act against its foundation in prudence and moral virtue. Aristotle suggests two possible ways to bridge the potential gap between moral action and contemplation grounded in theoretical thinking: the practice of political philosophy and the activity of friendship. Such philosophy and friendship, however, allow for the simultaneous existence of two ways of being in the life of a single person. As a citizen and friend exercising moral virtue toward others, a person lives the

“inclusive” social and political life natural to human beings. Yet, this social and political life also provides the opportunity for persons to turn inward and engage in an “exclusive,” internal life of contemplation, in which an embodied human reason touches or imitates a reason that is “divine.”

In my reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I build on Aristide Tessitore's concept of Aristotle's dual audience. Aristotle's primary audience, Tessitore argues, are not philosophers but rather respectable citizens who subordinate theoretical knowledge to the active pursuit of goodness. However, Aristotle hopes that his work will reach a second, more philosophically inclined audience. Such potential philosophers do not adhere to moral conventions but are characterized by a radical questioning of all conventional opinions and practices for the sake of discovering truth. Aristotle thus invites these students to consider the more fully satisfying character of the philosophic life, the life dedicated to theoretical knowledge.³

My reading of Aristotle's ethical treatise is informed by, yet goes beyond, Tessitore's methodological assumption of a dual audience. I approach Aristotle's text not with a dual but a single audience in mind, and understand this audience to be focused on the ethical journey that a single moral agent can take, a journey presented by the *Nicomachean Ethics* and culminating in the phenomenon of contemplation. I thus view the moral agent's life, as well as the text that analyzes that life, as progressive in structure. The agent and Aristotle's text start with an “inclusive” view of happiness that understands moral virtue as the highest purpose in life, but the agent and the text are moved by moral virtue itself toward an “exclusive” or “dominant” view of happiness the reaches toward contemplation. Yet, the agent and the text conclude that moral virtue and intellectual virtue can actually manifest two ways of being in the life of a single person. In acting virtuously toward others, a person lives the social and political life natural to human beings. Yet, at times they can turn inward, as it were, engaging in the activity of contemplation. The reader, or audience, of Aristotle's text, proceeds along the same journey as the agent of the text. Aristotle's text, therefore, gives the reader access to an understanding of the ethical and intellectual life in a way that the agent's life journey, presented by the text, gave to him or her.

I also read the *Nicomachean Ethics* in light of the current revival of scholarly interest in Aristotle's political and ethical theory. The focus on virtue and human flourishing in Aristotle's thought compels many scholars to reconsider both the foundations of contemporary liberal democracy and the desired aims of liberal society. As Susan Collins points out, contemporary neo-Aristotelians tend toward either a “political” or a “perfectionist”

reading of Aristotle's philosophy.⁴ Political neo-Aristotelians such as William Galston look to Aristotle for guidance on the qualities of character necessary to support the liberal political order.⁵ Virtue is thus primarily understood as civic or "liberal" and hence instrumental to the regime. Perfectionist neo-Aristotelians, such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Martha Nussbaum, uncover in Aristotle a roadmap for human flourishing simply without regard to regime, and argue that liberal democracies should seek to foster the virtues that make such flourishing possible.⁶ In this case virtue is understood primarily as pertaining to the individual and necessary for individual happiness, and thus as intrinsically valuable rather than instrumentally so. Politics is to serve the ends of the individual rather than the ends of politics itself.

Collins argues that neither political nor perfectionist neo-Aristotelians give due consideration to the conflict at the heart of moral virtue that Aristotle brings to light in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁷ According to Collins, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle shows that moral virtue is inclusive of self-interest.⁸ This produces an irresolvable tension within moral virtue itself: moral virtues are both self-forgetting in their attempt to serve the city, and self-regarding when pursued for the sake of the noble.

Although I agree with Collins that contemporary neo-Aristotelians do not give enough attention to the conflict at the heart of Aristotle's account of moral virtue, my argument is unique in several ways. In exploring the concepts of inequality and privacy in the giving and taking of material goods, I give attention to Aristotle's discussion of the virtues of generosity and magnificence in a way that many other scholars do not. For instance, neither Ronna Burger, Tessitore, nor W. F. R. Hardie includes a thematic discussion of these moral virtues in their commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁹ Collins and Thomas W. Smith do provide brief discussions of generosity and magnificence in their works on Aristotle. Like Burger, both Collins and Smith argue that Aristotle's analysis of the moral virtues is meant also to act as a critique of those virtues.¹⁰

For Collins the limits of moral virtue are brought to light in Aristotle's account of the noble as the end for which the virtues are practiced. Aristotle, Collins argues, shows that the law and the civic education it provides teaches that the virtues are both means to the common good and that they are noble and hence independent ends in their own right.¹¹ Collins thus argues, as I do, that the moral virtues, especially generosity and magnificence, are inclusive of self-interest; although self-forgetting in their attempt to serve the city, they are self-regarding when pursued for the sake of the noble.¹² According to Collins the problem at the heart of moral virtue, for Aristotle, is that there is an irresolvable tension between these two ends.¹³

Given the permanent discord within moral virtue itself, Collins argues that for the morally serious individual virtue becomes separated from its context within the civic polity and is elevated to an independent, noble, and hence self-regarding end in itself.¹⁴

In addition to highlighting the problematic nature of the noble in Aristotle's account of moral virtue, Collins also argues that the virtues of generosity and magnificence abstract from the activity of acquisition and thus from considerations of justice.¹⁵ Most likely flowing from inherited wealth, Collins then concludes that the practice of the virtues as presented by Aristotle implies tyranny, as, according to Collins, the "means of [virtuous] action [. . .] are most amply at the disposal of the tyrant, who may be said to own the entire city."¹⁶ Although I agree that Aristotle's emphasis on unearned resources as the foundation of moral virtue may imply tyranny, I believe that Collins's focus on this extreme can obscure the dangers within free regimes that Aristotle's discussion of virtue brings to light. Inherited and unequal wealth within free regimes can give rise to the practice of generosity and magnificence, potentially placing otherwise equal citizens in an antagonistic relationship, as benefactors seek to assert their superiority over recipients, and the provision of public goods is captured by private hands. Moreover, although I agree with Collins that Aristotle's account of the moral virtues abstracts from and thus needs to be supplemented by the virtue of justice, I argue that Aristotle's understanding of justice serves not simply to vindicate private acquisition, but rather emphasizes a "public" redistribution of goods, as it were, to reduce the inequalities generated by inherited wealth.

In exploring Aristotle's theory of justice in light of the concepts of redistribution, equality and commensurability, I treat Aristotle's understanding of justice with a level of seriousness that some scholars question. For instance, William Mathie argues that while distributive justice is practiced within regimes—aristocrats distribute shares based on virtue, oligarchs based on wealth, and democrats based on free birth—Aristotle suggests that it is absent at the foundation of the regime.¹⁷ Distributive justice does not address the question of who merits a share in rule, because for Aristotle, Mathie claims, distributive justice does not ask the more fundamental question of what in fact constitutes merit or desert, or the human characteristics desirable in themselves and which make those who possess them suitable to rule.¹⁸ In downgrading the importance of justice to Aristotle's ethical and political theory as a whole, Mathie is in agreement with Delba Winthrop. Winthrop argues that Aristotle actually intends book 5 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to undermine rather than reinforce our attachment to

justice. Aristotle, according to Winthrop, brings to light two problems with the virtue of justice. First, justice rests on law, which embodies the fixed, universal principles that a political community attempts to live by. However, for Aristotle, in politics the changing particulars are more important than the universals.¹⁹ Second, to the extent that justice is the practice of virtue toward others, it demands that we disregard concern for own good.²⁰ The universality and altruism demanded by justice, Winthrop argues, means that for Aristotle justice is unnatural and that a theory of friendship, provided in books 8 and 9 of the *Ethics*, is needed to replace the theory of justice as the core of his ethical theory.²¹ Collins and Robert C. Bartlett, like Winthrop, argue that the suppression of the individual good for the good of the community brings into question whether in Aristotle's view there is actually a natural ground for justice.²² Collins claims that for this reason, Aristotle points away from justice and the political life to philosophy or the theoretical life as the best life.²³

Although I argue that Aristotle's theory of friendship will correct and supplement his theory of justice, I do not go as far as Winthrop in maintaining that friendship actually replaces justice as the peak of the ethical possibilities that Aristotle explores. Rather, I understand justice as a necessary if not sufficient building block to friendship and philosophy. In this my argument is similar to Leah Bradshaw's. Bradshaw argues that Aristotle's virtue ethics requires the education of the passions through law.²⁴ For Bradshaw, therefore, Aristotelian ethics is closely aligned with justice and the practice of politics.

The core differences between Aristotle's theory of justice and those of modern theorists such as John Rawls and Robert Nozick are also brought to light in my reading of the text. In order to ground his concept of justice, Rawls theorizes about an "original position." Roughly equivalent to the idea of a state of nature in the philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and Rousseau, in the original position individuals are unaware of their natural talents or of what their sociopolitical position in society will be.²⁵ From behind this "veil of ignorance," Rawls argues, individuals regarding each other as identical and thus as moral equals, would construct a just society in which all primary social goods are distributed equally.²⁶ Thus, Rawls's theory of justice is premised on mutual recognition of a moral equality that gives rise to the maintenance of a sociopolitical equality among the members of society. To the extent that inequalities are tolerated, it is because they promote the interests of the disadvantaged rather than the advantaged.²⁷

The grounds of Aristotle's theory of justice are quite different from those of Rawls. While Rawls invokes the idea of an original moral equality

between human beings, Aristotle suggests that by nature persons are unequal. Moreover, in accordance with such natural inequality, Aristotle articulates a concept of geometrical distribution in which unequal persons receive unequal shares. However, such inequalities benefit the advantaged and not, as Rawls would insist, the disadvantaged.

Many modern readers, committed to the idea of the moral equality of all persons, will be tempted to dismiss the contemporary relevance of Aristotle's apparently egalitarian arguments. However, although suggesting that inequalities exist in nature, Aristotle, I argue, acknowledges that politics and law rest on a substantive recognition and application of equality. Aristotle's reflections on how human communities can mediate between natural inequalities and the equality that needs to be recognized and maintained within society, contributes to our modern thinking about justice. Perhaps surprisingly, Aristotle points to money as that which can provide an artificial or constructed equality between human beings, thus contributing to the justice and stability of the political community.

It is in his conception of the potential purposes of money that Aristotle most differs from modern libertarians such as Robert Nozick. For Nozick, "self-ownership," or the absolute right individuals have over their own person, implies the moral necessity of a minimal state and expansive free market in which everyone has a right to exchange their goods and services—as extensions of themselves—as they see fit.²⁸ According to Nozick, redistributive taxation favored by liberal egalitarians such as Rawls in order to help the disadvantaged is coercive and unjust; it denies equality or the principle that all persons are ends in themselves and thus cannot be used or sacrificed for the benefit of others.²⁹ A just distribution of resources, therefore, is simply whatever results from people's free exchanges within the market, which is likely to be a radically unequal distribution of income and opportunity.

Unlike Nozick, for whom money is a purely private good that should serve no larger purpose beyond the satisfaction of the individual's desires and wishes, for Aristotle money is a public good that can serve a political goal beyond the individuals involved. As originally intended, money, according to Aristotle, allows for a commensurability between different persons and skills rather than the radical incommensurability defended by Nozick. Although causing an isolated individualism to emerge as the city develops, money, Aristotle argues, initially serves the greater good of binding individuals together into one polity governed by law due to the commensurability that it can bring. Money can make those who would simply be other similar to each other, thus making it plausible for the politically just to come into being.

Although taking Aristotle's theory of justice seriously, I also argue that the conflict within moral virtue pushes the citizen toward an intellectual realm that Aristotle believes can be distinct from the moral realm. In this way I show that Aristotle's ethical theory provides a basis for *critique* of the liberal political order, rather than simply grounding it in or guiding it toward certain virtues as neo-Aristotelians such as Galston and Nussbaum claim. In addition, I argue that the morally neutral character of certain aspects of theoretical thinking, for Aristotle, can lead to lack of self-restraint.

I thus offer an alternative reading to Burger's on the issue of lack of self-restraint. According to Burger, book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, containing a discussion of lack of self-restraint, is a descent from the height of the preceding discussion of philosophy in book 6, much like the philosopher's descent back into the cave in book 7 of Plato's *Republic*.³⁰ Yet, according to Burger, it also represents the discovery of nature and contains Aristotle's endorsement of the Socratic teaching that virtue is knowledge.³¹ In accord with this teaching Aristotle argues that Socrates, "used to battle against this argument in its entirety [that a person may know what is right but do what is wrong], on the grounds that no such thing as lack of self-restraint [*akrasia*] exists: nobody acts contrary to what is best while supposing that he is so acting; he acts instead through ignorance" (*NE* 1145b25–27).³² Burger argues that a careful reading of Aristotle's analysis of the causes of lack of self-restraint shows that he in fact reaffirms this Socratic position rather than refuting it; knowledge in the "strict" or authoritative sense, that which is derived from the intellectual virtue of prudence, is never overcome in *akrasia*.³³ Moreover, Burger points out that neither is knowledge in the secondary, nonauthoritative sense, that which Aristotle says has not grown to be part of us but which is mouthed much as an actor speaks his lines, overcome in *akrasia* (*NE* 1147a23). Rather, at the moment we are acting with lack of self-restraint, according to Aristotle, we are acting in a temporary ignorance, much like persons who are asleep, mad, or drunk (*NE* 1147a17, 1147b6–7).³⁴ Thus, only when we temporarily forget our knowledge of what is right do we do what is wrong.

Tessitore, like Burger, argues that book 7 is a descent. In Tessitore's view, it is a descent from the height of the discussion of ethical virtue to the lower but more accessible target of self-restraint.³⁵ Also, Tessitore agrees that in Aristotle's account the unrestrained person does not act against what they actually know to be right, but rather acts in ignorance of knowledge that is possessed in potential only.³⁶ Thus, in Tessitore's view, Aristotle does not refute Socrates in the strict sense but rather vindicates his claim concerning the unassailable character of a certain kind of knowledge resembling

prudence.³⁷ Nevertheless, according to Tessitore, Aristotle preserves the phenomenon of *akrasia* by focusing on the overcoming of knowledge in the secondary sense, largely through habit that forms an unrestrained character.³⁸

Bradshaw argues, like Burger and Tessitore, that those lacking in self-restraint in Aristotle's view are incapable of the intellectual virtue of prudence.³⁹ Yet, Bradshaw points out that the condition of *akrasia* described by Aristotle in book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* resembles the condition of women described in book 1 of the *Politics*.⁴⁰ In the *Politics*, Aristotle claims that women are to be ruled by men in a political fashion—as equals—because women possess the deliberative faculty (*Pol* 1259a40).⁴¹ Yet, rule is not to alternate between men and women, but remain permanently in men because women's deliberative faculty "lacks authority" (*Pol* 1260a12–13).⁴² Thus, deliberating correctly but apparently lacking authority over their own passions, women, like the unrestrained, must be ruled by others.⁴³ Bradshaw concludes, however, that nothing in Aristotle's corpus shows that he viewed women's lack of self-restraint as natural or biological, rather than cultural.⁴⁴

In an alternative reading of Aristotle's treatment of *akrasia*, Devin Henry argues that Aristotle does in fact critique and advance on Socrates's position toward the knowledge of virtue. According to Henry, Aristotle's concept of *akrasia* can be divided into two forms: "drunk *akrasia*" and "genuine *akrasia*."⁴⁵ Drunk *akrasia*, much like Burger's, Tessitore's and Bradshaw's understanding of *akrasia*, occurs when a person, "intoxicated" by the desire for physical pleasures, temporarily fails to exercise their knowledge of what is right and thus acts on the desire to do wrong; they suffer from a "culpable ignorance induced by passion."⁴⁶ In genuine *akrasia*, the problem is not intellectual; the person does what is wrong "in the presence of full knowledge" of what is right.⁴⁷ Despite possessing prudence the genuinely *akratic* individual, in other words, acts on their imprudent desire for base pleasures.⁴⁸ However, to understand the reason why the genuinely *akratic* individual acts against their prudential knowledge of right and wrong, we must, Henry argues, look beyond book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to Aristotle's theory of proper pleasures in book 10 and his treatment of *akrasia* in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Considering these two sources together, Henry concludes that for Aristotle genuine *akrasia* can occur when a person's knowledge of virtue, specifically the virtue of moderation, is not supplemented by the experience of or desire for the proper pleasure that accompanies the activity of this virtue.⁴⁹

In an alternative reading to Burger's and Tessitore's, I argue that book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a natural progression from the discussion of the intellectual virtues in book 6 rather than a descent. The phenomenon

of self-restraint but especially of *akrasia* or the lack of self-restraint, I argue, arises after the emergence of theoretical thinking because, as Aristotle suggests, this intellectual activity can be a cause of this problematic moral condition. Moreover, although I agree that in the lack of self-restraint caused by uncontrollable passion it is not prudence but rather knowledge in some secondary sense that is overcome, I argue that when theoretical thinking is acting as cause it is precisely prudence that is overcome in *akrasia*. Thus, although passion or desire on its own may never overwhelm prudence as Burger, Tessitore, and Bradshaw maintain, I argue that perhaps when liberated by theoretical thinking it can. Therefore, like Henry, I believe that despite what may appear to be an initial agreement with Socrates, Aristotle actually critiques and progresses beyond the Socratic denial of the genuine possibility of *akrasia*. Henry argues, however, that we must look beyond book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to discover Aristotle's understanding of genuine *akrasia*. I argue, on the other hand, that the position of genuine *akrasia* comes to the surface within book 7 in the discussion of the syllogism, especially when this is considered in light of Aristotle's discussion of the intellectual virtues of prudence and wisdom in book 6. Yet, I agree that book 10, and in particular Aristotle's treatment of the case of Eudoxus, helps us to see Aristotle's concept of genuine *akrasia*.

The focus of my discussion, moreover, is not the weakness of women, as it is for Bradshaw, but the potential philosopher. In suggesting that lack of self-restraint is something that besets the beginning student of philosophy, I share an insight similar to Henry's that genuine lack of self-restraint can be traced to an incomplete education in the proper pleasures.

I suggest two possible solutions to the problem of lack of self-restraint: a political philosophy that resembles Aristotle's own theorizing and the phenomenon of friendship. In this vein I explore Aristotle's analysis of perfect friendship and its relationship to political friendship and the friendship of mothering. In bringing to light the ways in which political friendship resembles Aristotle's understanding of perfect friendship, my argument shares similarities with Jacques Derrida's discussion of friendship in Aristotle's thought.⁵⁰ In his book *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida, drawing from the *Eudemian Ethics*, argues that for Aristotle the "properly political act" creates "the most friendship possible."⁵¹ Aristotelian friendship is political, Derrida suggests, for two reasons. First, its essence is to love rather than to be loved; the friend is the lover rather than the beloved. Derrida points to two instances of friendship in Aristotle's account that highlights the fact that friendship is loving rather than being loved. First, in the case of the true friend who loves the other beyond life into death, when the other could not

possibly return the affection given, and second, when a mother, as a model of friendship, gives up her child to others so that the child may have a better life, even though the child may never know her.⁵² Giving rather than receiving affection characterizes friendship because, although the beloved may be ignorant that they are the object of affection, the lover cannot love without knowledge that they are doing so.⁵³ The requirement of knowledge on the part of the lover means that loving, in Aristotle's eyes, is inherently superior to being loved. The intrinsic hierarchy thereby established between lover and beloved, Derrida suggests, makes friendship a necessarily political phenomenon.⁵⁴

The second reason that Aristotelian friendship is properly political, according to Derrida, is that true or "primary" friendship necessarily experiences the "ordeal of stabilization, the becoming-steadfast and reliable," which "*takes time*."⁵⁵ The requirement that it be stable and long lasting makes friendship similar to the political community that also aims to be long lasting. Moreover, Derrida argues that primary friendship's stability is related to Aristotle's insistence that we must be selective in who our friends are. Those who receive our affection must possess the worthy characteristics that by their nature are long lasting, the testing of which require that we live with each potential friend.⁵⁶ Given these latter requirements, primary friendship is by its nature rare, leading Derrida to conclude that Aristotle has an aristocratic or oligarchical notion of friendship inconsistent with democratic politics.⁵⁷

Some commentators believe that perfect friendship in Derrida's view is in fact impossible. This relates to Pierre Aubenque's argument that a basic contradiction exists within the essence itself of friendship as understood by Aristotle.⁵⁸ The problem begins, according to Aubenque, when Aristotle maintains that perfect friendship requires equality between the friends, and "if the superiority of one of the two terms is such that there is no balance between them, friendship will not be possible anymore."⁵⁹ Yet, perfect friendship also requires that we wish our friends the greatest of goods. What if, receiving the goods we wish for them, our friends become better than they were and hence superior to us? According to Aubenque, "the tragic destiny of friendship is to wish a friend an even greater good depending on how immaculate [the] friendship is [. . .] [thus] friendship tends to weaken while trying to reach transcendence; or *perfect friendship destroys itself*."⁶⁰

Although I agree that there is a connection between Aristotle's understanding of "primary" or perfect friendship and the political, my argument differs from Derrida's in two significant ways. First, although it is true that Aristotle sometimes equates friendship with giving rather than receiving

affection, this is not the whole story.⁶¹ As I argue below, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines friendship as the reciprocal giving and receiving of affection between persons who both have knowledge of one another's goodwill. My understanding of the essence of Aristotelian friendship is thus not as extreme or one-sided as Derrida's. For instance, the case of the person who feels an unrequited love for the dead who can neither be aware of nor return the affection received, would not qualify as an instance of friendship under the definition provided in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Second, while I agree that for Aristotle perfect friendship, based on goodness, is long lasting and rare, I disagree that Aristotelian friendship, politically understood, is necessarily aristocratic or oligarchical. Rather, I argue that citizen friendship in timocracy, the "true" form of majoritarian rule, is most able to aspire to the perfect friendship Aristotle describes. Moreover, although it is surely difficult, I do not, like Aubenque, think true friendship is necessarily impossible to achieve or sustain.

I also argue that through the activity of mothering women can attain a form of friendship akin to the perfect kind. I thus build on the interpretation of scholars such as Bradshaw, but differ from those of Nancy Tuana, and Barbara Tovey and George Tovey. Bradshaw argues that for Aristotle women have a culturally conditioned rather than natural lack of prudence, leading women to suffer from a lack of self-restraint that makes them incapable of the virtue necessary for perfect friendship.⁶² Tuana, and Tovey and Tovey go further and, emphasizing Aristotle's claim that women's reason lacks authority over their emotions, argue that Aristotle believes women suffer from a natural moral and intellectual inferiority to men.⁶³ Likewise, for Saxonhouse, the family in Aristotle's thought is founded on a natural hierarchy between men and women that implies only the possibility of an imperfect friendship between them.⁶⁴ My reading of Aristotle differs from these scholars. Like Larry Arnhart, whose work investigates the congruence between Aristotle's understanding of the naturally political character of human beings and the Darwinian natural sciences, I explore Aristotle's reflections on women's relation to children rather than to men to discover his views on women's nature and possibilities with respect to moral, political, and philosophic activity. Also, I challenge the supposed centrality of reason both within the soul and the political sphere that these scholars assume in Aristotle's thought.

In arguing that Aristotle's philosophy of friendship is inclusive of women, I share a view similar to scholars such as Mary P. Nichols and Harold L. Levy. Nichols argues that in Aristotle's *Politics* an alternative to despotism and the development of free relations first emerges within the

family. Also, by defining the relations between men and women in the family as political, Aristotle implies that women should participate with men in rule of the household. For Nichols, Aristotle's argument that political rule should govern the relations between the sexes is based on his belief in their equality, making shared rule just, and in their differences, such as differences in virtue, making shared rule advantageous.⁶⁵ Levy argues that for Aristotle, women should exercise political rule not only within the family, but should assume political power within the city as well.⁶⁶

Although in agreement with Nichols and Levy that Aristotle critiques patriarchy and male domination of women, I explore the *Nicomachean Ethics* rather than the *Politics* and, again, come to this conclusion by focusing on the mother-child relationship and not women's relation to men as Nichols and Levy do. Also, I disagree with scholars such as Saxonhouse and Darrell Dobbs who argue that it is precisely because of their role as mothers that Aristotle argues for women's exclusion from the masculine public realm. According to Saxonhouse, Aristotle believes that women, bearing the young and preserving the household, lack the leisure to participate in the political discourse of citizenship.⁶⁷ Dobbs goes further, arguing that women's role in reproduction gives rise to certain moral and intellectual qualities that Aristotle believes makes them unsuitable for political rule.⁶⁸ I argue, in contrast, that Aristotle suggests that the activity of mothering, insofar as it manifests a sacrifice of self for the good understood as other, makes women uniquely suited to participate in rational dialogue and political decision-making.

My focus on mothering as the ethical basis in Aristotle's thought for women's participation in politics, moral action, and philosophy, like Arnhart's work, addresses developments in contemporary feminist theory concerning an ethics of care.⁶⁹ In order to give voice to women's unique moral experiences and reasoning, some feminist philosophers have recently sought to develop an ethics of care that makes mothering its central paradigm and that focuses on women's supposed emotionalism and concern for relationships as crucial to ethical decision making.

In her book *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan calls for the unique model of care shown by a mother for her child to become the new paradigm for our understanding of relationships.⁷⁰ Disagreeing with Freud's conception of relationships, premised on the assumption of highly differentiated selves whose "care" or love for each other has aggression and the desire to dominate at its root, Gilligan argues that mother-love is unique, originating not in a feeling of separation but in a primary sense of connection between self and other.⁷¹ Mothering is free of aggression, Gilligan suggests, because mothers care for their children with the aim of raising them to become mature adults with

a unique identity and will of their own.⁷² Mothering, therefore, is not about enchaining but rather releasing the other from the self and into the world.

Gilligan argues that if our paradigm for relationships shifts from two separated selves brokering hostile isolation to mother and child growing together in nurturing connection, women's unique moral voices will then be heard. According to Gilligan, men's moral reasoning adopts a perspective of "justice" associated with rationality, and focuses on impartial and universalizable principles. In contrast, women's moral reasoning, long unrecognized by theorists of moral development, focuses on the preservation of personal relationships, a value derived from their experience of both mothering and being mothered.⁷³ Like Gilligan, Sara Ruddick, in *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*, critiques the rationality supposedly esteemed by philosophers such as Aristotle, as it excludes and devalues the kind of practical thinking that arises from and is conditioned by the social practice of mothering. For Ruddick, maternal thinking is grounded in a reason that does not transcend and therefore mistakenly attempt to control emotion, and exhibits a form of knowledge that refuses to be separated from love.⁷⁴

Such an ethics of care, however, has proven controversial within feminism. Feminist critics charge, among other things, that an ethics of care suffers from an essentialism that presumes women are naturally less rational and more self-sacrificing than men.⁷⁵ These feminist critics argue that such presumptions about woman's nature have served historically to foster the perception that women cannot make moral and political choices for themselves and thus should be confined to the private realm of the family—raising children and being governed in an unequal relationship to men.

Marcia L. Homiak argues that in our present unequal socioeconomic context, celebrating women's care and altruistic self-denial for family members serves to sustain their inequality to men and prevents women from developing a sense of self-confidence necessary for making their own assessments of what is ethically best. Thus, for Homiak, "altruistic actions can be damaging when undertaken in circumstances in which the altruistic person lacks self-esteem."⁷⁶ Moreover, in contrast to Gilligan and Ruddick, Homiak maintains that Aristotle's understanding of the rational life does not require the devaluation of feeling and emotion traditionally associated with women. Rather, for Homiak, in Aristotelian ethics the rational part of the soul should be properly guided and restrained by the nonrational part, and thus Aristotle's rational ideal is not inherently masculine but rather worthy of emulation by women.⁷⁷

In *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, Susan Moller Okin also criticizes what she calls the "different moralities strain" in feminism.⁷⁸ For Okin, it is

politically unwise to argue that women are more naturally inclined toward a morality of "care" rather than an ethics of "justice" and "rights." Playing into the hands of reactionaries, the false concept that women's thought is embedded in emotion and focused on the preservation of personal relationships reinforces sex-role stereotypes that serve to justify women's exclusion from the public realm of men and their confinement to the private sphere of the family.⁷⁹ Moreover, Okin questions whether women are more naturally caring, arguing that any evidence suggesting gender differences in morality is derived from the near universal phenomenon of female primary parenting. Socially constructed rather than natural, female primary parenting that leaves women burdened with unshared responsibility for child care should not be cherished but rather replaced with dual parenting if equality of opportunity and justice between the sexes is going to be achieved.⁸⁰ The unequal division of childcare labor within the family, according to Okin, is the source of the economic inequality between women and men in the workplace that in turn produces greater inequality within the family. Okin thus concludes that motherhood, within our contemporary construction of marriage, makes women vulnerable economically, socially, and politically. For Okin, women's underrepresentation in politics, academia, and business is due to their overvaluation and representation as the primary caregivers of children.

Aristotle's philosophy of friendship can point to an ethics of care that addresses the concerns of its feminist critics. For instance, even in his natural account of the family, free of the hierarchical structures of its highly politicized form, Aristotle will maintain that the virtues of husband and wife differ, thus causing their friendship to lack the strict equality present in the perfect friendship between two men. Aristotle's analysis of friendship between men and women within the family, therefore, is very similar to the arguments of feminist critics of care such as Homiak, who claim that the relationship between husband and wife is derived from and continues in an inequality that accords power to men and subordinates women. Yet, when Aristotle explores the mother-child rather than husband-wife relationship, he reveals that mothers can give rather than receive an affection that serves as the model of friendship and allows for human flourishing. All mothering, Aristotle suggests, involves a giving of self for the good of the other in its condition as a distinct and independent individual. Thus, like Gilligan and Ruddick, Aristotle turns to the love that mothers have for their children to theoretically ground the moral and intellectual possibilities of an ethics of care.

In contrast to Gilligan and Ruddick, however, Aristotle suggests that a mother's love for her child does not distance women from his ethical and

rational ideal, but rather brings them closer to it. Moral virtue and political deliberation and action, Aristotle suggests, requires not the rational suppression of emotion but rather its rational expression, and moreover, reason and emotion are not strictly separated into different compartments but rather fundamentally connected. Thus, while Okin may be right in claiming that female primary parenting has usually served to justify women's exclusion from the masculine public realm, Aristotle, I argue, suggests that the activity and philosophy of mothering is reason for women's inclusion within it.

Aristotle's comments on motherhood indicate that mothering is a form of friendship that can open women up to and make them uniquely prepared for the political, ethical, and philosophic life. A mother's love for her child moves her to concern for the condition of her political community that is necessary for her child's flourishing. Moreover, the activity of mothering involves a transcendence of self for a good that is other than the self, thereby pointing toward the object and activity of contemplation. Yet, the question of women's capacity *as women* for friendship, as not all women are mothers, remains unanswered in Aristotle's thought. Aristotle, however, does provide an enlightened understanding of mothering. Mothering, as an activity, does not separate woman and man, or "feminine" emotion and "masculine" reason, but rather brings them closer together.