

Mothering and the Sacrifice of Self: Women and Friendship in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

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Aristotle introduces his discussion of friendship in Books Eight and Nine of the *Nicomachean Ethics* by claiming that friendship is a sort of virtue, or involves virtue, and that friends are necessary for life as “[n]o one would choose to live without friends, even if [they] had all other goods” (1155a4-5).¹ Among various types of friendship, Aristotle initially characterizes the perfect form as that between two good persons similar to each other in the excellence of their virtue. Yet, problems emerge in Aristotle’s presentation of perfect friendship. It appears that it is only open to men, as women seem confined to an imperfect form of friendship between husband and wife within the family. Moreover, the good man’s love of self is prior to his love for others.

I argue, however, that despite Aristotle’s initial characterization of perfect friendship as exclusively masculine, his brief reflections on the mother-child relationship brings a feminine form of friendship to the fore. Aristotle suggests that a mother’s love is the paradigmatic example of unconditional love in human life. The self-sacrifice of mothering, therefore, points toward the possibility that women are capable of a selfless form of friendship that is akin to or even higher than the “perfect” friendship of two good men that Aristotle describes.

Aristotle’s discussion of friendship and the possible inclusion of women in its highest form are significant to his ethical theory as a whole for a number of reasons. First is the importance of friendship to politics (Cooper 368-72; Tessitore 74). According to Aristotle, friendship among fellow citizens, or that which he calls “concord,” is necessary to hold cities and political communities together (1155a22; 1167b2). Thus legislators pay more attention to producing concord than justice, because, as Aristotle claims, “[w]hen people are friends, they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they need friendship in addition” (1155a26-27). Aristotle attributes concord to cities when, “the citizens have the same judgment about their common interest, when they choose the same things, and when they execute what they have decided in common” (1167a26-28). In other words, concord or political friendship is unity of mind among citizens in deliberation and action with regard to important matters affecting the public interest. Examples Aristotle gives are fundamental constitutional questions such as whether or not certain public offices should be elective, foreign policy questions such as whether or not an alliance should be made with a particular foreign entity, and political questions such as who should rule the community.

The second reason why Aristotle's discussion of women and friendship is important is the relationship between friendship and nobility. Aristotle claims that "[f]riendship is noble as well as necessary: we praise those who love their friends and consider the possession of many friends a noble thing" (1155a29-30). Aristotle thus suggests that the ability to be and to possess friends is a noble thing in itself. Yet, Aristotle also says that "to those in their prime, [friends] give the opportunity to perform noble actions" (1155a14). This reminds us of Aristotle's discussion of the paradigmatic moral virtue of courage in Book Three, in which he argues that the end of courage or the sake for which it is chosen is the noble (1115b10-14, 21-23; 1116b1-2, 1117a6-7) (Ward 71-72; but see Levy 412). Thus, the second sense in which Aristotle refers to the noble in its relationship to friendship is that it appears to motivate and facilitate the doing of morally virtuous actions for the sake of the noble on the part of the friends (Tessitore 74-75).

The relationship of friendship to philosophy is the third reason why it is important to consider Aristotle's discussion of friendship in light of its possibilities for women. According to Aristotle, friends "enhance our ability to think" (1155a14). Also, in the midst of his analysis of perfect friendship, Aristotle claims that among the various objects worthy of affection, "the unqualified good and the unqualified pleasant – are also found in it, and these are the highest objects worthy of affection" (1156b23-24). Aristotle therefore suggests that it is in the perfect friendship between those who are noble and good that the unqualified or universal good, the object of the philosophic quest, is grasped. Friendship, therefore, appears necessary to participate in what Aristotle calls "contemplation" in Book Ten, which comes to light at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as the highest human life accompanied by the highest human good: happiness (see Burger 52-53).

The crucial role that friendship plays in politics, nobility, and the philosophic life makes an analysis of Aristotle's understanding of this phenomenon critical to understanding his ethical theory as a whole. Moreover, I will attempt to illustrate that for Aristotle, women, through motherhood, are capable of partaking in or perhaps even transcending the highest form of friendship that he describes. If this is true, it would suggest Aristotle's belief that full participation in political deliberation and action, the nobility of moral virtue, and the life of philosophy can and should be open to (most) women.

My interpretation of Aristotle's thought differs from scholars such as Leah Bradshaw, Nancy Tuana, Barbara Tovey and George Tovey, and Arlene Saxonhouse. Bradshaw argues that for Aristotle women have a culturally conditioned rather than natural lack of prudence, leading women to suffer from incontinence or moral weakness that makes

them incapable of the virtue necessary for perfect friendship (Bradshaw 563-64, 566-68, 569-73). 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 that women suffer from a natural moral and intellectual inferiority to men (Tuana 13, 23-31; Tovey and Tovey 587-88). Likewise, for Saxonhouse, the family in Aristotle's thought is founded upon a natural hierarchy between men and women that implies only the possibility of an imperfect friendship between them (Saxonhouse, "Aristotle" 46-48 and *Women* 85-87). My reading of Aristotle differs from these scholars because 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 will 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 (Nichols, "Toward a New – and Old – Feminism" 177-80 and *Citizens and Statesmen* 29-33). 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 (Levy 402-03, 408, 410, 412, 415n18).

Although in agreement with Nichols and Levy that Aristotle critiques patriarchy and male domination of women, I explore the *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 (Saxonhouse, "Aristotle" 48 and *Women* 88). 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 (Dobbs 86-87; also see Tuana 13, 23). 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.

In the argument that follows, I begin by analyzing Aristotle's understanding of perfect or true friendship, showing that its requirement for a quantitative or strict equality raises the question of whether or not such a friendship can exist between men and women. I address this question by exploring Aristotle's discussion of the friendship between husband and wife in the family, arguing that this relationship does not rise to the level of true friendship as Aristotle understands it. I argue, however, that Aristotle's brief references to the friendship a mother feels for her child points to other possibilities for women in his thought. The mother-child relationship shows that for Aristotle it is within human nature to aspire to a truly selfless form of friendship for another, and that such friendship is indeed open to women. I then discuss how emotion, such as the emotion of mother-love, associated by Aristotle with women more than men, can claim a place in the Aristotelian conception of politics. I also reflect on Aristotle's discussion of mothering in light of Socrates' proposals in the *Republic* regarding relations between the sexes, the structure of the family, and the study of the good, to show that Aristotle believes (mothering) women can participate in citizenship, friendship, and philosophy with other women and men. I conclude with a discussion of contemporary feminist proposals and critiques of an ethics of care, and consider how Aristotle's reflections on women and friendship can address this debate within feminism.

Perfect Friendship

Aristotle sets out to define what friendship is in chapters three and four of Book Eight of the *Ethics*. He begins by defining friendship broadly as the condition in which two persons will the good for one another, and are aware of one another's good will (1156a3-5). Aristotle then subdivides friendship into three kinds based on three different objects of affection. The first two kinds of friendship Aristotle identifies are friendships based on utility and those based on pleasure. In friendships of utility, we will the good of the friend because they're useful to us; we feel affection for the useful and not for the person. Similarly, in friendships of pleasure, we will the good of the friend because they give us pleasure; again, we feel affection for the pleasant and not the person (1156a3-5, 14-19). The third kind of friendship Aristotle identifies is its true or perfect form. The perfect form of friendship is based on goodness. According to Aristotle, we will the good of the friend because "they are good," and moreover, "[t]hose who wish for their friends' good for their friends' sake are friends in the truest sense, since their attitude is determined by what their friends are and not incidental considerations" (1156b10-12). Thus, in the perfect form of friendship, we feel affection for the friend due to their goodness, and not for the utility or pleasure that we can get out of the relationship. It therefore appears that in perfect friendship the friends are viewed by each other as ends in themselves rather than simply means to other ends more desirable. Perfect friendship involves, it seems, not

a desire for the useful or the pleasant, but rather a recognition and affection for the goodness of the other.

Aristotle proceeds to delineate the characteristics of perfect friendship as follows. 1) The friends must be alike in their virtue, adhering to the proverb “that birds of a feather flock together” rather than “opposites attract.” According to Aristotle, the actions of the good are almost identical to each other. 2) Perfect friendship is long lasting because goodness, which friends value in each other, is a thing that lasts. 3) Perfect friendship is rare, since such good or virtuous persons are few. 4) It requires a long time for the friends to get to know each other, as they must have confidence in each other’s good character. In other words, the friends must actually *be* good and not just seem good. Thus, perfect friendship, according to Aristotle, cannot exist among the bad or those who lack virtue, as such persons, although they may desire the useful and the pleasant from each other, “do not find joy... on the basis of what they are” (1156b6-33; 1157a16-19).

The fifth characteristic of perfect friendship is that the friends must enjoy spending time together. Aristotle claims that “nothing characterizes friends as much as living in each other’s company” (1157b18). Moreover, although people can have an abstract feeling of good will toward those among whom they don’t live or don’t like, or at least not wish them any ill, they “are not really friends, because they do not spend their days together and do not find joy in one another, and these seem to be the chief marks of friendship” (1158a5-10).

The sixth characteristic of perfect friendship is that “each partner is both good in the unqualified sense and good for his friend. For those who are good [...] without qualification, are also beneficial to one another” (1156b13-14). Aristotle here identifies two types of goods persons can be and love: the “good for them” and the good “in an unqualified sense” (1155b21, 25). The unqualified good, although it can be manifested and loved by each of the friends, also transcends or stands above the characters and emotions of these particular persons. The unqualified good is good whether or not these particular persons manifest or love it. It is, in other words, a universal good. Aristotle emphasizes the presence of this unqualified, universal good in his discussion of perfect friendship when he claims, as mentioned previously, that of the objects worthy of affection, “the unqualified good and the unqualified pleasant – are also found in it, and these are the highest objects worthy of affection” (1156b23-24). If we understand the unqualified, universal good as the object of philosophic contemplation, it appears that for Aristotle, perfect friendship allows for its manifestation in some way. If this is true, it seems that perfect friendship does indeed point to a greater good beyond itself, which is also pleasant, but in such a way that it does not destroy the integrity of the persons in the

relationship or reduce the friends to means rather than ends; they can be both ends in themselves as persons, and point to something beyond themselves – the good.

Problems with perfect friendship, however, begin to emerge in chapter seven with Aristotle's contention that perfect or true friendship requires equality between the friends (1157b37). As a consequence, a good person "does not become the friend of someone whose station is superior to his own," and moreover, "[p]ersons much inferior to them in station do not expect to be friends with kings, nor do insignificant people expect to be friends with the best and wisest men" (1159a1-2). Thus, for Aristotle, equality does not have the same meaning in friendship as it does in matters of justice. In relationships of justice, the equal, according to Aristotle, is primarily qualitative or proportionate, where the superior in merit receives more of a share, the inferior in merit less (1158b30-31). Justice, in other words, is getting what you deserve, and people deserve different things. In relationships of friendship, on other hand, the equal is what Aristotle calls "quantitative," or equality "in the strict sense," in which the subjects are the same and give and receive in equal measure (1158b31-33). Friendship, one might say, is not getting what you deserve, but being and getting the same (see Tessitore 79). Aristotle therefore claims that if "there is a wide disparity between the partners as regards their virtue, vice, wealth, or anything else... then they are no longer friends or expect to be friends" (1158b31-33).

The requirement for a quantitative or strict equality in relationships of friendship causes the question of whether or not men and women can be true friends to arise. Can women participate in the kind of perfect friendship between two good persons that Aristotle describes? From the point of view of biology, at least, it would seem that men and women are very different, thus failing to meet Aristotle's strict standard of sameness or like-to-like in this regard. Can men and women, however, aspire to a strict equality or sameness in virtue? If not, it would appear that for Aristotle the possibility of perfect friendship only arises among men, as he does not explicitly discuss the possibility of perfect friendship between two women.

Women and Friendship

The possibility of friendship between men and women is first raised in chapter seven of Book Eight when Aristotle argues that an imperfect form of friendship is possible between those who are unequal, provided that the superior partner receives greater affection from the inferior, and the inferior in turn receives less affection from the superior (1168b23-28). A kind of proportionate rather than strict equality is thus maintained between the partners, making the relationship seem more like one of justice rather than friendship. Nonetheless, Aristotle gives four examples of this imperfect type

of friendship: that between father and son, older and younger, ruler and subject, and, what we will be concerned with, husband and wife (1158b11-13). As a relationship of inequality, in order for husband and wife to enter into an imperfect form of friendship, a proportionate equality would have to be established in which the husband, as superior, receives more affection from his wife than he gives to her as the inferior partner. Moreover, Aristotle suggests that the possibility of friendship between man and woman, whether imperfect or true, initially arises between husband and wife within the family.

The next reference to friendship between husband and wife occurs in Aristotle's discussion of friendship and politics in chapters nine to eleven of Book Eight. As mentioned previously, friendship for Aristotle is not just a private phenomenon existing between individuals, but also a political phenomenon that takes place on the political level between citizens. In other words, friendship is not just personal but also political. In chapter ten, Aristotle identifies six different regimes or political systems, three just and three unjust. The three just regimes are kingship, aristocracy, and timocracy (more commonly called polity), and the three unjust regimes, each perversions of the just ones, are tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy respectively (1160a31-35; 1160b10-20). In chapters ten and eleven Aristotle argues that friendships within the particular political regimes each have analogues to different friendships within the family. For instance, the friendship between a king and his subjects is analogous to the friendship between father and sons. Both are friendships of inequality. Thus, as a king, in his superior ability to do good to his subjects, should receive a greater affection from his subjects than he gives to them, so a father, as the author of his children's being and hence more like a god to humans than a king to subjects, should receive more affection from his sons than he gives them in return (1160b24-27; 1161a11-17, 20-23). However, the kingly rule of the father turns tyrannical if he treats his children like slaves (1160b26-30).

The friendship between citizens in a timocratic regime, on the other hand, is analogous to the friendship between brothers. As timocratic citizens share in ruling and being ruled in turn as all are "on an equal footing," so brothers, according to Aristotle, are "equal and belong to the same age group, and... generally have the same emotions and the same characters" (1161a26-29). Friendship between timocrats and brothers, unlike that between king and subjects and fathers and sons, is based on equality and sameness and thus more closely resembles the perfect or true friendship between equal persons alike in their virtue and character. The timocratic relationship between brothers can turn democratic, however, if no respect at all is paid to age differences or forms of merit between the brothers.

What of the relationship between husband and wife in the family? Is it similar to the kingly but unequal relationship between fathers and sons, or is it closer to the timocratic

but equal relationship between brothers? Aristotle places it somewhat in the middle of these two alternatives. He argues that the relationship between husband and wife is aristocratic, as “it is based on excellence or virtue: the superior partner gets a larger share of good, and each gets what is suited to [them]” (1161a24-25). The relationship between husband and wife is therefore based on virtue, but their virtues are unequal. Thus, as aristocrats should get more of the good and affection from the common people because the former are more virtuous than the latter, so the husband should receive more affection from his wife as his virtue is superior to hers. Moreover, Aristotle claims that the husband’s rule over his wife and the household, “depends on his worth or merit, and the sphere of his rule is that which is proper to man. Whatever is more suited to a woman he turns over to his wife” (1160b33-35). The aristocratic relationship between husband and wife, therefore, turns oligarchic when the husband gives his wife no say at all in the running of the household, or the wife rules the household because she is a rich heiress. This latter form of corruption suggests that for Aristotle, the proper virtue of a woman does not suit her to rule within the family, a form of familial organization that he portrays as unjust (Dobbs 83-84; but see Pangle 94; Nichols, “Toward a New – and Old – Feminism” 177 and *Citizens and Statesmen* 30; Saxonhouse, “Aristotle” 36-37; and Levy 398-400, 409-10).

Aristotle’s characterization of the friendship between husband and wife as aristocratic clearly points to the fact that he believes this relationship can be based on virtue and not just biology. However, the virtues or proper spheres of men and women in the family are presented as different and unequal, with the husband possessing the ruling and superior kind (but see Levy 398, 402-403). The friendship between husband and wife in this discussion, therefore, does not seem to meet the requirements of perfect friendship.

In chapter twelve of Book Eight, Aristotle again turns to friendship within the family despite having just discussed this in chapters ten and eleven in which familial friendships were presented as analogous to friendships within the different political regimes. What can account for the oddness of Aristotle’s procedure, or why must we revisit the issue of friendship within the family? Aristotle seems to suggest that although our understanding of familial relations is influenced by politics and political regimes (for instance more hierarchical regimes will be composed of more hierarchically ordered families, and more egalitarian regimes of more egalitarian families), friendship within the family is still independent of politics or can stand on its own. Family relations are still essentially private as opposed to political relations. Friendship, or the affection felt between family members, can exist without reference to the regime, and are thus more natural or prior to relations within the political community (Pangle 86; Tessitore 83; Schollmeier 7; Hardie 318). Aristotle thus argues

[t]he friendship between man and wife seems to be inherent in us by nature. For man is by nature more inclined to live in couples than to live as a social and political being, inasmuch as the household is earlier and more indispensable than the [city], and to the extent that procreation is a bond more universal to all living things (than living in a [city]). (1162a16-19)

Aristotle thereby points to the sexual or reproductive relationship between men and women as the natural basis of their friendship, and the children that come to be, according to Aristotle, are “regarded as the bond that holds them together, and that is why childless marriages break up more easily” (1162a28).

In chapter twelve, therefore, it appears that Aristotle will provide an account of friendship in the family from within, or from the point of view of the family conceived as a private and more natural association than the city, rather than from without or from the point of view of the political regime. An example of the difference between the political perspective on the family and the private perspective of the family occurs in Aristotle’s account of the parent-child relationship, which, as mentioned above, is derived from the reproductive relationship between man and woman. According to the political account of the family the friendship between fathers and sons is analogous to that between a king and his subjects: as a king is more deserving of and should receive more affection from his subjects than he shows to them, so a father, as the author of their being, is more deserving of and should receive more affection from his children than he shows to them. However, according to the private and more natural perspective of the family which we receive in chapter twelve, parents, “know better that the offspring is theirs than children know that they are their parents’ offspring, and the bond which ties the begetter to the begotten is closer than that which ties the generated to its author” (1161b20-22). It would seem, therefore, that parents naturally feel closer to their children than their children do to them, suggesting that parents give more affection to their children than they receive in return. The hierarchy of affection is thus reversed in the natural account of the parent-child relationship.

Aristotle suggests two reasons why parents naturally love their children more than their children do them. The first is that children belong to their parents in a way that parents do not belong to their children. As a tooth and a hair belongs to its owner, so a child belongs to its source, but, “the source does not belong at all – or only to a lesser degree – to that which has sprung from it” (1161b22-23). Therefore, whereas parents feel that their children are inseparable from them, children feel that their parents are separable (but see Schollmeier, 8-9). As Aristotle says, “parents love their children as themselves: offspring is, as it were, another self” (1161b27-28).

The second reason that parental affection for children is naturally greater than what they receive from children in return has to do with the point in time parents and children come to know each other. According to Aristotle, parents “love their children as soon as they are born, but children their parents only as, with the passage of time, they acquire understanding or perception. This also explains why affection felt by mothers is greater [than that of fathers]” (1161b24-27). As this last sentence indicates, in the natural account of friendship within the family, a mother’s love or her relationship to her children finally manifests itself. The political perspective on the family spoke only about the hierarchical relationship between fathers and sons, while a mother’s love and authorship for her child remained completely invisible (see Pangle 95).

The natural friendship between husband and wife, like the natural friendship between parents and children, also manifests significant differences from the political regime’s understanding of that friendship. Unlike the politicized relationship between husband and wife in which their friendship is aristocratic (with the superior virtue of the husband making him more deserving of a greater affection from his wife than he is obliged to show her in return), the natural friendship between man and woman in the family, Aristotle suggests, allows for a greater equality. As we have seen, the biological differences between man and woman bring them together for the purpose of reproduction, and children, according to Aristotle, are a good common to both partners (1162a29). Moreover, Aristotle claims, “human beings live together not merely for procreation, but also to secure the needs of life [...]. Thus they satisfy one another’s needs by contributing each [their] own to the common store. For that reason, this kind of friendship brings both usefulness and pleasantness with it, and if the partners are good, it may be based on virtue or excellence” (1162a21-25).

The natural friendship between husband and wife, therefore, seems to incorporate within itself the three basic forms of friendship; beginning with utility and pleasure, it can even aspire to a friendship based on goodness. Does this form of friendship based on goodness between husband and wife reach the level or satisfy the requirements of Aristotle’s perfect form of friendship between two good persons alike in virtue? Aristotle, with respect to man and woman, argues, “[t]here is a division of labor from the beginning and different functions for man and wife” (1162a22). Furthermore, Aristotle states that “each partner has [their] own peculiar excellence and they can find joy in that fact” (1162a26). The greater equality in the natural friendship between husband and wife is thus not a quantitative equality of sameness, but rather an equality based on differences that are complementary rather than antagonistic. It does not satisfy the requirement of strict equality or the like-to-like standard that must be present in Aristotle’s ideal of the perfect friendship between two good persons alike in their virtue. We must conclude, therefore, that friendship between husband and wife is not perfect in the strict sense that

Aristotle understands it (see Cooper 319). True friendship, it seems, is the exclusive preserve of men; it appears to exist only between two good men and not between men and women, and Aristotle does not explicitly consider the possibility of perfect friendship between two women (but see Dobbs 87; and Saxonhouse, "Aristotle" 46-47).

Mothering and the Sacrifice of Self

Aristotle's analysis of perfect friendship seems to exclude women and suggest that it exists only between good men. However, a brief exploration of his reflections on the mother-child relationship significantly impacts our understanding of the potential for friendship put forward by Aristotle. As noted previously, in Book Eight mother-love was suppressed in the politicized understanding of the family, only coming into view when the focus shifted to the family from within conceived as a web of natural relationships. Moreover, Aristotle pointed out that a mother's affection for her child was greater than that felt by fathers. Aristotle reminds us of this at the end of chapter seven in Book Nine, when he says "mothers love their children more (than fathers do): birth involves a greater effort on the mother's part, and she knows more clearly that the child is hers" (1168a25-28). The intensity of a mother's love for her child, it seems, is what causes Aristotle to use motherhood as the model of friendship. For instance, in his first reference to the mother-child relationship in Book Eight, Aristotle says, "friendship appears to consist in giving rather than receiving affection. This is shown by the fact that mothers enjoy giving affection" (1159a26-27) (see Cooper 320; Groenhout 193; Ward 168-69; Annas, *Morality of Happiness* 250; but see Pakaluk 102-103). In chapter four of Book Nine Aristotle again uses motherhood as the model of what it means to be a friend. At the beginning of chapter four Aristotle says:

The friendly relations which we have with our neighbours and which serve to define the various kinds of friendship seem to be derived from our relations to ourselves. We count as a friend 1) a person who wishes for and does what is good or what appears to him to be good for his friend's sake; or 2) a person who wishes for the existence and life of his friend for the friend's sake. *This is also the feeling which mothers have for their children* and which friends who have had a quarrel (but are still friends, have for one another) [...] a friend also [is] 3) a person who spends his time in our company and 4) whose desires are the same as ours, or 5) a person who shares sorrow and joy with his friend. *This quality, too, is most frequently found in mothers.* By one or another of these sentiments people also define friendship. A good man has all these feelings in relation to himself. (1166a3-10, italics mine)

The above passage suggests that for Aristotle, the good man's love of self is constitutive of his relation to others, because the good man "has the same attitude toward his friend as he does toward himself, for his friend is really another self" (1166a30-32; 1170b6).²

Moreover, according to Aristotle, the way in which a good man loves and treats himself is analogous to the way in which a mother loves and treats her child. As a model of friendship, the mother wishes for her child's life for her child's sake, loving her child even if the child quarrels with her or treats her badly, and, wanting the same thing for her child as the child wants for itself – the good – she shares in her child's sorrows and joys. The affection that mothers feel toward their children for their children's sake puts them in the category of the benefactor that Aristotle discusses in chapter seven of Book Nine. A benefactor, according to Aristotle, does good deeds and shows affection for the recipient without expecting or usually receiving anything in return. Aristotle proceeds to give three analogues of the relationship between benefactor and recipient: that between a craftsman and his product, a poet and his poem, and a mother and her child (1167b32-1168a5, 25-28). What unites the three examples is that the love the craftsman, poet, and mother feels is for that which they have brought into being.

Given that the last example of the benefactor is the only one that treats of a relation between human beings, couldn't we say that the affection and care a mother shows for her child is an illustration of a truly altruistic or selfless form of friendship? Aristotle appears to suggest otherwise. He explains the apparently selfless motive of the benefactor by reference to the fact that existence for all human beings is something desirable, but that "we exist in activity [...] by living and acting, and in [our] activity the maker is, in a sense, the work produced. [We] therefore love [our] work, because [we] love existence" (1168a5-8). Aristotle thus indicates that in our activity of making things, as craftsmen make products and poets make poems, and in doing for others, as mothers do for their children, we make ourselves. We create our own identity in the work that we do and the projects we take on, which are a reflection of ourselves and make us who we are (see Pangle 159-62). However, the greatest work or project, thereby producing the greatest personal development and satisfaction for the maker, would appear to be making another human being who they are (Schollmeier 63, 69). The latter, it seems, could apply especially to the task of mothering (but see Dobbs 76).

It would appear that for Aristotle the friendship a mother has for her child is, like the friendship between good men, rooted in the development of self and thus the enhancement of activity and life. Yet, if we return to Aristotle's first reference to the mother-child relationship, perhaps we can conclude that Aristotle points us to other possibilities. As mentioned previously, in Book Eight Aristotle argues that friendship consists more in giving rather than receiving affection, illustrated by the fact that "mothers enjoy giving affection" (1159a27). That mothering, like friendship, is defined more by giving rather than receiving affection, becomes manifest when

[s]ome mothers give their children away to be brought up by others, and though they know them and feel affection for them they do not seek to receive affection

in return, if they cannot have it both ways. It seems to be sufficient for them to see their children prosper and to feel affection for them, even if the children do not render their mother her due, because they do not know her. (1159a27-32) (see Pangle 87)

If, as Aristotle maintains, parents love their offspring as another self, a mother who gives up her child to others whom she thinks can give them a better upbringing sacrifices a part of herself for the good of her child. Such sacrifice of self, however, does not make the mother who she is by allowing her to make another human being in her own image, as is the case with other benefactors. Although she gives birth to her child, it is not she, but others, who raise the child. Moreover, according to Aristotle, a mother will make this sacrifice even if it remains completely invisible, as her child may never know her. It would seem, therefore, that a mother who gives up her child to others so that the child can have a better life, makes a true sacrifice of self for the love of another without any expectation of self-fulfillment in return. In this sense she is like the woman in Socrates' just city, articulated in Plato's *Republic*, who turns her offspring over to communal rearers for the happiness of the child and the greater good of the city (460b-d).³ Perhaps for Aristotle this is the one example of unconditional love in human life.

Citizens, Friends, and Philosophers

Aristotle's example of the self-sacrifice of mothering causes a truly selfless form of feminine friendship to come into view. It suggests that Aristotle believes it is possible for human beings, or within their nature, to act out of love for another that transcends the self. Moreover, it seems that for Aristotle the uniqueness of mother-love shows that women are capable of an altruism that points toward their participation in a perfect form of friendship that equals or is even truer than the friendship between good men.

The discussion of a mother who gives away her child so that her child can have a better life is, however, a very rare and particular example of mothering that would seem to exclude rather than include most mothers and women from Aristotle's understanding of friendship. Yet, Aristotle uses a particular example in this case that illuminates and serves as a metaphor for what all mothers, having the proper end in view, in fact seek to achieve. As contemporary feminist theorists Carol Gilligan and Sara Ruddick suggest, the aim of mothering is not simply to raise a child that is another self, but to cultivate a unique other with an identity and life of their own. (Gilligan 46-47; Ruddick 89-91). Paradoxically, therefore, all mothering involves a giving of self so that the child can grow into an independent other ready to assume the moral and intellectual responsibilities that friendship and citizenship require. In other words, all mothers, to use Aristotle's terms, give of themselves so that they will be able, in time, to give up their children and see

them prosper. Mothering, therefore, requires having a conception of the good of the other that transcends the interests and desires of the self.

If all mothering calls forth a type of love that allows women to engage in a form of friendship that equals or perhaps surpasses the perfect friendship of two good men, does this imply Aristotle's endorsement of women's participation in politics? A positive answer to this question requires that we confront Aristotle's claims in the *Politics* that political activity is rational and that man, not woman, is the rational and therefore political animal. In Book One of the *Politics*, Aristotle argues that human beings are by nature political animals because they, "alone among the animals," possess reason and speech as reason's external manifestation (1253a2-3, 9).⁴ Unlike other animals that intuit the merely pleasant and painful and express this through the sounds that they make, human beings, according to Aristotle, can grasp through reason the advantageous and the harmful, the good and the bad, and the just and the unjust, and communicate these things to each other through speech (1253a14-18). Aristotle therefore suggests that political activity is rational argument and deliberation concerning advantage, goodness, and justice and their opposites, and making decisions based on such rational deliberations (Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen* 14-15). Yet, Aristotle argues that the human soul is naturally divided into a rational, deliberative element that rules, and a nonrational, emotional element that is ruled. Moreover, Aristotle claims that "[t]he slave is wholly lacking the deliberative element; the female has it but it lacks authority; the child has it but it is incomplete" (1260a10-15). The apparent lack of authority that women's reason has over their emotions leads Aristotle to propose that women have "serving" virtues in contrast to men's virtues which are "ruling," and thus that "the male, unless constituted in some respect contrary to nature, is by nature more expert at leading than the female" (1260a24-25; 1259a42-43). It would thus appear that for Aristotle, women, guided by their emotions rather than their reason, must be excluded from and subordinated to the rational, political, and more fully human realm of men.

Aristotle's discussion in Book One of the *Politics*, however, is not exhaustive of his thought on the structure of the soul and its relation to politics. For instance, in Book One of the *Ethics*, Aristotle agrees to proceed on the assumption that the soul has two parts, a rational element and a nonrational element (1102a27-28). Yet, he questions whether "these two elements [of the soul] are separate, like the parts of the body or any other divisible thing, or whether they are only logically separable though in reality indivisible, as convex and concave are in the circumference of a circle" (1102a28-32). Aristotle therefore implies that although the soul can be divided into parts in speech or thought, in reality it is united or whole, one part unintelligible without the presence of the other. Thus, as Sokolon argues, Aristotle suggests that the division of the soul into rational and nonrational elements is imprecise and certainly not absolute, and that "it is only to

facilitate the discussion of ethics that the functions of the soul are spoken of as ‘parts’” (Sokolon 19; also see Groenhout 186-87). If the “parts” of the soul are in reality inseparable, it would follow that one could have rational emotions and, as it were, emotional thoughts.

In addition to the fundamental inseparability of reason and emotion, Aristotle suggests in the *Ethics* that there is a crucial connection between ethics, or moral and intellectual virtue, and politics. According to Aristotle, “the main concern of politics is to engender a certain character in the citizens and to make them good,” and that “the man who is truly concerned about politics seems to devote special attention to excellence, since it is his aim to make the citizens good” (1099b29-30; 1102a7-9). Thus, politics calls forth not only intellectual virtue, or rational deliberation concerning the good and the just, but also moral virtue, or the doing of the good and the just. Not simply thinking well but also acting well is the goal and completion of politics. Aristotle’s focus on moral virtue is of special interest to our argument. He defines moral virtue as an internal characteristic or disposition within the soul in which reason guides emotion toward a mean between the vices of excess and deficiency (1106b14-16; 1106b35-1107a2; 1138b21-24). Taking the example of courage as the paradigmatic moral virtue, Aristotle argues that it is our soul’s disposition toward the emotion of fear, specifically the fear of death. To feel an excess of fear in the face of death is the vice of cowardice and a deficiency of fear the vice of recklessness. To feel the right amount of fear at the right time is to achieve the mean, which is the virtue of courage (1107a35-1107b3; 1115a25-26; 1115b34-1116a9). The virtue of courage, therefore, does not exclude or require the rational suppression of the emotion of fear, as this indeed would be a vice, but rather requires reason to allow the emotion of fear to be felt at the right time in the right amount.

Taking the closely related moral virtue of “gentleness” as another example, Aristotle defines it as the soul’s disposition toward the emotion of anger. To feel an excess of anger in the wrong circumstances is the vice of “short-temperedness,” and a deficiency of anger in the right circumstances is the vice of “apathy.” To feel the right amount of anger in the right circumstances is to achieve the mean, which is the virtue of gentleness (1108a4-9; 1126a2-31). Again, gentleness, like courage, does not require the exclusion or rational suppression of the relevant emotion, in this case anger, but rather for reason to allow the proper amount of emotion to be felt at the right time (see Groenhout 182). Aristotle goes so far as to say, “those who do not show anger at things that ought to arouse anger [...] do not show anger in the right way, at the right time, or at the right person. Such people do not seem to rise to their own defense, since they do not show anger; but to let one’s own character be smeared and to put up with insults to those near and dear to [one] is slavish” (1126a3-9). We note that Aristotle’s indirect defense of the person who shows the proper anger toward other persons who attack those dear to them,

reminds us of a mother's love for her child that causes her to wish for her child's life and all that is good for her child for her child's sake.

Aristotle's discussion in the *Ethics* of the structure of the soul, moral virtue, and the relation to politics, refines his presentation of the political in Book One of the *Politics* in a way that is suggestive of the inclusion of women (see Ward 164-67, 169-70). If women, for Aristotle, are associated more with emotion rather than reason, in the *Ethics* he clarifies that the two "parts" of the soul are in reality entwined in a web of connection. Emotion, therefore, is not separated from but rather shares and is present with reason in political deliberation and choice (Sokolon 4-5, 11-12, 15-22, 29-32). Aristotle also shows that moral virtue requires the proper expression rather than suppression of emotion. If politics requires moral action for its completion, as Aristotle suggests, then political activity, to reach its end, must include rather than exclude the emotions.

Returning to the specific issue of mothering, even if it is acknowledged that all mothering is a sacrifice of self in the sense of giving of oneself for one's child, and that emotion, such as that which a mother feels for her child, can claim a place in politics, it should be recognized that "mother" does not equal "woman." Thus, what is the connection between women's capacity to express an altruistic form of friendship in the mother-child relationship (suggesting, for Aristotle, women's inclusion in politics), and the possibility of true friendship between adult women and women and men? To understand Aristotle's thinking with regard to women's capacity for a higher form of friendship with other women and men, it is helpful to consider his discussion of mothering in light of Socrates' proposals for the just city in Book V of Plato's *Republic*.

In the *Republic*, Socrates argues that the actualization of justice in the city requires radical transformation to the relations between the sexes and the structure of the family. He proceeds to outline three proposals necessary to achieve this transformation: the equality of the sexes, the community of women and children, and the rule of philosophers. With respect to his first proposal, Socrates, focusing on the sameness of soul rather than differences in reproductive biology, claims that women and men have the same natures and thus should be given the same education and functions within the city. All jobs, therefore, including arts such as medicine, carpentry, and shoemaking, as well as the burdens of going to war and ruling, should be distributed randomly among both women and men according to natural ability (454c-d, 455c-e, 456a, 467a, and 540c). Socrates' second proposal is the community of women and children, or abolition of the institution of private wives and the introduction of communal ownership and rearing of children (457d, 460b-c). The purpose of this proposal is unity within the city in which all citizens experience the same pleasures and pains simultaneously (462a-d). Unity, however, does not require that the bonds holding families together be eliminated, but

rather than the strong emotions and feelings of friendship that bind family members be extended to the city as a whole. For Socrates, justice and happiness within the city requires that each citizen, having been raised in common by the city's official child-rearers, regard every other citizen as either a mother, father, sister, brother, daughter, or son (463c). The city must become the "family," as it were, and citizens must transcend love of their "own" for love of all, and think about the good not just for themselves but for the whole. The rule of philosophers is Socrates' third proposal, in which leadership and authority are assumed by persons, both male and female, who have suitably philosophic natures (473d-e, 540c; also see Okin, "Philosopher Queens" 20).

Reflecting on Socrates' proposals for the equality of the sexes and philosophic rulers, in which women and men share equally and in close bonds of friendship all the functions within the city, feminist theorist Susan Moller Okin argues persuasively that both are premised on his second proposal, the abolition of private wives and the communal rearing of children. Socrates, therefore, indicates that dispensing with what he regards as their unnatural domestic roles of private wife and mother is what opens up other possibilities and ways of life for women (Okin, "Philosopher Queens" 20-21). Moreover, the proposal requires that women give up their children, once born, to be raised by communal rearers, both male and female, appointed by the city for their natural suitability in giving care (460b-d). As I have mentioned previously, Socrates' proposal that biological mothers give up their children to communal "mothers" in order to unite the city into one "family," as it were, resembles Aristotle's praise of mothers who give up their children to others so that their children can prosper, feeling affection for their children even if they do not know her in return. Conditions within Socrates' city are similar, as all women are "mothers" because citizens do not know who their biological mother is. Likewise, all children are cherished equally by all, because all are raised collectively rather than privately.

Despite praising a mother-child relationship in the *Ethics* that points toward Socrates' proposal for the abolition of the private family and the communal rearing of children in the *Republic*, Aristotle explicitly critiques this proposal in Book Two of the *Politics* (1261a10-1264b25). How can this apparent inconsistency between the *Ethics* and the *Politics* be reconciled? It is important to notice that although Socrates' proposal for the community of women and children is openly rejected by Aristotle in the *Politics*, his proposals for the equality of the sexes in education and occupation and for the rule of philosophers are not. I would argue, therefore, that while Aristotle cautions against the abolition of the private family as extreme, he, like Socrates, encourages the integration of women with men into the economic, political, and philosophic life of the city. If women are not actually to give up private families and children for the sake of the city, Aristotle's example in the *Ethics* of the mother who gives up her child to others to raise

shows that he believes it is within women's natural capacities to do so. Women, for Aristotle, can move beyond love of one's own for the love of the whole and can think and act for the good of the city and not just the self. Thus, if women are not be the common wives of men and common mothers to children, they can and should be the equal colleagues and friends of men (but see Saxonhouse, "Aristotle" 42-43, 48, 50-51 and *Women* 80-81, 87, 90-91). To the extent that women participate in the common life of the city apart from their life within the home, they will also be able to form friendships among themselves.

The argument that a mother's natural love for her biological children can provide the grounds for women's political caring and friendship, may be confronted by the serious objection that there is simply too large a gap between the ability to wish well for one's own children and loving the good of an unrelated whole such as the city. In order to address this objection, it is helpful to look more closely at Aristotle's critique in the *Politics* of Socrates' proposal for the community of women and children. Aristotle argues that in Socrates' city, even if "all say 'mine' and 'not mine' at the same time," it should be understood that the concept "all" has a "double sense" (1261b19-20). According to Aristotle "all" can mean "each individually," and in this case "each will then speak of the same boy as his own son and the same woman as his own wife" (1261b20-23). However, Aristotle claims that "those who have wives and children in common will not speak of them in this way, but as 'all' [collectively] and not individually" (1261b24-25). The problem, according to Aristotle, with the collective understanding of "all" – when every person, as it were, says all of these boys are all of our sons rather than that each boy is my son – is:

What belongs in common to the most people is accorded the least care: they take thought for their own things above all, and less about things common, or only so much as falls to each individually. For [...] they slight [what is common] on the grounds that someone else is taking thought for them [...]. Each of the citizens comes to have a thousand sons, though not as an individual, but each is in a similar fashion the son of any of them; hence all will slight them in a similar fashion. (1261b31-1262a1)

As this passage indicates, Aristotle believes that when all say "mine" and "not mine" collectively, there will actually be no affection or bonds of friendship within the city at all. Human beings do not love or care for others they do not perceive as their own or as another "self," as it were. Thus, if all parents collectively call all children collectively their sons and daughters, they will care for none of these children in particular, and there will be no particular children of their own in the city for which they can care. The result, Aristotle implies, would for all citizens be an excessive self-centeredness that destroys

rather than produces the unity of the city that Socrates so desired. Aristotle therefore speculates:

Which is superior – for each of two thousand (or ten thousand) individuals to say “mine” and address the same thing, or rather the way they say “mine” in cities now? For now the same person is addressed as a son by one, by another as a brother, by another as a cousin, or according to some other sort of kinship, whether of blood or of relation and connection by marriage – in the first instance of himself, then of his own; and further another describes him as a clansman or tribesman. It is better, indeed, to have a cousin of one’s own than a son in the sense indicated. (1262a6-13)

Aristotle therefore argues that known biological relations do not simply close one off from others, but rather situate one in an ever wider web of connection; to parents, siblings, cousins, in-laws, and larger communities and associations such as clans and tribes. Moreover, even if the private family is understood as a closed society, it at least initially helps individuals move beyond their love of self to love of others to some degree. It is from this love of the other within the biological family, Aristotle suggests, that human beings are prepared for and move toward love others within larger wholes such as fellow citizens within the city. Thus, for Aristotle, we do not choose between love of one’s own within the family, such as one’s own children, and love of the city, but rather love of one’s own leads to love of the city in which one’s family is situated. Indeed, Aristotle implies that if mothers truly wish the good for their children they must also wish what is good for the city, as the city, and the political activity that defines it, calls forth and makes possible their own and their children’s moral and intellectual activity.

I would like to conclude this section with a brief reflection on the philosophic quest as it relates to women and mothering. As already mentioned, Socrates proposes that women, like men, if naturally suited should engage in the life of philosophy. But, what does it mean to philosophize? In Book VI of the *Republic*, Socrates attempts to give some clarity to his understanding of the philosophic quest, arguing that the greatest study of the philosopher is the good (505a). Although I do not have the opportunity here to give a full analysis of Socrates’ account of the good, I would like to emphasize that the good for Socrates is the intelligible source of truth and the mind’s ability to think (508d-509a-c). Moreover, as the intelligible cause of truth, it is grasped by the mind apart from the senses, and exists beyond or apart from the self understood as an individual entity. It is also distinct from the practices and beliefs of one’s particular society and the material world as a whole (515d-518d).

As this brief description suggests, Socrates’ understanding of the good appears similar to the unqualified and universal good that Aristotle in the *Ethics* indicates is the object of

philosophic contemplation. How does this understanding of the good relate to Aristotle's discussion of the friendship between mother and child? As we have seen, all mothering requires a sacrifice of self in awareness of a good beyond the self. The self-sacrifice of mothering is manifested either in the rare example that Aristotle explicitly discusses of a mother who gives up her child at birth for others to raise, or in the more common maternal practice brought to light by this rare example of the giving of self so that one's child will become a distinct other eventually able to leave the self. I would argue, therefore, that the maternal transcendence of self, in thought and practice, for the good of the other beyond the self, prepares one or makes one especially suited for the philosophic transcendence of self to grasp the good which is the object of the philosophic quest. Mothering and philosophizing are closely linked.

Conclusion: Aristotle on Mothering and a Feminist Ethics of Care

My focus on mothering as the ethical basis in Aristotle's thought for women's participation in politics, moral action, and philosophy, addresses developments in contemporary feminist theory concerning an ethics of care. 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 which focuses on women's supposed emotionalism and concern for relationships as crucial to ethical decision making. 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 (see Groenhout 172, 184-185, 187-88). 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. I will thus conclude by discussing the work of more prominent feminist proponents of an ethics of care and consider important feminist critics of this ethical model for women. I will then briefly point to how Aristotle's reflections on women and friendship can address these divisions within contemporary feminist theory.

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 (Gilligan 47-49). 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 (Gilligan 46-47). 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 (also see Ruddick 89-91). 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 (Gilligan 24-39). 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 (Ruddick 6, 9, 13-15).

The claim that "justice" and objective rationality are masculine ways of thinking that should be rejected by women in favour of "care" and emotionalism has been critiqued by many feminist theorists. Sandra Lee Bartky, for example, in *Femininity and Domination*, argues that there is a gender imbalance in caregiving such that women's care of men is unreciprocated. "Caring" is therefore exploitative and disempowering to women as it signals their tacit acknowledgement and continuation of the supremacy of the male in the relationship. Thus, for Bartky, women's caregiving is, in effect, "a collective genuflection by women to men, an affirmation of male importance that is unreciprocated" (Bartky 100, 109, 117). Bartky also contends that the emotional sustenance women provide to men is epistemically problematic, preventing women from developing a sense of self and vision of reality that is uniquely their own. It is also ethically dangerous, requiring women to adopt the often questionable moral values of their male partners (Bartky 111-14).

Marcia L. Homiak, like Bartky, argues that in our present unequal socioeconomic context, 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" (Homiak 96-97, 98). Moreover, in contrast to Gilligan

and Ruddick, Homiak maintains that Aristotle's understanding of the rational life, as we have seen, 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 non-rational part, and thus Aristotle's rational ideal is not inherently masculine but rather worthy of emulation by women (Homiak 80, 82, 90-94, 99).

In *Justice, Gender and the Family*, Susan Moller Okin also criticizes what she calls the "different moralities strain" in feminism (Okin, *Justice* 15). 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 (Okin, *Justice* 15). 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, or the fact that women are usually burdened with unshared responsibility for childcare, should not be cherished but rather replaced with dual parenting if equality of opportunity and justice between the sexes is going to be achieved (Okin, *Justice* 5, 15, 175-76). The unequal division of childcare labour 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 under-representation 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 maintains 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 Bartky and 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 and self-denial 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 in a united soul. 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.

Although his direct statements on women seem to deny it, Aristotle's comments on motherhood indicate that mothering is a form of friendship that opens a woman up to and makes her 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 of the philosophic quest. Thus, my analysis of Aristotle provides a partial answer to the question of whether women can have "perfect" friendships. It is not a complete one, as never are all women mothers. The question of women's capacity *as women* for friendship, therefore, remains unanswered in Aristotle's thought. Yet, Aristotle does provide an enlightened understanding of mothering. Mothering does not separate woman and man, or "feminine" emotion and "masculine" reason, but rather brings them closer together.

Notes

¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Martin Ostwald, trans. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1986). All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition.

² For insightful discussion of Aristotle's complex understanding of the role of self-love in friendship, see Burger 45-50; Pangle 146-54, 170-73, 175-77, 179-82; Kraut para. 11, 12, 13; Cooper 328-30, 339-44, 351, 354; Mara 317; Pakaluk 165-77, 189-217; Stern-Gillet 67, 69-71, 73-74, 104, 110, 112-13, 115-18; Schollmeier 49, 50-51, 53, 57-58; Annas, *Morality of Happiness* 249-62 and "Plato and Aristotle" 539-44, 548-50; Kahn 21-30, 32-39; and Hardie 324-25.

³ Plato, *Republic*, C.D.C. Reeve, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004). All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition.

⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, Carnes Lord, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition.

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