The Elements of Aristotelian *Philia*

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

University of Pittsburgh

2021
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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Aristotelian philia ("friendship") is a complex phenomenon involving such diverse emotional, rational, evaluative, and motivational elements that it can be difficult to see how to put the pieces together. Aristotle himself brings together nearly the full range of elements in a remarkably rich passage in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.5. I use this passage as a guide in developing an account of hexis ("state") as the organizing principle of philia. This passage involves a contrast between philia and philēsis ("fondness"), and I begin by arguing in Chapter 2 that philēsis itself is a more interesting and complex emotional condition than has been recognized. I then partly use this account of philēsis to argue in Chapter 3 that the consensus interpretation of the passage in NE VIII.5 is mistaken. Aristotle appeals to the involvement of prohairesis ("decision") in philia to argue that philia is a hexis, and most commentators take Aristotle to refer to a kind of decision to reciprocate love that forms a philia. I argue that Aristotle rather has in mind the decisions which friends make regarding the good of each other within the context of philia. I then explain in Chapter 4 how such decisions imply that philia is a hexis by arguing that Aristotle recognizes a distinction between ways of having boulēsis ("wish"): The kind of boulēsis that is required for prohairesis must be had as a hexis, although not all boulēsis is like this. Thus I argue that philia is, roughly, being fond of one’s friend and having as a hexis on the basis of which one acts by prohairesis boulēsis for the good of one’s friend. Finally, in Chapter 5 I argue that this account of philia as a hexis helps us to further appreciate the way in which character philia, out of Aristotle’s three forms of philia, is primary: It is the only form in which one is related to the good of one’s friend—rather than one’s own pleasure or utility—in such a way that one’s relationship is itself appropriately called a hexis.

**Keywords:** Aristotle, philia, friendship, hexis, prohairesis, boulēsis, goodwill.
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Preface

This dissertation is not just a work on friendship, but of it; I could not have done it without the support of many philoi along the way, to whom I am grateful.

I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Jennifer Whiting. Without Jennifer’s example as a philosopher, this dissertation would have been impoverished and without her guidance as a mentor, impossible. Jennifer’s creativity, always well-grounded in the details, and her frank discussion, always mixed with good-humor and encouragement, provided needed perspective, both philosophical and practical.

I am also very grateful to the other members of my dissertation committee, all of whom have so deeply shaped my thought and for whom I have such admiration: for John McDowell’s patience and perceptiveness; for Gisela Striker’s rare combination of breadth and exactness; and for Michael Thompson’s passion and sincerity. It makes me happy to think they might be reflected here in some small way. I am also fortunate to have learned from Rachel Barney, Steve Engstrom, Jessica Gelber, Christina Hoenig, Doug Hutchinson, Brad Inwood, Peter Markie, and Peter Vallentyne.

I am thankful for the friendship of many colleagues who have enriched and enlivened this process, including: Steve Coyne, James Davies, Jeremy Davis, Laura Davis, Marion Durand, Marc Gasser-Wingate, Nathan Gilbert, Reier Helle, Ian Hensley, Sukaina Hirji, Robbie Howton, Dhananjay Jagannathan, Emily Kress, Katy Meadows, Peter Osorio, Juan Piñeros Glasscock, Allison Piñeros Glasscock, Evan Rodriguez, Jacob Stump, and Laura Tomlinson.

For unwavering love and support, I owe many thanks to my family: especially my mother, Ginger Philpot, who early on encouraged me to pursue philosophy; my sister, Madeleine Dunstedter; my uncle, Frank Gilliam; and my dear friend, Conor Proffitt.

This dissertation is dedicated to my best friend, my “another self,” Emily Philpot: I truly could not have done it without her. Without the example of my father, Tim Philpot, I likely would not have begun it—would that he were here to see it.
1.0 Introduction

Plato’s early dialogues often feature Socrates refuting an “expert” on some subject while at the same time professing ignorance of that subject.\(^1\) This format is given an interesting treatment in the *Lysis*, where the experts are two young boys and the subject is one Socrates ought to know by his age: how to make friends. We certainly might hope that *this* profession of ignorance, at least, is ironic. It is pitiful to think of Socrates, as he describes himself, wanting a friend since childhood but not knowing how “one person becomes the friend of another” (211d-212a). With the help of Lysis and Menexenus—whose claims to expertise, such as they are, lie in their professing to be friends—Socrates attempts to discover what makes someone a friend and more generally, what makes something dear.\(^2\)

The pace of their investigation is quick. Candidates are raised and rejected in swift succession: They begin with basic extensional accounts, according to which it is the mere fact of loving or being loved, or both, that makes something a friend (212b-213d); then move on to intentional accounts, according to which it is the way something is loved, e.g., *as* similar or *as* good, that matters (213d-215c); and finally reach a more complex intentional account which includes both the way in which the object is loved and the character of the lover which explains why the lover loves the object in that way (215c ff.). But throughout this discussion, the structuring assumption is that love is (a) desire. This assumption shapes which possibilities are taken seriously and which are discarded: It is a welcome and intuitively plausible result that a friend is good, but that a friend is bad or an enemy is a non-starter. And this assumption also generates many of the puzzles which block their progress; for example, a friend must be good (because desire is aimed at the good), and at the same time it seems that good people will be unable to have friends (because desire is aimed at something the desirer lacks and good people are self-sufficient).

The *Lysis* treats love as a desire the object of which is the beloved herself. And as

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1. Classic examples are piety in the *Euthyphro*, courage in the *Laches*, and temperance in the *Charmides.*
2. The Greek word for friend is just a substantive use of the adjective ‘philos’, “dear”, so the dialogue moves easily from what makes someone a friend to what makes something dear.
Aristotle is standardly read, he follows suit. He may clarify that the object of the desire is not the beloved herself but good things for the beloved. And he may improve upon the quality of the desire by requiring that good things are wished for the beloved for her own sake. But love is still fundamentally a desire or wish; and as David Konstan puts it, philia (usually translated as “friendship”) “...names the state of affairs that obtains between phileis, which requires that each philos have the corresponding wish for the other.” But this way of understanding Aristotle is a mistake (or at least a profound oversimplification): It obscures important differences between Plato and Aristotle; muddies the internal structure of philia; and underestimates the role of technical aspects of Aristotle’s moral psychology in his account of philia.

However, it is perhaps unfair to attribute to Konstan the view that philia is a state of affairs constituted by desire: Konstan has also claimed that it is a state of affairs constituted by a feeling (pathos) and then revised this claim, saying:

I myself once wrote that “...as a state of affairs obtaining between friends, [philia] consists of two pathē...” But I now think that this is inadequate as an account of Aristotle’s view. For Aristotle, friendship is primarily an activity, not just a state. (Konstan, 2018, 44)

Konstan’s evolution on this point indicates just how difficult it is to explain the way in which the elements of philia—e.g., the elements Konstan emphasizes, desire, pathos, and activity—come together in this complex phenomenon.

There is, however, a remarkably rich passage where Aristotle brings together nearly the full range of elements. In Nicomachean Ethics VIII.5 Aristotle argues that philia is a hexis (“state”) in contrast to the pathos of philēsis (“fondness”) and in doing so invokes boulēsis (“wish”), prohairesis (“decision”), and more (1157b28-32). I propose to use this passage as a lodestar in developing an account of hexis as the organizing principle of philia. Aristotle recognizes three forms of philia: virtue or character philia, pleasure philia, and utility philia.

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3The question of what kind of a thing love or friendship is according to Aristotle is not often addressed directly. But this general consensus can be seen, e.g., in Cooper’s treatment in his seminal 1977 of philia as mutual well-wishing, an approach which is followed by many, including Konstan, who argues that love is a desire and that friendship is a state of affairs involving reciprocal desires (2008, 212). Further evidence is the fact that two recent monographs on Aristotle on friendship, Stern-Gillet (1995) and Pangle (2002), address neither this question nor the alternative I will propose.

4See, e.g., Vlastos (1973).

5Konstan (2008, 212).
Focusing on philia as a hexis helps us to further appreciate the way in which character philia is primary: It is the only form in which one is related to the good of one’s friend in such a way that one’s relationship is itself appropriately called a hexis.

Primary philia is, roughly, being fond of one’s friend and having as a hexis on the basis of which one acts by prohairesis boulēsis for the good of one’s friend. This structure parallels the structure of virtue as an emotion-involving hexis which gives rise to prohairesis. Thus one theme running throughout, often submerged, is a way to understand the possibility raised by Aristotle that philia is a “kind of virtue” (ἀρετή τις) (NE VIII.1, 1155a4). As we will see, this is not how NE VIII.5 has generally been understood, for scholars have underutilized the rich connections that Aristotle sees between philia and virtue.

1.1 The Consensus Interpretation and its Problems

In NE VIII.5, 1157b28-32 (which I present in Chapter 2 and to which I will often return) Aristotle argues that in contrast to philēsis, philia is a hexis because of the way in which prohairesis is involved in philia. According to the widely-endorsed view which I will simply call the “consensus interpretation,” the role of prohairesis in philia is that friends decide to reciprocate philēsis or love. Reciprocation is a foundational requirement for philia, and so according to the consensus interpretation, prohairesis is involved in establishing philia—it is a hexis which is in some sense chosen. This certainly does not seem to be the kind of hexis that virtue is, which according to the account in NE II, takes time and habituation to develop. And in general, whether philia is the kind of thing that can be instituted by prohairesis would make an immense difference in our conception of philia.

The consensus interpretation is riddled with problems; but given the fundamental issues involved in this argument, these are productive problems: Addressing them will give us a better understanding of Aristotle’s account of philia. I summarize the main problems here:

1. The consensus interpretation often recasts this argument in terms of a contrast between philēsis and antiphilēsis, but antiphilēsis does not appear in the argument; antiphilein does.
2. The role of *prohairesis* in reciprocation identified by the consensus interpretation depends upon “anti” implying a thick notion of reciprocation, but there is good reason to suppose that it does not.

3. The consensus interpretation makes *philēsis* the object of *prohairesis*, but *philēsis* does not seem to be a proper object of *prohairesis*.

4. The way in which the consensus interpretation understands the role of *prohairesis* does not make sense of Aristotle’s argument: If *prohairesis* is involved in the reciprocation which establishes *philia*, then in order to conclude that *philia* is a *hexis*, we would need the claim that *hexeis* come from *prohaireseis*; but Aristotle claims just the opposite.

5. However we understand the argument that *philia* is a *hexis*, it is meant to contrast with Aristotle’s claim in the same passage that there can be *philēsis* for inanimate objects. The consensus interpretation has a harder time making sense of this contrast: If, as the consensus interpretation claims, *philēsis* is a suitable object of *prohairesis*, then we certainly might think that one could have *philēsis* for an inanimate object by *prohairesis*. But if it is this *prohairesis* which indicates that there is a *hexis*, then such *philēsis* for an inanimate object would be a *hexis*, too. And if the consensus interpretation were to appeal to a further distinction between inanimate objects and living things, then this would only show that there is more at issue in this argument than reciprocation.

6. Finally, most expositors of the consensus interpretation agree (as I do) that this argument concerns *primary philia*, but the consensus interpretation cannot properly account for this fact because reciprocation is a feature of all three kinds of *philia*.

The first two problems concern important assumptions made by the consensus interpretation. These problems give us reason to be suspicious that the consensus interpretation is really so obvious as it is made to seem. The second two problems concern internal issues within the consensus interpretation itself. I argue that these problems give us good reason to reject the consensus interpretation. And the last two problems concern the relationship between the consensus interpretation and elements of the larger context. I develop an alternative interpretation, and I argue that the way in which my interpretation is able to resolve these problems gives us further reason to adopt it.
1.2 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2: In *NE* VIII.5 Aristotle argues that *philia* is a *hexis* in order to support a contrast between *philia* and *philēsis*. It is a quick, compressed argument which likely relies on Aristotle’s other discussions of *philēsis*, especially the earlier contrast between *philia* and *philēsis* in *NE* VIII.2. It will be helpful to approach the argument in VIII.5 with some understanding of *philēsis*. A prior examination of *philēsis* is especially needed because expositors of the consensus interpretation often assume that ‘antiphilēsis’ (“reciprocal fondness”) can be substituted in this argument for ‘antiphilein’ (roughly, “to love in turn”). Aristotle’s notion of *philēsis* has received little attention. But, as I argue in Chapter 2, this notion is especially interesting and important for two reasons.

First, the term ‘*philēsis*’ does not appear in Aristotle’s other ethical treatise, the *Eudemian Ethics* (or indeed in any of Aristotle’s other works). I argue that a close examination of Aristotle’s use of ‘*philēsis*’ in the *Nicomachean Ethics* suggests that it is introduced in order to clean up some messiness in the Eudemian discussion of *philia*, especially concerning the treatment of inanimate objects. The introduction of ‘*philēsis*’ allows Aristotle to more clearly regiment the terminology describing love and friendship. Most importantly for the argument of later chapters, it allows Aristotle to reserve ‘τὸ φιλεῖν’ (“loving”) and *philia* for attitudes toward and relationships between individuals with independent *goods* (roughly, those for whom living well is possible and thus might fare well or badly).

Second, *philēsis* is a complex and interesting concept in its own right, which has been overlooked because scholars often fail to connect Aristotle’s three main discussions of *philēsis*. Although Aristotle assimilates *philēsis* to a *pathos* in *NE* VIII.5, we learn in *NE* IX.5 that *philēsis* takes time and familiarity to develop. In other words, *philēsis* itself seems to have *hexis*-like features. We also learn in IX.5 that although *philēsis* is not defined as a desire, it is essentially connected to *motivation*. This connection helps us to appreciate the complex *boulēsis* which Aristotle seems to connect with *philēsis* in *NE* VIII.2 (wishing goods to one’s wine but for oneself). The view of *philēsis* which emerges is of a complex emotional condition which gives rise to a wide range of motivations.

Chapter 3: With a clearer understanding of *philēsis*, I turn in Chapter 3 to the ar-
argument that *philia* is a *hexis* from *NE* VIII.5. According to the consensus interpretation, this argument turns on *reciprocation*: *Philia* requires reciprocation, but *philēsis* does not, and reciprocation involves *prohairesis* because of the element of deliberateness or intention involved in reciprocation. In this chapter, I argue that the consensus interpretation faces a number of problems, and I propose an alternative interpretation.

I begin with two assumptions (problems 1 and 2 above) often made by expositors of the consensus interpretation. These assumptions make the consensus interpretation seem straightforward: It is often assumed (1) that this argument can be understood as a contrast between *philēsis* and *antiphilēsis* and (2) that the prefix ‘anti-’ indicates an intentional sense of reciprocation. Together, these assumptions almost force us to accept the consensus interpretation. But I argue there is good reason to question both of these assumptions. The examination of *philēsis* in Chapter 2 shows that there are important differences between *philēsis* and τὸ φιλεῖν such that we should not assume that ‘antiphilein’ can be replaced with ‘antiphilēsis.’ And I argue that there is good reason to suppose that the prefix ‘anti-’ does not indicate intention but symmetry.

The consensus interpretation itself faces further problems. First, the consensus interpretation supposes that in establishing *philia*, one reciprocates *philēsis* or love by *prohairesis* (problem 3 above). But it is difficult to make sense of this reciprocation as an object of *prohairesis*. For Aristotle describes *prohairesis* as, roughly, the choice of something *up to us* as a means towards some end. *Philēsis*, as a *pathos*, does not seem to be up to us in the way required by *prohairesis*. Likewise, it is difficult to understand *philia* as established by a kind of “rational commitment” involving *prohairesis*. And in both cases, establishing *philia* by *prohairesis* goes against Aristotle’s own description of the slow development of *philia* over time. And even if we could make sense of reciprocation as a matter of *prohairesis*, the consensus interpretation faces the more serious problem that it fails to make sense of Aristotle’s argument that *philia* is a *hexis* (problem 4 above): According to the consensus interpretation, *philia* in a way comes from *prohairesis*; but Aristotle claims that *prohairesis* comes from a *hexis*, not the other way around. Thus the consensus interpretation gets the structure of Aristotle’s argument backwards.

We should take the *prohairesis* Aristotle has in mind here to be not the decision to
become friends, but the decisions friends make concerning each other within the context of their friendship. In a friendship, friends not only wish goods to their friends but also act on prohairesis to bring those goods about. These prohaireses flow from the philia, and thus because as Aristotle claims, prohairesis comes from a hexis, the kinds of prohairesis involved in philia show that philia must be a hexis (although we will find in Chapter 5 that primary philia is special in this regard).

Chapter 4: My account of the argument that philia is a hexis calls attention to the key claim that prohairesis comes from a hexis. In order to support my interpretation and see more clearly the way in which philia is a hexis, we need to better understand this key claim; and I turn to this in Chapter 4. The basic shape of a connection between prohairesis and hexis is suggested by Aristotle’s association of a hexis of character with the ends towards which prohairesis is in some sense directed. I accept the general view offered by others, such as Anscombe, that prohairesis involves a conception of one’s good or living well which requires a hexis of character. But I argue that a distinction which Aristotle draws in NE VIII.5 allows us to say something more specific which, however, challenges the common view of Aristotelian boulēsis.

I sidle up to this issue from a different angle. I begin by using the kinds of distinctions in desire drawn by, for example, Gary Watson and Bennett Helm, to motivate what I call “spontaneous boulēsis.” One of the defining features of boulēsis is that its objects are desired in some sense as good. Most interpretations of boulēsis in some way tie the goodness of its object to a conception of one’s good. I suggest that sometimes we can desire something as good on a whim or simply because it strikes us as good in the moment. Most views of boulēsis, I argue, have a hard time accommodating spontaneous boulēsis which seems to neither explicitly refer to one’s conception of the good nor express it.

I then argue that Aristotle distinguishes two ways of having boulēsis which suggest that he allows for spontaneous boulēsis. In referring to the well-wishing of friends, Aristotle distinguishes between boulēsis “according to a pathos” (κατὰ πάθος) and boulēsis “according to a hexis” (καθ’ ἕξιν). I argue that boulēsis κατὰ πάθος refers to something like spontaneous boulēsis: It is sudden, in the moment, and not connected to a conception of one’s good. In contrast, boulēsis καθ’ ἕξιν involves a conception of one’s good had as a matter of one’s
hexis of character. Finally, I argue that prohairesis likewise involves a conception of one’s good. And thus prohairesis comes from a hexis in the sense that the boulēsis with reference to which a prohairesis is made must be had as a matter of one’s character (although not all boulēseis are).

Chapter 5: Finally, I return to the hexis of philia in light of this account of the connection between prohairesis and hexis. We still need to understand exactly how this connection shows that philia is a hexis. If the connection between prohairesis and hexis runs through a person’s ends, then we must examine the kinds of ends involved in philia. Determining the ends involved in philia requires addressing the role of goodwill in philia.

Perhaps the most intensely discussed issue concerning Aristotle’s account of philia is whether all three forms of philia—character or primary, pleasure, and utility—require goodwill. Goodwill is roughly the wishing of goods to someone for her sake. The issue of whether or not all three forms of philia require goodwill thus raises the question of whether there are self-interested forms of philia. I argue in favor of the traditional view, influentially challenged by John Cooper, that pleasure and utility philiai do not require genuine goodwill. I argue that pleasure and utility philiai are both based on and aimed at the pleasure or utility one receives for oneself from one’s friend (at least, in their pure form, which qualification is important because I also argue for a more nuanced understanding of the classification of philiai).

In order to support the claim that pleasure and utility philiai do not require goodwill, I appeal to Aristotle’s characterization of philia as koinōnia (“community”). The dividing line separating those things which are capable of sharing in koinōnia and thus capable of being in a relationship of philia from those things which are not is the line between those things which have independent goods and those things which lack them. This recalls the important contrast between philēsis and philia developed in Chapter 2, and it helps to explain why Aristotle would count even self-interested relationships as philiai: Even self-interested relationships involve a special form of interaction between persons as distinct from mere things.

Every koinōnia aims at some good, and this structure helps us to understand the hexis of (primary) philia. In pleasure and utility philiai, the good enabled by the koinōnia and at
which it aims is the pleasure or utility one receives for oneself. One’s friend is loved insofar as she provides pleasure or utility, and the philia ceases whenever she ceases to be pleasant or useful. The controlling end in virtue of which one’s friend is loved in pleasure or utility philiai is thus the end of one’s own pleasure or utility. I argue that these philiai are not themselves hexeis because as Aristotle says, these philiai are merely incidental: The stable end (on the basis of which one might act by prohairesis) involves one’s friend only incidentally. Primary philia, by contrast, deserves to be called a hexis because it is that aspect of one’s own hexis of character in virtue of which one has the good of one’s friend herself as an end. Becoming friends and coming to fully value one’s friend thus involves acquiring, and can be identified with, an end one did not previously have.

1.3 Texts, Translations, and Terms

Translations from Aristotle’s Ethics are my own. I have followed, unless otherwise noted, the Oxford Classical Texts of the Nicomachean Ethics by Bywater and of the Eudemian Ethics by Walzer and Mingay. I have greatly benefited from the translations of the Nicomachean Ethics by Irwin, Reeve, and Rowe and from the translation of the Eudemian Ethics by Inwood and Woolf. Translations from other works of Aristotle are from the Revised Oxford Translation, edited by Barnes.

In order not to prejudice interpretation and to call attention to the technical nature of key terms, I have usually transliterated and italicized, but not translated, terms such as philia, philēsis, prohairesis, boulēsis, etc. (although I sometimes use a translation for an associated word, such as “choosing” or “deciding” for prohaireisthai).
2.0 Philēsis

Aristotle’s discussion of philia (often translated as “friendship”)¹ in Books VIII and IX of the Nicomachean Ethics has the typical shape of an Aristotelian inquiry: It begins with some general remarks on the importance of the subject and raises some puzzles about it; proposes a method by which progress might be made; and then implements that method.² In this case, Aristotle suggests that we might better understand philia by first understanding the possible objects of love—the “things that are lovable” (philēta).³ In VIII.2, Aristotle identifies these as the good, the pleasant, and the useful. In VIII.3-4, Aristotle uses this classification of the objects of love to distinguish the corresponding kinds of philia: virtue (or as I will often refer to it, “primary”), pleasure, and utility philia. The remaining chapters deal with refinements, extensions, and defenses of this view, beginning in VIII.5.

Scholars have tended to treat VIII.5 as a disorganized collection of miscellaneous points. Christopher Rowe, for instance, sees five sections (i-v).⁴ Even without describing the contents of these sections, Rowe’s summary of their relations gives a good sense of how hectic VIII.5 might appear:

There is no connection between i and what has gone before, or between i and ii; and the switches between iii and iv, iv and v, and vi and vii are all equally abrupt. That between ii and iii is at least explicitly marked; but iii is so short that there is a certain abruptness even here. (Rowe, 1971, 59)

I will argue that VIII.5 offers a crucial refinement to the view of philia developed in the previous chapters by answering the question What kind of a thing is philia? Leading up to VIII.5, philia has been characterized primarily in terms of attitudes—loving (τὸ φιλεῖν), fondness (philēsis), and goodwill. This characterization might even lead one to suppose that

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¹’Philia’ is a difficult term to translate because of, among other issues, its wide range of application. It applies relationships between close friends, business partners, family, etc. On these difficulties of translation, see Konstan (1997, Ch. 1) and Whiting (2006, §1).
²Cf. NE VII, Physics I, De Anima I-II.
³Cf. DA I.1, 402b14-16, where Aristotle raises the methodological question of the priority of objects to faculties.
⁴Rowe’s divisions are: i, 1157b5-13; ii, b13-24; iii, b25-28; iv, b28-32; and v, 1157b33-1158a1. Rowe’s sections vi (1158a1-10) and vii (a10-18) continue into VIII.6 and complete a unit which Rowe sees as corresponding to EE VII.2, 1236b32-1237b7.
philia just is one of or some combination of these attitudes. Aristotle heads off this potential misstep in VIII.5, where he makes clear that philia is not in itself an attitude, but rather a hexis, a stable “state.” Properly appreciating this point is key to understanding, for example, how philia comes about, how the varieties of philia differ, and how philia fits into Aristotle’s moral psychology. And once we properly understand Aristotle’s argument that philia is a hexis, we can also see that VIII.5 is better organized and less abrupt than it might seem at first.

Aristotle offers two considerations to support the claim that philia is a hexis. The first makes this claim seem entirely ordinary: Friends do not cease being friends just because they are asleep or separated and so unable to engage in the activities of philia (NE VIII.5, 1157b5-11). Likewise, the fact that one is not contemplating some bit of knowledge at the moment does not mean that one cannot be said to know it. For Aristotle, this is an indication that philia, like knowledge and virtue, is a persistent state, not merely an activity (although as we will see, mere persistence over time may not be enough to establish that philia is a hexis proper).

Aristotle’s more formal argument, my primary concern, shows that there is much more to Aristotle’s claim that philia is a hexis. This argument introduces prohairesis into the Nicomachean discussion of philia for the first time. Prohairesis, often translated “decision” or “choice” and explained more fully in §3.1 below, is a central concept in Aristotle’s ethics. By drawing our attention to the role of prohairesis in philia, this argument represents a key point of contact between Aristotle’s account of philia and the rest of his ethics. Here Aristotle argues:

Fondness [philēsis] seems to be a feeling, and friendship [philia] [seems to be] a state [hexis]; for there is fondness no less towards inanimate things, but they [sc., friends] love [each other] in return involving decision [prohairesis], and decision comes from a state; and they wish good things to those whom they love for their own sake not according to a feeling but

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5The Platonic background might further strengthen this supposition, given Plato’s general emphasis on love as an attitude, even in the discussion of philia in the Lysis.

6Here Aristotle does not draw the explicit conclusion that philia is a hexis but says: “Just as in the case of the virtues, some are called ‘good’ according to a state [καλὸς ἔξω] and others according to activity, so too in the case of friendship.”

11
This argument—punctuated as a single sentence in the Greek—is compressed, to say the least. The conclusion given at the start is a contrast between “fondness” (philēsis) and philia, but philia drops out of the justification. And the opposition between inanimate and animate objects, apparently poised to be the wedge that drives this contrast, is not continued as we might have expected. Despite these difficulties, scholars have been remarkably unified in their interpretation of this argument.

According to what I will simply call the “consensus interpretation,” the fulcrum of this argument is the notion of reciprocation. This distinguishes philēsis from philia—at least, it is claimed to be the operative distinction here—because philēsis does not involve reciprocation (or at least need not), but philia requires it. The consensus interpretation then locates the role of prohairesis in this reciprocation by taking there to be a level of rationality and intention in reciprocation which requires prohairesis. According to the consensus interpretation, then, philia is established by prohairesis—friends are so by choice.

There are several problems with the consensus interpretation. Most importantly, it saddles Aristotle with a bad argument (or rather, not much of an argument at all) for the conclusion that philia is a hexis. For according to this interpretation, prohairesis establishes

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7 ἔοικε δ’ ἡ μὲν φίλησις πάθει, ἡ δὲ φιλία ἕξει· ἡ γὰρ φίλησις οὐχ ἧττον πρὸς τὰ ἄψυχά ἐστιν, ἀντιφιλοῦσι δὲ μετὰ προαιρέσεως. ἡ δὲ προαιρέσεως αἷεν ἔξεις· καὶ τἀγαθὰ βούλονται τοῖς φιλουμένοις εἰκόνων ἑνεκα, οὐ κατὰ πάθος ἀλλὰ καθ’ ἕξιν.

8 Several notes concerning the translation of this passage: (1) I prefer “fondness” as a translation of ‘philēsis’, which is usually rendered as “loving” or “affection.” This better captures the wide range of objects and attitudes associated with philēsis; for example, Aristotle seems to allow that you can have philēsis for your favorite mug (NE VIII.2, 1155b27-28), but it is not clear that “loving” or “affection” properly apply in this case. This also better reflects Aristotle’s view that even philēsis takes time and familiarity to develop (NE IX.5, 1166b34-67a1), as we speak of “growing fond” of something and “having a fondness” for something in a way which indicates a kind of habitual state. (2) “they love [each other] in return” renders the finite verb antiphilein. Translators routinely make this into a participle for ease—“reciprocal loving”—but as we will see, this risks confusion, especially if ‘philēsis’ is translated as “loving.” This is a rare use for Aristotle of the verb antiphilein in the plural. It is most often used to indicate one person having love for a person who loves her. In the plural it seems to indicate two people loving and being loved by each other (cf. MM II.11, 1209a8-10). (3) I have supplied “friends” as the subject of antiphilein, but as I will argue in §5.3.1, this argument applies to primary philia in particular.

9 But it seems to me quite clear that it is an argument. It begins with what looks like a conclusion (“philēsis seems to be a pathos, and philia, a hexis”). This apparent conclusion is followed by a γὰρ clause, which we would expect to give the justification. And this justification consists of three clauses (with subsequent clauses connected by ‘δὲ’) which when properly understood, can be seen to offer an argument for the conclusion.

10 For sources of the consensus interpretation, see 45n19 below.
*philia* through reciprocation. But Aristotle does *not* claim that a *hexis* comes from *prohaire-sis*; he rather claims that *prohairexis* comes from a *hexis*. So the role assigned to *prohairesis* by the consensus interpretation does nothing to show that *philia* itself is a *hexis*. I consider this problem in detail and defend an alternative interpretation in Chapter 3. By misconstruing the structure of this argument, the consensus interpretation also makes it difficult to see how this argument fits into its context. The consensus interpretation forces an abrupt transition to Aristotle’s remark on wishing goods to one’s friend “according to a state,” and it has a hard time explaining how this argument might especially apply to primary *philia* in particular, as the larger context suggests that it does. I examine these issues more fully in Chapters 4 and 5.

In this chapter, I want to start from a confusion which has made the consensus interpretation seem almost inescapable. Some expositors of the consensus interpretation construe the argument in terms of a contrast between *philēsis* and *antiphilēsis* (“reciprocal fondness”).\(^\text{11}\) If the argument is construed in this way, then of course it appears that *all* the difference lies in the “*anti-*” prefix. And if Aristotle is understood as claiming that *antiphilēsis* involves *prohairesis*, whereas *philēsis* does not, then it would seem that the role of *prohairesis* must be in the reciprocation taken to be indicated by the “*anti-*” prefix. The consensus interpretation easily concludes that in this argument *philia* is distinguished from *philēsis* by the fact that *philia* requires reciprocation which involves *prohairesis*.

But Aristotle does not contrast *philēsis* with *antiphilēsis* in this argument; rather, he contrasts the noun, ‘*philēsis*’, with the verb, ‘*antiphilein*.’ This is important because ‘*antiphilein*’ does not mean “to have *philēsis* for each other,” but “to *philein* each other” and given the way in which Aristotle uses *philein* to characterize *philia*, *antiphilein* thus potentially brings in the full range of features associated with *philia*. This raises the possibility that the role of *prohairesis* lies in some feature *besides* reciprocation. Thus it is potentially misleading to frame the argument of VIII.5 in terms of a distinction between *philēsis* and *antiphilēsis* because this is liable to give the false impression that the distinction Aristotle is making and the *locus* of the *prohairesis* must be found in the “*anti*” rather than in the more general contrast between *philēsis* and *philia* with which Aristotle is concerned there.

\(^{\text{11}}\)See below, 47n25.
In order to approach this argument in VIII.5 with a proper appreciation of the interpretive options, we need a clearer understanding of Aristotle’s notion of *philēsis* and its relationship to *philia*. This issue is also worth pursuing in its own right: Although *philēsis* has received little sustained attention from scholars, it plays a key role in Aristotle’s account of *philia*, which requires or is partially characterized by antiphilēsis. Moreover, I will argue that *philēsis* itself is a complex mixture of emotional, motivational, and dispositional elements which covers important areas of love and friendship to which *philia* does not apply.

The term ‘*philēsis*’ seems to have been coined by Aristotle: It does not occur before Aristotle, and after Aristotle it occurs almost exclusively in the commentators on Aristotle. Within Aristotle, it does not occur outside of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. ‘*Philēsis*’ thus seems to be a specialized term suited to the discussion of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and one that was not widely taken up. This makes ‘*philēsis*’ an excellent case study in Aristotle’s technical vocabulary. My hypothesis, suggested by the usage of ‘*philēsis*’ in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is that Aristotle introduced the term as a refinement to the discussion of *philia* in the *Eudeman Ethics*. So I will begin by arguing that the Eudeman discussion exhibits a kind of messiness which *philēsis*, properly understood, is well-suited to clean up. This messiness has to do with the treatment of inanimate objects (and this is not surprising, given that as we have already seen, Aristotle explicitly connects *philēsis* with inanimate objects in NE VIII.5). I will not argue that the Eudeman treatment is outright contradictory, since this would involve settling big questions about, among other things, the attribution of apparently-psychological capacities to inanimate objects. Even the appearance of inconsistencies will be enough to shed light on the role of *philēsis*.

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12 *Philēsis* receives passing attention in many discussions of Aristotle’s account of *philia*, some of which will be discussed below, but I have found no focused treatment of it.

13 It is an interesting question why ‘*philēsis*’ did not enter the philosophical vocabulary (at least as far as surviving texts indicate). But I will not pursue this question here.

14 On this point, then, I think we find a counter-example to Rowe’s general view that the Nicomachean discussion presupposes elements of the Eudeman discussion in ways that make it less clear. See Rowe (1971, Ch. I.5).
2.1 Inanimate Objects in the Eudemian Account of *Philia*

At a general level, the Eudemian and Nicomachean accounts clearly differ in their handling of inanimate objects. When Aristotle sets up the discussion of *philia* in *NE* VIII.1—setting out the *endoxa* to be accommodated, the problems to be resolved, etc.—Aristotle describes one line of inquiry as “higher” (ἀνώτερον) and “more concerned with nature” (φυσικώτερον) (1155b1). This is the approach of those who discuss *philia* at the elemental or cosmic level, like Euripides, Heraclitus, and Empedocles. The puzzles of this natural scientific approach can be set aside, Aristotle says, “since they do not belong to the present inquiry,” which concerns human affairs (1155b8-9). When Aristotle discusses *philia* in terms of likeness and opposition in *NE* VIII.8—concepts also employed by the natural scientific approach—Aristotle is careful to limit discussion of the way in which the elements, e.g., the wet and the dry, might fit the model of *philia* between opposites. These matters again “belong to quite another” (ἀλλοτριώτερα) inquiry (1159b23-4).

Aristotle sets up the natural scientific approach similarly in *EE* VII.1, referencing Euripides, Heraclitus, and Empedocles; but he does not set it aside. And instead of bracketing the natural scientific approach in the discussion of likeness and opposition in *EE* VII.5, Aristotle explicitly seeks to situate it in relation to his own account (1239b5-10). The discussion of inanimate objects, particularly the elements, is correspondingly much more detailed than that of *NE* VIII.8. There is more to this difference in approach, I think, than a narrowing of the topic in the Nicomachean discussion. He also employs a new concept, *philēsis*, to make the Nicomachean account more precise.

The discussion of *philia* between opposites in *EE* VII.5 begins with a general thesis: “The opposite is dear to the opposite as being useful; for what is similar to itself is useless to it” (1239b23-4). After giving a few examples, like husband and wife, Aristotle rephrases this thesis in terms of desire:

[A]: ...and the opposite is pleasant and an object of appetite (ἐπιθυμητόν) as being useful, and not as constituting the end but as contributing towards the end. For whenever [something]...
gets what it appetitively desires [ἐπιθυμεῖ], it is in possession of the end, and it does not desire [ὁρέγεται] the opposite, such as the hot [desiring] the cold, and the dry [desiring] the wet.\(^{18}\) (EE VII.5, 1239b25-29)

The opposite is desired as something useful. When it is obtained, the desire for it goes away; so the opposite is desired not as an end itself but as usefully contributing towards some end. Notably, Aristotle’s examples here are pairs of opposed elements apparently desiring each other, the hot and the cold, the dry and the wet. It is difficult to avoid attributing some quasi-psychological attitude to them analogous to love. Immediately before introducing the elements, Aristotle does switch to ‘ὁρέγεται,’ which might be used in a less psychological and more metaphorical sense of “striving.” But this use of ‘ὁρέγεται’ is so closely linked to the previous ‘ἐπιθυμεῖ’ that it is hard to make much of the transition. And clearly this point about desire is meant to be connected to the initial thesis that “[t]he opposite is dear to the opposite as being useful...” Aristotle is preparing to connect this claim to his own account of philia in terms of the three objects of love, which had earlier been distinguished with reference to desire (EE VII.2, 1235b18-1236a15). But Aristotle has already said that inanimate objects, though they can be loved, are incapable of loving (EE VII.2, 1237a37-40). So we might at least wonder at this point, Just how do inanimate objects fit into the account of loving and philia?

The way Aristotle proceeds only intensifies this question. He moves directly to applying this discussion to philia:

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\text{[B]}: \text{And in a way even the philia for the opposite is for the good; for they [sc., opposites] desire [ὁρέγεται] each other on account of the mean. For like tallies, they desire [ὁρέγεται] each other on account of producing in this way one mean out of both. Yet it [philia]?}\(^{19}\) is incidentally for the opposite, but intrinsically for the mean. For the opposites do not desire each other, but the mean.}\(^{20}\) (EE VII.5, 1239b29-34)

Throughout this passage, which immediately follows the previous one, Aristotle refers to

\(^{18}\) καὶ ἢδυ καὶ ἐπιθυμητὸν τὸ ἐναντίον ὡς χρήσιμον, καὶ οὐκ ὡς ἐν τέλει ἄλλ' ὡς πρὸς τὸ τέλος. ὅταν γὰρ τύχῃ οὗ ἐπιθυμεῖ, ἐν τῷ τέλει μὲν ἐστὶν, οὐκ ὀρέγεται δὲ τοῦ ἐναντίου, οἷον τὸ θερμὸν τοῦ ψυχροῦ καὶ τὸ ξηρὸν τοῦ υγροῦ.

\(^{19}\) There is no expressed subject, and it may be that the desire is incidental (as Inwood and Woolf translate) or that the philia is incidental (as Kenny takes it). These claims are of course related, but I am inclined to see philia as the referent. The structure seems to be: a point about philia supported by a claim about desire, followed by another point about philia (introduced by the ‘ἐτι’) supported by another claim about desire.

\(^{20}\) ἔστι δὲ πως καὶ ἢ τοῦ ἐναντίου φιλία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. ὀρέγεται γὰρ ἀλλήλων διὰ τὸ μέσον· ὡς σήματα γὰρ ὀρέγονται ἀλλήλων διὰ τὸ αὐτὸ γίνεσθαι ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἐν μέσων. ἔτι κατὰ συμβεβηκός ἐστι τοῦ ἐναντίου, καθ' αὐτὸ δὲ τῆς μεσότητος. ὀρέγονται γὰρ οὐκ ἀλλήλων τάναντια, ἀλλὰ τοῦ μέσου.
neuter “opposites.” There has been no explicit narrowing of the subject, and so Aristotle’s claim that “...in a way even the philia for the opposite is for the good” at least appears to apply generally, even to the example of the opposed elements just given. Are we to take it, then, that there can be philia between inanimate objects, even though they are incapable of loving (τὸ φιλεῖν)? (Aristotle does imply that there is philia for inanimate objects when he argues that goodwill is not a part of pleasure philia, because if it were, then there would also be goodwill for inanimate objects (EE VII.7, 1241a8-9).)

Aristotle does eventually draw an explicit contrast between inanimate and animate things. But even this contrast is of only limited help:

[ Cf.]: For if those who are too cold are heated and if those who are too hot are cooled, they are brought into the mean; and likewise in the other cases. But if not, they are always in a state of desire [ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ], not in the mean states. But the one in the mean without desire takes pleasure in the things that are pleasant by nature, and others [take pleasure in] everything that deviates from their natural condition. This pattern [εἶδος], then, is also in the case of non-living things; but loving [τὸ φιλεῖν] comes about whenever it is in the case of living things.21 (EE VII.5, 1239b34-1240a1)

Aristotle, switching from the neuter to the masculine, now illustrates the previous point in terms of people (but not yet pairs of people): Those who are, for example, too hot, perhaps because of a fever, can be brought into the mean state through the opposite, being cooled. Those in an extreme, then, only incidentally desire the opposite as being useful for bringing them into the mean state.22 It is those in the mean state who desire and take pleasure in the things which are pleasant by nature—a point Aristotle repeats elsewhere.23 At this point, Aristotle draws a contrast between inanimate and animate things: “This pattern [εἶδος], then, is also in the case of non-living things; but loving [τὸ φιλεῖν] comes about whenever it is in the case of living things.” But this contrast is not as helpful as we might wish precisely because it is unclear what “pattern” (εἶδος) Aristotle means to attribute to inanimate things.

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21 ὑπερψυχθέντες γὰρ, ἐὰν θερμανθῶσιν, εἰς τὸ μέσον καθίστανται, καὶ ὑπερθερμανθέντες, ἐὰν ψυχθῶσιν ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπί τῶν ἄλλων. εἰ δὲ μη, ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ, ὅπως ἐν τοῖς μέσοις ἀλλὰ χαίρει ὃ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ ἀνέων ἐπιθυμίας τὸς φύσει ἴδεσιν, οἱ δὲ πάσοι τοὺς ἐξετάσαν τής φύσει ἔξεσιν. τοῦτο μὲν οὖν τὸ εἶδος καὶ ἐπί τῶν ἁμισύνων ἔστιν τὸ φιλεῖν δὲ γίνεται, όσταν ἢ ἐπὶ τῶν ἁμισύνων.

22 The Lysis is clearly in the background here. This is Aristotle’s answer to the potentially worrisome role of something bad in philia, which troubles Socrates when he reaches the conclusion that “the body, which is neither good nor bad, is a friend of medicine on account of disease, that is, on account of something bad” (219a1-3).

23 E.g., EE VII.2, 1235b33-1236a; NE III.4, 1113a29-33; NE X.5, 1176a15-19.
and what notion of “loving” (τὸ φιλεῖν) he means to deny them.

I will not go into the interpretive options in detail here. It suffices for my point that there are several options. The “pattern” might be understood in more or less psychological terms: At one end, it might be the immediately preceding pattern of desiring and taking pleasure in an opposite. At the other end, it could be merely the pattern of opposites bringing each other into the mean (without attributing desire). The pattern might also be understood as either one-sided (like a person who is too hot desiring the cold) or reciprocally (like the wet and the dry “desiring” each other).

This latter distinction corresponds to a potential distinction in τὸ φιλεῖν: This might be understood either as the one-sided activity of loving or as being in the reciprocal relationship of φιλία (i.e., ‘φιλεῖν’ as “being friends”). So it could be that inanimate objects are capable of quasi-psychological attitudes, but these attitudes do not constitute loving. Or it could be that inanimate objects do stand in relationships of, we might say, “attraction” to each other, but these relationships do not constitute φιλία.

As we have already seen, these interpretive options may be in tension with passages earlier in the chapter where Aristotle does seem to attribute both something like loving and a kind of φιλία to inanimate objects. After all, this is what makes them relevant to the discussion and what allows Aristotle to conclude the chapter with the general statement (referring to neuter plural opposite things), “Therefore, the opposites are friends incidentally, as has been said, and on account of the good” (1240a3-4). But again, my point is not that these difficulties cannot be settled in a consistent manner. My point is rather that this discussion gives inanimate objects an ambiguous status. Aristotle seems to want to attribute something like loving and φιλία to inanimate objects, but he lacks the framework to draw clear-cut distinctions.

Aristotle has good reason to want to address inanimate objects in some way. They are part of the domain addressed by Plato’s Lysis, to which Aristotle is clearly responding.24 In the Lysis, Socrates tries to develop an account of being a “friend” or being “dear” which applies generally. He considers both cases of opposed inanimate objects being friends with

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24Price (1989, 9-10) provides a useful summary of the similarities between the Lysis and Aristotle’s account.
each other and cases of people being friends with inanimate objects. This level of generality causes many of the problems which block Socrates’ progress. And in EE VII.5, I think we see Aristotle likewise encountering problems. Aristotle improved on the account of the Lysis by distinguishing between the good, the pleasant, and the useful as the objects of love. But this distinction is not enough to forestall difficult questions which arise when he tries to accommodate the general claim that opposites, including inanimate objects, are “friends.” The Nicomachean account seeks to answer these questions partly by restricting the domain of inquiry—excluding elemental and cosmic philia—and partly, I argue, by introducing philēsis. Philēsis thus represents a significant aspect of Aristotle’s engagement with the Lysis.

2.2 Philēsis in the Nicomachean Ethics

In fact, as we will see, Aristotle uses an example reminiscent of the Lysis to introduce philēsis in the first of three passages in the Nicomachean Ethics where Aristotle addresses philēsis most directly. In each of these passages, Aristotle is concerned to distinguish philēsis from a related concept: In VIII.2, Aristotle distinguishes philēsis from philia by appealing to the fact that an object of philēsis, unlike a party to philia, needs neither to reciprocate nor to have an independent good. In VIII.5, Aristotle again distinguishes philēsis from philia, this time arguing that philēsis is a feeling (pathos), whereas philia is a hexis. Finally in IX.5, Aristotle distinguishes philēsis from goodwill (eúdoia) by calling attention to the active motivation involved in philēsis. Scholars often treat these passages in isolation, and philēsis has suffered from this piece-meal treatment. Read together, they reveal a interesting account of a complex emotional condition that has not been sufficiently appreciated by commentators.

2.2.1 Philēsis and inanimate objects in VIII.2

After setting out the puzzles in VIII.1, Aristotle proposes: “Perhaps it would become clear concerning these things if the object of love were identified” (1155b17-18). Aristotle

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25 For examples of the first sort, see 215e; and for examples of the second sort, see 212d.
26 Τάχα δ’ ἂν γένοιτο περὶ αὐτῶν φανερῶν γνωρισθέντος τοῦ φιλητοῦ.
then distinguishes three “objects” of love (philēta), the good, the pleasant, and the useful, and he charts the relations between them. Here Aristotle’s analysis parallels his treatment of desire. These are the formal objects of love (in the same way that according to Aristotle, desire is for the good or apparent good). These formal objects pick out aspects in virtue of which something is loved (or desired). It would be natural—perhaps more natural than in the case of desire—to raise a question about the range of these formal objects: Can any particular thing which instantiates one of these formal objects be loved?

It is in response, I think, to this kind of implicit question that Aristotle brings in philēsis:

Although there are three things on account of which [people] love, in the case of philēsis for inanimate things it is not called ‘philia’ ... (NE VIII.2, 1155b27-28)

There is a distinction to be made which depends upon whether the philēta are instantiated by inanimate or animate things. The way in which Aristotle begins this distinction by referencing love (φιλεῖν) might lead us to expect something like: If one loves (φιλεῖν) an inanimate object, then the resulting relationship is not philia but philēsis. However, Aristotle does not continue in quite this way. It is philēsis, not φιλεῖν, which is directly attached to the inanimate objects: “...in the case of philēsis for inanimate things...” This gives the impression, which I think we will see confirmed, that philēsis takes on characteristics of both loving (τὸ φιλεῖν) and philia. It can take the place of τὸ φιλεῖν as an active attitude but can also be viewed as a kind of relationship comparable to philia. This is important because, among other reasons, it opens the possibility that in the Nicomachean Ethics, unlike the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle reserves ‘τὸ φιλεῖν’ for living things.

Aristotle supports this distinction between philēsis and philia by pointing to two distin-

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27 Cf. NE II.3, 1104b30-31, where Aristotle lists the three objects of choice as the fine, the beneficial, and the pleasant (τριῶν γὰρ ὀντων τῶν εἰς τὰς αἱρέσεις καὶ τριῶν τῶν εἰς τὰς φυγάς, καλῶν συμφέροντος ἡδέος...). On this point, see Whiting (2006, §4).

28 It might be intuitively plausible that anything which can appear good can be desired. But VIII.1 has just demonstrated that there are more conflicting beliefs about the kinds of things which can be loved.

29 τριῶν δ’ ὀντων δι’ ἀφίκησιν, ἐπὶ μὲν τῇ τῶν ἀφίκησιν φιλίας οὐ λέγεται φιλία;

30 Of course, Aristotle could not have gone on to make a simple distinction concerning the resulting relationship depending upon whether the object of φιλεῖν was inanimate or living because unreciprocated love will not result in philia.

31 It could be that the subject of ‘λέγεται’ is meant to bring in φιλεῖν from the first clause, but I think it is more likely that the subject is specified by the ἐπι clause, as, e.g., Reeve and Irwin translate. We might also make a connection with τὸ φιλεῖν by assuming that philēsis just is the activity of τὸ φιλεῖν, as some scholars seem to do, but as we will see, this is an assumption we should not make.
guishing features. Philēsis for inanimate objects is not philia:

for there is no reciprocal fondness [antiphilēsis], nor is there wish [boulēsis] for that thing’s good (for presumably it would be ridiculous to wish good things to wine, but if indeed [someone does], he wishes that it be preserved, so that he himself might have it).32 (NE VIII.2, 1155b28-31)

First, inanimate objects are of course incapable of returning fondness, so there is no reciprocal fondness (antiphilēsis). (And note that here Aristotle does use the noun, ‘antiphilēsis,’ rather than the verb, ‘antiphilein,’ as he does in our passage from VIII.5.) But as Aristotle will go on to assert, philia is a reciprocal relationship between two (or more) people.33 If someone wishes goods to someone for her own sake but the wish is not returned, then the wisher is said to be merely “good-willed” (εὔνους) and the two do not stand in a relationship of philia (NE VIII.2, 1155b32-34).34

Second, philēsis for inanimate objects does not amount to philia, because inanimate objects are not proper recipients of well-wishing, which is required for philia (although whether the stronger notion of goodwill is required must be considered later). Inanimate objects do not seem to have “a good” such that someone might wish good things to them. Here Aristotle employs an example which might make us think of the Lysis, where Socrates considers “phil-” compounds, including “wine-lovers” (φίλωνιοι) (212d5-8). It would be ridiculous, Aristotle supposes, to wish goods to one’s wine; the closest attitude would be to wish to the wine something which is good for oneself. This is because inanimate objects do not have

32 οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀντιφίλησις, οὐδὲ βούλησις ἐκείνῳ ἀγαθοῦ (γελοῖον γὰρ ἴσως τῷ οἴνῳ βούλεσθαι τάγαθα, ἀλλ’ ἐπερ, σῴζεσθαι βούλεται αὐτόν, ἵνα αὐτὸς ἔχῃ)

33 This requirement comes up in an interesting way in the discussion of self-love, where Aristotle wonders whether there can really be philia with oneself, given that philia requires two or more parties (NE IX.4, 1166a33-b2; cf. EE 1240a13-21).

34 This raises complicated questions both about the nature of philia—in particular, whether all three forms of philia require goodwill (which will be addressed in Chapter 5)—and about the nature of goodwill (εὔνους) itself. David Konstan, for instance, supposes that this sense of being “good-willed” (εὔνους) in VIII.2 is just like philia, but single-sided. This sense thus involves both philēsis and wishing goods, and in this respect it differs from the more technical notion of goodwill discussed in IX.5 which Aristotle distinguishes from both philēsis and philia (Konstan, 2008, 209). Against this view, (1) it is not unlikely that, after just indicating that philēsis is separable from goodwill, Aristotle is also treating goodwill as separable from philēsis, as he will in IX.5. Certainly philēsis has not been explicitly reintroduced, and the focus is on the role of goodwill in philia. And (2) the example which Aristotle will go on to give of having goodwill towards someone one has not seen (NE VIII.2, 1155b34-56a1) seems to fit the notion of goodwill discussed in IX.5, which may be motivationally inert. However, there would seem to be some difference in the way in which Aristotle is treating goodwill in VIII.2 and IX.5, given that goodwill seems to be restricted to primary philia in IX.5. I address this issue in Chapter 5.
independent goods. Their goods are rather dependent upon the user. (It is an interesting feature of Aristotle’s example, to which I will return, that the attitude is not quite the one we might expect to be ascribed to the wine-lover: It is not aimed at wine in general or drinking wine habitually; rather, it seems to concern a particular wine which it is hoped will be preserved, like a connoisseur taking care to age a particular bottle.)

Aristotle returns to this point later in NE VIII.11 as part of his discussion of the relationship between philia and justice. Aristotle argues that there is no philia (or justice) between crafts-person and tool, soul and body, or master and slave because there is “nothing in common” between them (1161a32-35). For the same reason, there is no philia or justice with inanimate objects in general (1161a35-b2). Aristotle puts this point more clearly in terms of their goods in the corresponding passage in the Eudemian Ethics:

Since it holds likewise, soul in relation to body and craftsman in relation to tool and master in relation to slave, of these there is no community [koinónia]. For there are not two things, but the one and the other belongs to it. Nor is the good for each separable, but rather the good of both is [the good] of the one for whose sake [the other] is. (EE VII.9, 1241b17-22)

The attitudes of well-wishing involved in philia require that each party have an independent good that might be promoted. However, when one thing, A, is for the sake of another, B, then in a sense, there is only one good, the good of B. And the “good” of A is subordinate to and determined by that of B. There is a sense in which such things can be “benefited” by their use, but this falls short of well-wishing (NE VIII.11, 1161a35-b1). To the extent that this thought is meant to apply to inanimate objects in general (and to horses, oxen, etc., as at NE VIII.11, 1161b1-2), it raises large questions about the scope of Aristotle’s teleology. But it is at least clear that inanimate things and non-rational animals do not

Nussbaum rightly emphasizes this independence as part of what makes friends a vulnerable external good (2001a, Ch. 12, esp., 354-5).

This may in fact be what Aristotle has in mind. Wine was already being purposefully aged in the Classical period, and aged wine was valued at least by some (Davidson, 1998, 40-43). Pindar, for instance, praises “old wine” (Ol. 9.48).

I agree with Inwood and Woolf in bracketing ‘οὐδέν,’ as the OCT does. Kenny accepts Jackson’s emendation ‘οὐδ᾽ ἐν’ and translates: “because they are not two different things: the first term in each is unified, but the second belongs to the first and has no unity of its own.” However, the use of ‘τοῦ ἑνὸς’ in 1241b21 seems to tell against this reading.

share in *eudaimonia*. In this sense, then, which I take to be the sense relevant to *philia*,
ythey do not have an independent, self-standing good. Their “good” can be determined by
the use to which they are put—for example, the enjoyment of wine by the wine-lover, the
prescription of wine by the doctor, etc. There can be *philēsis* for such things based upon the
way in which they fit into one’s own good, but one cannot stand to them in a relationship
of *philia*.

### 2.2.2 *Philēsis* as a *pathos* in VIII.5

Later in VIII.5 (the passage with which we began), Aristotle again distinguishes *philēsis*
from *philia* and again appeals to inanimate objects:

Fondness [*philēsis*] seems to be a feeling, and friendship [*philia*] [seems to be] a state [*hexis*];
for there is fondness no less towards inanimate things, but they [sc., friends] love [each
other] in return involving decision [*prohairesis*], and decision comes from a state; and they
wish good things to those whom they love for their own sake not according to a feeling but
according to a state. *(NE VIII.5, 1157b28-32)*

Aristotle argues here that *philēsis* is a *pathos*, and *philia* is a *hexis*. I will examine this
argument more fully in Chapter 3. For now, note that Aristotle’s use of the claim that
there can be *philēsis* towards inanimate objects recalls the passage from VIII.2, and it is
likely that this argument in VIII.5 turns on one (or more) of the features highlighted there,
reciprocation and having an independent good. Clearly the role of *prohairesis* is central
to this argument, and there are two ways in which *philēsis* might lack (and *philia* have)
*prohairesis*, corresponding to those two features: First, it might be that *philēsis* is without
*prohairesis* in the sense that *philēsis* is not exercised intentionally, at will—by *prohairesis*.
Second, it might be that *philēsis* is without *prohairesis* in the sense that it does not require one

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40 See, e.g., *NE* I.9, 1099b32-1100a1; *Pol.* III.9, 1280a32-4; *PA* II.10, 656a3-8.
41 How exactly this independence is to be accommodated within friendship is a difficult issue. See, e.g.,
Whiting’s worries about the “colonizing ego” (1991, §4).
42 However, note that this contrast does not yet indicate anything determinate about the motivation behind
well-wishing in *philia*. Parties to *philia* must have independent goods which can be promoted, but it may be
that the wish that those goods be promoted is self-interested.
43 ἔσει δὲ ἡ μὲν φίλησις πάθει, ἡ δὲ φιλία ἕξει· ἡ γὰρ φίλησις οὐχ ἧττον πρὸς τὰ ἄψυχά ἐστιν, ἀντιφιλοῦσι δὲ μετὰ
προαιρέσεως, ἡ δὲ προαιρέσεις ἀρ’ ἔξεισι· καὶ τάγαθα βούλλονται τοῖς φυλαμένοις ἐκείνων ἔνεκα, οὐ κατὰ πάθος
ἀλλὰ καθ’ ἐξων. *(On the translation of this passage, see 12n8 above.)*
to act *prohairesitically* towards the good of the object. *Philēsis* does seem to lack *prohairesis* in both of these senses. As a *pathos, philēsis* does not seem to be the kind of thing which can be controlled by *prohairesis*. And given that the object of *philēsis* might not even *have* a good (as in the case of inanimate objects), *philēsis* certainly does not require *prohairesis* action regarding the good of its object.

This distinction between *philēsis* as a *pathos* and *philia* as a *hexis* is sometimes treated as a distinction between *active* and *passive*. On this way of treating the distinction, *philēsis* is thought to be the *activity* of *philia*. (And this may be part of the reason why expositors of the consensus interpretation see no problem in shifting from *antiphilein* to *antiphilēsis*.) At a certain level, this may be correct: Aristotle twice claims that *philia* and *philēsis* co-vary with the object of love (*NE* VIII.3, 1156a6-7; VIII.7, 1158b17-19); and the conjunction of both terms might be taken to pick out the relationship and the attitudes within it.

Although we might use ‘*philēsis*’ to refer to the kind of active fondness or affection present in *philia*, we should not *identify* *philēsis* with the activity of *philia* for at least two reasons: First, the activity of *philia* requires well-wishing of some sort, but as we have seen, *philēsis* does not. The objects of *philēsis* may not even *have* a good which one might wish to be promoted. *Philēsis* thus encompasses a wider range of possible attitudes than the activity of *philia*. When Aristotle needs to describe the activity of *philia*, he rather reaches for ‘τὸ φιλεῖν,’ for instance in VIII.8, where Aristotle argues that “loving” is more characteristic of *philia* than “being loved” (1159a27 ff.). I think that in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, at least, Aristotle identifies the activity of *philia* with τὸ φιλεῖν (although of course τὸ φιλεῖν can occur outside of *philia* too) and reserves it for cases in which a kind of well-wishing is involved.

Indeed, as I will argue, this narrowing of ‘τὸ φιλεῖν’ made possible by the introduction

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44 Aristotle appeals to this fact in arguing that virtue is not a *pathos* in *NE* II.5 (1106a2-4).
45 In Chapter 3, I will argue that the consensus interpretation fails to properly take into account the first sense and wholly overlooks the second sense, which I argue is key to understanding this argument.
46 For instance, Price refers to the definition of ‘τὸ φιλεῖν’ in the *Rhetoric* (II.4, 1380b34-1381a3) as a definition of ‘*philēsis*’ (1995, 113).
47 On Aristotle’s vocabulary of love and friendship, see Konstan (2006, Ch. 8). Konstan notes the close connection between *philia* and τὸ φιλεῖν and occasionally comes close to suggesting that τὸ φιλεῖν requires well-wishing, saying, e.g., “As a name for simple love, that is, the altruistic wish for the good of another, *philia*, like to *philein*, is a *pathos*…” (178). But if he does accept this restriction, Konstan would appear to hold that τὸ φιλεῖν requires goodwill, whereas I have suggested, and this will require further explanation in Chapter 5, that τὸ φιλεῖν only requires *boulēsis* for the promotion of the beloved’s good (which *boulēsis* may or may not be for the beloved’s own sake).
of ‘philēsis’ is part of what gives Aristotle greater precision in the Nicomachean discussion. And second, as we will see, the way in which Aristotle contrasts philēsis and goodwill further suggests that philēsis itself has hexis-like features, so to restrict philēsis to an activity would be an oversimplification. (And this may be why here in VIII.5 Aristotle says that philēsis “seems” (ἔοικε) to be a pathos.)

Certainly this distinction does indicate an important difference in the stability of philēsis and philia. In the Categories, Aristotle describes a hexis as an especially durable kind of condition (διάθεσις). His primary examples of hexeis are knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and virtue, both of which take time to develop and are quite resistant to change. This fits well the characterization of (primary) philia as developing slowly over time: Friends must have shared the proverbial amount of salt because the required knowledge and trust of each other takes time to acquire (NE VIII.3, 1156b25-32; cf. NE VIII.4, 1157a20-22). The philia built on such a foundation and based in each friend’s character is also especially durable (NE VIII.3, 1156b9-12). It is likely that the way in which philēsis is characterized here as a pathos indicates that philēsis need not take so long to develop or be so long-lasting.

However, Gauthier and Jolif take philēsis too far in the other direction when they suggest that philēsis is a pathos in the sense that “…one is able to fall for a good wine, for example, in one blow and without forethought, to feel an outburst of passion for it…” This sets up their view of the contrast between philēsis and philia in this argument: Philēsis can occur suddenly and with no thought, but the reciprocation involved in philia requires prohairesis. But as we will see, this view of philēsis directly contradicts Aristotle’s claim in IX.5 that philēsis also takes time to develop. In this respect, philēsis seems to differ from other pathē in that philēsis refers directly to a kind of emotional state or disposition (something hexis-like)

48 Cat. 8b27-35: “A state differs from a condition in being more stable and lasting longer. Such are the branches of knowledge and the virtues. For knowledge seems to be something permanent and hard to change if one has even a moderate grasp of a branch of knowledge, unless a great change is brought about by illness or some other such thing. So also virtue; justice, temperance, and the rest seem to be not easily changed.” Hutchinson (1986, Ch. 2) provides a thorough account of Aristotle’s notion of a hexis, especially as it relates to the ethics.

49 It is clear from Aristotle’s account of virtue in NE II that it is acquired through a process of habituation. It may be more surprising that knowledge, which in some sense can be taught, also requires time to develop, but see NE VII.3, 1147a18-24.

50 “…on peut s’éprendre d’un bon vin, par example, d’un seul coup et sans réflexion préalable, éprouver pour lui une bouffée de passion…” (Gauthier and Jolif, 1958, II.681).
developed and persistent over time. Certainly other pathē, like fear, could become emotional
dispositions—this is key to Aristotle’s account of becoming virtuous—but fear can grip one
suddenly, all at once in a way that philēsis cannot. Perhaps the analogue in the domain of
fear would be something like a phobia.

As Aspasius points out, classifying philēsis as a pathos does seem to indicate an important
non-rational element in philia.\(^{51}\) The pathē are emotional responses of the non-rational part
of soul which Aristotle particularly associates with pleasure and pain.\(^ {52}\) To the extent that
all philiai involve philēsis, as Aristotle seems to hold, all philiai then involve some kind of a
non-rational, emotional attachment.\(^ {53}\) But the issue of the non-rational nature of philēsis is
perhaps not as clear-cut as Aspasius supposes: As we have already seen in VIII.2, philēsis can
be directly connected with what is usually taken to be a highly rational form of motivation,
boulēsis, as when a person wishes that her wine be preserved. This brings philēsis closer to
philia itself, which is often taken to be defined as the wishing of goods for one’s friend.

Aristotle does elsewhere list philia among the pathē. But given the care he takes to
distinguish philia from philēsis, I take those references to be general, non-technical uses of
‘philia.’ As the Nicomachean discussion shows, it would be more precise to refer to philēsis
as the pathos in the domain of philia (although even this would not be entirely satisfactory
since like philia, philēsis is not the kind of thing that an orator might suddenly arouse in
an audience).\(^ {54}\) The classification of philēsis as a pathos and its connection to boulēsis raise
important questions about the structure of the motivations involved in philia. I will address
an aspect of this issue in Chapter 4, where I consider the distinction Aristotle draws in this
passage from VIII.5 between wishing “according to a feeling” (κατὰ πάθος) and “according
to a state” (καθ’ ἕξιν).

\(^ {51}\) Aspasius, On Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics 8, 172, 8-23. See below, §2.3.
\(^ {52}\) Rapp (2013, §IV) attempts to fit philia into the Rhetoric’s framework of defining the pathē with reference
to pleasure and pain.
\(^ {53}\) Philēsis is thus relevant to the long-standing debate over the role of affective ties in philia. Malcolm
Heath, for instance, has argued that the Greek notion of philia “is not, at root, a subjective bond of affection
and emotional warmth, but the entirely objective bond of reciprocal obligation; one’s philos is the man one
is obliged to help, and on whom one can (or ought to be able to) rely for help when oneself is in need”
(Heath, 1987, 73-74). On this view, cf. Peachin (2001). Konstan has argued energetically against this view:
\(^ {54}\) On this issue, see Rapp (2013, esp. 25). I agree with Rapp that philia involves important emotional
elements, as philēsis indicates, but I am not convinced that philia as explained in EE VII and NE VIII-IX
is itself a pathos.
2.2.3 Philēsis and goodwill in IX.5

The connection between philēsis and desire is made clearer in NE IX.5, one of a pair of chapters which distinguish philia from the closely related concepts of goodwill (εὔνοια) and concord (ὁμόνοια).\(^{55}\) As we have already seen, some form of well-wishing or goodwill is an integral part of Aristotle’s account of philia from the beginning, but here he addresses goodwill directly, arguing that it is a potentially free-standing attitude.\(^{56}\) To do this, Aristotle argues that goodwill can be separated from both philia and philēsis (in VIII.2 Aristotle had argued that philēsis is separable from goodwill, and so we now learn that neither requires the other).

Goodwill is not philia, Aristotle argues, because the epistemic requirements, as it were, of goodwill are so much lower than those of philia. You do not need to know someone in order to have goodwill towards that person, as you might have goodwill towards the citizens of your country or those who practice the same profession; but it would be strange to say that you could be friends with someone you did not know. Likewise the recipient of your goodwill might never be aware of it; but surely it cannot escape your notice that you are friends with someone.\(^{57}\) Aristotle says that these points have been mentioned before (1166b32), which I take to be a reference back to VIII.2: There Aristotle said that you could have goodwill towards someone you have never laid eyes on and this person might even have goodwill towards you, but this would not constitute philia (1155b34-1156a5). Goodwill, then, requires only the vague supposition that the recipient is somehow deserving of it, whereas philia requires greater, more precise knowledge of the friend.

Although philēsis too is less demanding than philia, it is still more demanding than

\(^{55}\)We might also view these chapters as focused on the “features of friendship” (τὰ φιλικὰ), as e.g., Gauthier and Jolif (1958, II.725) and Whiting (2006, §6) do. Then they would be part of a larger unit including at least IX.4 on self-love, which begins, Τὰ φιλικὰ δὲ τὰ πρὸς τοὺς πέλας, καὶ οἷς αἱ φιλίαι ὁρίζονται, ἐσκεν ἐκ τῶν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐκχαριθέναι (1166a1-2).

\(^{56}\)There is a question (mentioned above, 21n34) about how this later discussion of goodwill relates to Aristotle’s earlier usage of it. Some, such as Whiting (2006, 281) and Konstan (2006, 173), suppose that IX.5 introduces technical refinements to a pre-theoretic notion of goodwill in VIII.2. However, the way Aristotle refers in IX.5 (1166b32) to earlier discussions (on which see below) seems to indicate continuity. I discuss this more fully in Chapter 5.

\(^{57}\)In a sense, this statement is too strong: It may be difficult to “label” a relationship, but in any relationship approaching philia, one is certainly aware both of the other person and to some extent, of that person’s attitudes. I discuss a related issue in §5.1.3.1 below.
goodwill:

For [goodwill] does not have διάτασις or desire ὄρεξις, but these things attend philēsis; and philēsis involves familiarity, but goodwill can arise suddenly, as happens toward contestants.\(^{58}\) *(NE IX.5, 1166b30-1167a1)*

Aristotle points to two features which distinguish goodwill from philēsis: First, goodwill does not necessarily involve διάτασις or desire. (There are issues concerning the translation of ‘διάτασις,’ and so I have left it untranslated for now.) Second, whereas philēsis requires familiarity or intimacy, goodwill may come about suddenly. I will address the second feature first.

### 2.2.3.1 Philēsis and familiarity

Philēsis involves or comes about with συνήθεια—“familiarity,” “intimacy,” or “acquaintance.” This is a condition philēsis shares with philia (or perhaps we should say, a condition philia has in virtue of involving philēsis?). Philia requires trust, and trust is built through coming to know someone, which in turn requires close association (συνήθεια).\(^{59}\) In both philia and philēsis, becoming acquainted or familiar with someone (or something) is a process which takes time. This is clear both from the way in which Aristotle elsewhere connects συνήθεια with time (e.g., *NE* VIII.3, 1156b25-32) and from the contrast Aristotle draws here with goodwill: Goodwill does not require familiarity, but rather can come about suddenly. Thus the requirement of familiarity for philēsis is not merely a knowledge requirement, although it certainly is that; there is an element of repetition or habit involved in συνήθεια. This shows that philēsis cannot be, as Gauthier and Jolif claim, an “outburst” of emotion where one is seized suddenly, all at once by a feeling of love for something.\(^{60}\) Rather, philēsis is developed over time as one becomes familiar with its object. It takes time to come to know that a new mug fits your hand well, holds heat well, is resilient, is easily cleaned, etc. (although presumably less time than it takes to come to know a friend as trustworthy).

As we have seen from VIII.2 and VIII.5, philēsis can be had towards a wide range of

\(^{58}\) οὐ γὰρ ἔχει διάτασιν οὐδ’ ὄρεξιν, τῇ φιλήσει δὲ ταῦτ’ ἀκολουθεῖ· καὶ ἡ μὲν φίλησις μετὰ συνήθειας, ἡ δ’ εὔνοια καὶ ἐκ προσπαθεῖας, οἷον καὶ περὶ τοῖς ἀγωματίας συμβαίνει·

\(^{59}\) See, e.g., *NE* VIII.3, 1156b25-32 and *NE* VIII.4, 1157a20-22.

\(^{60}\) See above, 25n50.
objects. This includes the objects of *philia*, other people who can reciprocate, and other living things, whether they can reciprocate or not; and it includes inanimate objects like your favorite mug or shirt, and perhaps by extension your favorite café or vacation spot.  

But if *philēsis* is a fondness for something developed over time, then there is an important limit on the attitudes which will count as *philēsis*. We can see this by contrasting the way Alexander Nehamas explains the *philēsis*:

*Philēsis* is a very broad, generic attitude: it ranges from a merchant’s cool appreciation of profit to the most intense erotic passion, and it is provoked by everything that, according to Aristotle, human beings care for: practical benefit or profit, pleasure, and virtue (*NE* 8.2, 1155b17-26). (Nehamas, 2010, 216).

It is certainly right that, like the objects of *philia*, the possible objects of *philēsis* are the *philēta*—the good, the pleasant, and the useful—and that *philēsis* can be directed towards a wider range of objects which have these properties than *philia*. But the familiarity and time required to develop *philēsis* mean that not every instance of caring about something based upon one of the *philēta* will amount to *philēsis*. This is precisely part of Aristotle’s point in contrasting *philēsis* and goodwill. We certainly *care* about someone when we have goodwill towards that person, and goodwill is based upon the appearance of some positive quality of that person. But such goodwill need not involve *philēsis*. And to the extent that an erotic passion is *sudden*, aroused all at once by the beauty of its object, that erotic passion will not amount to *philēsis*.  

Nehamas’ characterization also raises an important question about the *generality* of *philēsis*: To what extent is it a generic attitude which might characterize, as Nehamas suggests, the “merchant’s cool appreciation of profit”? This raises again the question of whether *philēsis* is meant to be Aristotle’s analysis of the attitudes of the horse-lovers, quail-lovers, dog-lovers, exercise-lovers, and wine-lovers discussed by Socrates in the *Lysis* (212d5-8). The role of familiarity and time in developing *philēsis* suggests a certain level of particularity. *Philēsis* involves getting to know an object, becoming familiar with it in a way that brings about a fondness for it. As I noted earlier, Aristotle’s own example of *philēsis* for wine fits

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61 Cicero, for instance, touches on our propensity to become attached to familiar places (*De Amicitia* 68).
62 Aristotle explicitly compares goodwill and erotic love in this regard at *NE* IX.5, 1167a3-4: “[Goodwill] seems to be a starting-point of *philia*, just as pleasure through sight [is a starting-point] of erotic love” (ἔοικε δὴ ἀρχὴ φιλίας εἶναι, ὡσπερ τοῦ ἑραν ἣ διὰ τῆς ὰφέως ἴδονή).
this model: Aristotle’s imagined wine-lover seems to have a fondness for a particular wine and wishes that it be preserved.

Aristotle elsewhere characterizes being a “lover of something” (φιλοτοιοῦτος) as taking pleasure in that thing, apparently in a kind of general, habitual way (NE I.8, 1099a7-11). A wine-lover in this sense might be someone who habitually enjoys drinking wine. But if the attitude of such a lover could be fully characterized in terms of habitual appetites (epithumiai) for that thing, then I would argue that philēsis would not be involved. Philēsis seems to require some attitude of care which sets it apart from epithumia—something like the difference between the attitudes of the connoisseur and the drunkard. Philēsis, after all, is at least in the domain of philia, so we might reasonably expect it to involve similar sorts of attitudes. And such attitudes of care are most naturally directed at particular objects. Perhaps it would be enough, however, to say that a wine-lover had developed a fondness for wines from a particular vineyard, varietal, vintage, etc. in such a way that she took special care in storing, aging, tasting, etc. those wines. But it is more difficult to imagine that there could be philēsis for something as general as “profit.” Certainly we would, I think, need to know more about the shape of the merchant’s attitudes and motivations towards profit before we could say that she has philēsis for profit in general. (I will return to the attitudes involved in philēsis below.)

We can now appreciate the hexis-like character of philēsis. It is not a fleeting, momentary pathos. Indeed, as we have seen, it is similar enough to philia that Aristotle must carefully

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63 Pakaluk is certainly right to point out that the ultimate aim of the wine-lover is to drink the wine, and so in that sense the wine-lover would not seem to aim to promote the good of the wine, even if the wine had “a good”, which it does not (Pakaluk, 1998, 60). But this fact should not overshadow the kind of care with which the connoisseur might approach her wine. And Aristotle does seem to think that the proper use of something can be a way of benefiting that thing in such a way that drinking the wine might not be inconsistent with caring about it (1161a35-b1). Cf. Gauthier and Jolif’s comment: “...qu’il y ait des gens chez qui cet amour est un état habituel, c’est ce qu’Aristote n’entend pas nier; il veut dire simplement que pour aimer le vin, il n’est pas nécessaire d’être un ivrogne” (Gauthier and Jolif, 1958, II.681). But there is certainly room between their view that philēsis might be a sudden outburst of passion and being an ivrogne, and it is in that space that I would locate philēsis.

Thus philēsis fills a gap Aristotle recognizes in the unnamed social virtue discussed in NE IV.6. This virtue is closest to philia but differs from it because this virtue “does not involve passion [πάθος] and being affectionate [στέργειν] towards those with whom it deals” (1126b22-23). This virtue involves a general sensitivity to the proper pleasures and pains of social interaction, not affection aimed at individuals.

65 There are deep issues here, which I will not be able to address, paralleling well-known issues in philia: Are friends loved on the basis of repeatable qualities, such as their virtue? In which case, there might indeed seem to be an attachment to something general, with friends loved on the basis of it. Or are friends loved as whole, particular individuals or for their particular instantiations of repeatable properties?
distinguish the two. Like *philia*, *philēsis* involves a process of becoming acquainted with the object, which requires repeated, close association over time. This process establishes something like a *relationship* of fondness with the object. *Philēsis* seems to persist over time, shaping one’s general attitudes towards the object. This process of development and persistence over time give *philēsis* something like the stability of a *hexis* (although as noted above, presumably not the high degree of stability and durability Aristotle ascribes to *hexēis* proper). Moreover, this gives Aristotle the kind of account which we would want of emotional “loving.” To say that we *love* something is not to indicate a particular episode, a particular instance of an attitude, but rather to indicate a kind of ongoing emotional *disposition*.66 The other feature which distinguishes *philēsis* from goodwill helps to further fill out this emotional disposition.

### 2.2.3.2 *Philēsis* and desire

Goodwill and *philēsis* can be distinguished not only by the way in which they come about, but also by the kinds of attitudes involved: Goodwill does not have (or at least does not require) διάτασις and desire (ὄρεξις), but these are concomitant with *philēsis*.67 For the moment, I will focus on the claim about ὀρεξίς. As Christof Rapp notes, we might initially find this claim puzzling: Aristotle seems to define goodwill as a kind of *wishing* goods to someone; and this wishing (boulēsis) is a form of desire; so how could goodwill not have desire?68 Rapp rightly identifies two ways in which we might resolve this appearance of contradiction. First, Aristotle standardly uses ‘ὥρεξις’ as a *general* term for desire, of which Aristotle recognizes three kinds: appetite (ἐπιθυμία), spirit (θυμός), and wish (boulēsis).69 It would indeed be difficult for Aristotle to assert that goodwill, which is defined as a kind of

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66 *Philēsis*, then, to some extent corrects an “awkwardness,” noted by Striker, which we might feel in Aristotle’s treatment of *philia* in the *Rhetoric* by giving us an emotional disposition associated with *philia* (1996, 301n13). But to the extent that, like *philia*, *philēsis* takes time and familiarity to develop, it does not supply the kind of emotion an orator might arouse in her audience on the spot.

67 Aristotle says that these things “follow” (ἀκολουθεῖ) *philēsis*. However, ‘ἀκολουθεῖ’ often indicates a logical, not merely a temporal, relation, and so we should understand this in the sense that *philēsis* necessarily involves these things. But I do not think that we should take this passage, as Rapp does, to show that “*philēsis* is said to be a sort of desire” (2013, 34).

68 Rapp (2013, 34).

69 See, e.g., *EE* 1223a26-7; *DA* 414b1-3, 433a21-26.
boulēsis, does not have desire in the general sense which includes boulēsis. But occasionally Aristotle seems to use ‘ὄρεξις’ in a specific sense (although note that my argument here will not turn on whether or not Aristotle in fact employs this narrower sense). Aristotle sometimes seems to oppose ὀρεξία to nous, logos, or even boulēsis in a way which might suggest that ‘ὄρεξις’ refers to mere desire in the sense of non-rational desire. In this sense, ὀρεξία would pick out appetite and spirit in opposition to boulēsis. If Aristotle does use ‘ὄρεξις’ in a restricted sense and we were to take it in that sense here in IX.5, then Aristotle’s point might be that philēsis, unlike goodwill, involves non-rational motivations. And this point would certainly align with understanding goodwill as a certain kind of boulēsis.

According to Rapp, this point would also be congenial to philēsis, contrasting “the more passionate philēsis with the more detached goodwill.” And Rapp stops short of endorsing this interpretation only because of the way in which it might seem to align τὸ φιλεῖν with goodwill in contrast to philēsis, given that τὸ φιλεῖν seems to be defined in the Rhetoric, similarly to goodwill, as a kind of boulēsis. And Rapp is precisely concerned to vindicate the Rhetoric’s treatment of τὸ φιλεῖν as an emotion, so he does not want to see the “more passionate” philēsis separated from τὸ φιλεῖν. But I think we have good reason to reject this interpretation outright. Besides identifying philēsis as a pathos, there is little evidence that Aristotle restricts philēsis to non-rational motivation. In fact, as we have seen, even philēsis for an inanimate object can involve boulēsis, as when a person wishes that her wine be preserved, so clearly boulēsis can “attend” philēsis. Moreover, the way in which Aristotle proceeds in IX.5 does not support this way of contrasting goodwill and philēsis; it rather supports another understanding of the contrast.

Aristotle will go on to say that we might describe goodwill as a kind of “inactive (ἀργή) philia” (1167a11). It is this potential inactivity or idleness of goodwill, not its rationality, which is central to the contrast between goodwill and philēsis. The sense in which goodwill might be inactive is suggested by the way Aristotle supports the initial contrast between

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70 Rapp cites DA 434a12 and MA 701b1 as passages in which ‘ὄρεξις’ is sometimes taken in this sense (2013, 34). For a fuller argument that Aristotle does use ‘ὁρεξία’ in this narrow sense, see Lorenz (2009, 182-3). Lorenz adds EE 1224a23-5 and DA 433a6-8. Of course, whether ὀρεξία is really meant to be excluded from the contrasting element can be difficult to ascertain. Whiting (2002b, esp. §5) brings out the kinds of difficulties involved in DA 433a6-8.

71 Rapp (2013, 34).
goodwill and philēsis, continuing from above:

For they [sc., the spectators] become good-willed towards them [sc., the contestants] and share their wishes, but they [sc., the spectators] would not at all join in their actions; for, which we said before, they become good-willed suddenly and feel superficial affection [ἐπιπολαίως στέργουσι].

Spectators can get swept up in the action of the contest and suddenly form goodwill for one of the contestants. The spectators want the contestant to win, just as the contestant herself does (and so they “share their wishes” (συνθέλουσιν)). But the spectators will not act on behalf of the contestant—they will not jump into the ring and actually do anything to bring it about that the contestant wins (and so they do not “join in their actions” (συμπράξαιεν)).

This suggests the second way to understand the claim that goodwill might lack ὀρέξις: It might be that Aristotle is using ‘ὀρέξις’ to refer specifically to desire which actually motivates someone. As in the first interpretation, this would involve a slightly narrower, non-standard usage of ‘ὀρέξις,’ since Aristotle would be claiming that boulēsis, which is a kind of ὀρέξις in the general sense, might lack ὀρέξις in this narrower sense. If this is indeed Aristotle’s point, as I think it is, then we can see that it is a difficult point to make purely in terms of ὀρέξις. We certainly might have thought that all forms of ὀρέξις, including boulēsis, involved motivation insofar as they they are forms of desire (and Rapp is hesitant to endorse this interpretation for such reasons). Here it is helpful to return to διάτασις.

Translators often treat διάτασις as if it were a third difference between philēsis and goodwill (in addition to ὀρέξις and familiarity). But I think that διάτασις should rather be taken together with ὀρέξις and that Aristotle adds it in order to help clarify his point about ὀρέξις and motivation. Most translators take ‘διάτασις’ to mean “intensity” in the sense we might use of the “intensity” of an emotion. Understood in this way, διάτασις indeed looks like a separate condition. We have and act on cool emotions and desires, so διάτασις would tell us something specific about the quality of the pathos philēsis. However, this does not seem to fit Aristotle’s other uses of ‘διάτασις.’

It is used infrequently by Aristotle and most commonly in physiological or biological

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72 εὖνοι γὰρ αὐτοῖς γίνονται καὶ συνθέλουσιν, συμπράξαιεν δ' ἄν οὐδὲν ὀπερ γὰρ εἶπομεν. προσπαίως εὖνοι γίνονται καὶ ἐπιπολαίως στέργουσιν.

contexts. There it seems to be used without any psychological dimension. So in History of Animals, Aristotle says that the womb has “elasticity” (X.3, 635b9) and that spasms in the womb can be caused by “distention” (X.4, 636a32). In De Incessu, Aristotle explains why athletes with weights jump farther and runners who swing their arms run faster by the resistance or pressure that happens in “extending” their arms (3, 705a18). The esophagus is capable of sinewy extension (νευρώδη τάσιν), Aristotle explains in Parts of Animals, so that when food enters, it can “stretch” (III.3, 664a33). Finally, in the Politics Aristotle argues that lawmakers should not try to forbid the “exertions” and crying of young children, because this is itself a form of physical exercise and strengthening (1336a34)—“Exertions” here often seems to be understood in the sense of exerting or stretching one’s voice, i.e., “screaming.”

The only other use of ‘διάτασις’ by Aristotle (besides the possibly spurious Problemata) is in this passage in the Nicomachean Ethics. And from these other instances, it is perhaps difficult to tell just what Aristotle means by saying that διάτασις follows philēsis. In these other instances, Aristotle uses ‘διάτασις’ to refer to the physical extension, stretching, or exertion of something in a way that might not seem to be psychological or emotional, such as the extension of the womb, the esophagus, the arms, etc. But what might this kind of physical movement have to do with philēsis? This question has presumably led most translators to understand ‘διάτασις’ in a metaphorical sense meaning “intensity” or “intensity of feeling.”

Rapp considers both a metaphorical use of ‘διάτασις’ and a low-level physiological sense referring to the kinds of physiological alterations which accompany pathē (such as the boiling of the blood around the heart in anger), and Rapp finds himself “unable to decide” between the two. But I think we can understand ‘διάτασις’ more straightforwardly in a higher-level physical sense of “exertion.” This fits quite well with Aristotle’s point that those who merely have goodwill may not “join in the actions” of those for whom they have goodwill. Those who have philēsis, by contrast, both have a desire (ὀρέξις) and are moved by that desire to exert themselves—to take action to fulfill the desire. Thus I think ὀρέξις and διάτασις

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74 LSJ recognizes a metaphorical use of ‘διάτασις’, but cites this very passage in support.
75 Rapp (2013, 34).
function together to make a point which would be difficult for Aristotle to make in terms of ὀρέξις alone. And if we understand ‘διάτασις’ in this way, then we can see that Aristotle is careful to touch on both distinguishing features of philēsis in his example and explanation: Goodwill involves sharing the wishes of someone in a way which may come about suddenly and may not lead to action because the affection is merely superficial. Conspicuously absent is any reference to intensity and for good reason: The wild cheering of spectators would seem to be a paradigmatic case of intensity, and yet such intensity may not lead to the kind of exertion required for philēsis.76

Even so, we may be hesitant, as Rapp is, to accept this interpretation because it forces us to say that although boulēsis is a kind of ὀρέξις, not all boulēseis are motivating. And we might have thought that what unites the three kinds of ὀρέξις—what makes them all kinds of desire—is their motivating character. But in fact, this interpretation aligns with a distinction Aristotle himself makes in boulēsis, and this distinction makes good sense of Aristotle’s discussion of goodwill. Aristotle recognizes two classes of boulēsis which are not (at least directly) motivating. These are boulēseis for things which are either impossible or cannot be accomplished by us.77

But there is boulēsis for impossible things, such as immortality. And there is also boulēsis for things which could not at all be accomplished through ourselves, such as that some actor or athlete be victorious.77 (NE III.2, 1111b22-24)

Even if something is impossible, whether in itself or for us, we might nevertheless wish that it would come about. Thus boulēsis includes idle wishes and hopes.78 The kind of boulēsis involved in goodwill may remain at this motivationally inert level (notice Aristotle’s use of contestants as examples in both cases). But philēsis necessarily involves some kind of exertion in pursuit of the object of desire.

This essential role of motivation in philēsis is noteworthy: Pathē clearly can give rise to desires, but Aristotle tends to define the pathē independently of possible motivations.

76There is perhaps a sense in which feeling “superficial affection” might be considered the opposite of intensity; “exertion” better fits Aristotle’s other uses of ‘διάτασις,’ and I think it better in context to connect ‘διάτασις’ with the action prompted by philēsis.
77βούλησις δ’ ἐστὶ <καὶ> τῶν ἀδυνάτων, οἷον ἀθανασίας. καὶ ἤ μὲν βούλησις ἐστι καὶ περὶ τὰ μηδαμῶς δι’ αὐτοῦ πραγματεύταν ἂν, οἰον ὑποκρίτην των νικῶν ἢ ἄλληρτην.
78This feature of boulēsis complicates the distinction between volitional and cognitive made by Hadreas (1995), who argues that we should give a cognitive account of goodwill instead of volitional.
Aristotle classifies appetite itself as one of the pathē and treats it in *Rhetoric* I.11, while reserving the remaining pathē for the more formal discussion of the pathē in Book II. And only a few of the remaining pathē are defined in terms of desire (including anger, τὸ φιλεῖν, and hate). As Gisela Striker observes, “...Aristotle’s division of labor between Books 1 and 2 has the interesting effect of separating, as it were, the desiderative from the cognitive aspects of emotion.”

This division makes good sense. As is often emphasized, the pathē play a cognitive role by providing an experiential grasp of certain facts (or apparent facts). Fear, for instance, makes one aware of danger. But for many pathē, including fear, the experiencing of the pathos is not characterized by a particular desire. Certainly an arachnaphobic encountering a spider and a thrill-seeker at the plane door would seem to have quite different motivational responses to their fear.

For many emotions, the information conveyed is quite distinct from the question of what one should do with that information. However, philēsis is not like this; it is essentially motivational. This is what we would expect for a pathos connected to τὸ φιλεῖν, which Aristotle treats in the *Rhetoric* as a pathos defined as a certain kind of boulēsis (II.4, 1380b34-1381a3).

But we should be careful to note that philēsis is not defined as a certain kind of desire, but rather as necessarily accompanied by desire (and action prompted by the desire).

### 2.3 Conclusion

Aristotle’s discussion of philēsis, read as a whole, paints the picture of an aspect of love and friendship more interesting and complex than recognized by many modern commentators. However, in commenting on *NE* VIII.5 Aspasius offers quite a perceptive analysis, and it is instructive to compare his account:

[Artsotle] says that philēsis resembles an emotion, but philia [resembles] a hexis. However, some philēseis seem to be hexeis and not just pathē. Temporary motions in the body or soul

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80 In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle does note that part of τὸ φιλεῖν is “being inclined, as far as you can, to bring these things about,” so τὸ φιλεῖν is defined as a kind of motivationally efficacious boulēsis.
are *pathē*, while certain enduring qualities, from which activities are derived, are *hexeis*. For we call some people wine-lovers or savoury-lovers when the *philēsis* that is in them is a *hexis*; I mean that savoury-loving and wine-loving are a *hexis* in them. However, [Aristotle] calls emotion not only a temporary motion but also an emotional condition [*παθητικήν διάθεσιν*]; I mean by an emotional condition that [found] in the emotional [part] only, and not also in the rational [part of the soul]...

But a *philēsis* according to *pathos* is engendered according to a mere *pathos* and is active according to a *pathos*. For this reason he said that a *philēsis* is a *pathos*, but *philia* is a habitual condition....

...*philēsis* has been called a *pathos* because it is a kind of emotional *hexis* [*παθητική τις ἕξις*] from which only activities according to *pathos* arise...(Aspasius, *On Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* 8, 172, 8-23; Konstan, trans., modified)

Aspasius rightly notes that although Aristotle assimilates *philēsis* to a *pathos* in VIII.5, *philēsis* itself has *hexis*-like features. This aspect is lost in many translations—“affection”, “friendly affection”, or “friendly feeling”—which threaten to reduce *philēsis* to the mere feeling of love.\(^1\) As we have seen, it takes time and familiarity to develop and must be carefully distinguished from the relationship of *philia*. Aspasius calls *philēsis* both an “emotional condition” (*παθητική διάθεσις*) and an “emotional state” (*παθητική ἕξις*). Although Aristotle does not use these labels, as far as I can tell, “emotional condition” seems apt (as long as “condition” is understood not in the sense of being in the active condition of experiencing the *pathos*). It is doubtful that *philēsis* implies a condition so thoroughly ingrained as a *hexis*.\(^2\)

Aspasius also recognizes the corresponding claim that the condition of *philēsis* gives rise to certain activities, although he is not entirely clear on the scope or character of these activities. But Aspasius heavily emphasizes the non-rational nature of *philēsis* and attributes *philēsis* to wine-lovers and savoury-lovers. Aspasius then at least appears to associate *philēsis* closely with appetites. If so, Aspasius rightly captures the way in which *philēsis* is partially distinguished by its connection to motivation.

I have argued that the motivations connected to *philēsis* are both more expansive and more sophisticated than appetites: It would be strikingly—implausibly—odd if Aristotle felt the need to work so hard to distinguish *philēsis* from *philia* and goodwill, if *philēsis* merely

\(^{1}\)E.g., Crisp, “affection”; Bartlett and Collins, “friendly affection”; Ross and Brown, “love” (VIII.2, VIII.5), “friendly feeling” (IX.5); Reeve, “way of loving”; Irwin, “loving”; Rowe, “loving”.

\(^{2}\)It may also be that *philēsis* need not rise to the level of being a *hexis* as that “according to which we are in a good or bad condition in relation to the *pathē*” (*NE* II.5, 1105b25-6).
described the kind of habitual appetites he discusses elsewhere, while at the same time failing to draw an explicit connection between philēsis and appetitive desire. It seems rather that philēsis is in the domain of philia, τὸ φιλεῖν, and goodwill precisely because it involves similar motivations. However, philēsis appears to have a wider range of desires associated with it than τὸ φιλεῖν does (at least in the Nicomachean account). At one end of the range, philēsis might involve the kind of wishing of goods to a friend for her own sake which characterizes primary philia (given that, as Aristotle claims, there is philēsis in each of the three kinds of philia). At the other end, philēsis might involve wishes with reference to one’s own good concerning an object lacking an independent good, as in the example of wishing that one’s wine be preserved.

We can now see how philēsis is well-suited to clean up the apparent messiness of the Eudemian discussion. Philēsis encompasses aspects of both an attitude and a relationship, so it can be used in place of both τὸ φιλεῖν and philia. It is elastic enough to apply to a wide range of cases, from the complexities of primary philia on down. This allows Aristotle to make much clearer distinctions in the Nicomachean account. In the Eudemian account, Aristotle says outright that inanimate objects can be the objects of τὸ φιλεῖν (VII.2, 1237a37-40), and he clearly implies that there is philia at least between people and inanimate objects (VII.7, 1241a8-9) and as we saw in EE VII.5, perhaps between inanimate objects. This raises serious questions about what exactly constitutes τὸ φιλεῖν and philia.

In the Nicomachean account, by contrast, there is no indication that inanimate objects can be the recipients of τὸ φιλεῖν (and as I have suggested, this seems to be denied at VIII.2, 1155b28-31). And Aristotle clearly states that there is no philia with inanimate objects (VIII.11, 1161a35-b2). Instead, both of these cases are covered by philēsis. This allows Aristotle to reserve ‘τὸ φιλεῖν’ and ‘philia’ to describe the attitudes and relationships between individuals with independent goods. In Chapter 3, I will argue that this is key to understanding Aristotle’s argument that philia is a hexis in VIII.5: Philia and philēsis differ in that philēsis does not require that one act on prohairesis for the good of the object—indeed the object of philēsis may not even have a good.
3.0 Prohairesis

With a clearer understanding of philēsis, we can now turn to the argument in VIII.5 that philia is a hexis. There is widespread agreement on the shape of this argument. Many scholars endorse some version of the consensus interpretation according to which the central focus of this argument is reciprocation. According to this interpretation: the reciprocation required for philia involves prohairesis; this prohairesis (somehow) implies a hexis; and thus philia is in some sense a hexis which is chosen. What we learn in VIII.5 is that friends are so by prohairesis.

In this chapter, I argue against the consensus interpretation. After giving a brief account of the key concept of prohairesis in §3.1, I cast doubt on two important assumptions often made by expositors of the consensus interpretation in §3.3.1. It is often assumed that this argument can be recast in terms of antiphilēsis, but as we saw in Chapter 2, there are important differences between philēsis and τὸ φιλεῖν which should make us hesitant to replace antiphilein with antiphilēsis. The consensus interpretation also assumes that the prefix ‘anti-’ indicates intentional reciprocation in response to the love of a friend, but I argue that there is good reason to think that ‘anti-’ merely indicates symmetry. Then I turn to two problems with the consensus interpretation itself, beginning in §3.3.2 with the difficulty of interpreting reciprocation as a matter of prohairesis and then continuing in §3.3.3 with the difficulty of making sense of the argument in terms of reciprocation. Finally in §3.4, I argue for an alternative interpretation according to which prohairesis in this argument refers to the prohaireseis friends make regarding each other within the context of philia.

3.1 A General Account of Prohairesis

The argument in VIII.5 that philia is a hexis turns on the role of prohairesis in philia. The concept of prohairesis—usually translated as “choice” or “decision”—is central to Aristotle’s ethics, and the elevation of the importance of prohairesis is a distinctively Arist-
totelian feature. *Prohairesis* helps to demarcate virtuous actions, which must, among other things, be done “choosing them” (προαριστεύομενος) (*NE* II.4, 1105a31-32); it helps to explain what exactly a virtue *is*—a state which is in some way “concerned with *prohairesis*”, a ἐξ ἑκεῖνος προαριστευκή (NE II.6, 1106b36; VI.2, 1139a23); and as such, *prohairesis* is in some ways the primary locus of moral evaluation, given that, as Aristotle says, *prohairesis* “distinguish characters more than actions” (*NE* III.2, 1111b6; cf. *EE* II.11, 1228a2-4). Thus *prohairesis* also provides the fault-line along which Aristotle distinguishes defective character-states. Roughly, the virtuous person acts on *prohairesis* in pursuit of the right aim, while the vicious person acts on *prohairesis* in pursuit of the wrong aim; and the enkratic acts on *prohairesis* following reason and going against appetite, while the akratic follows appetite, acting against *prohairesis* (and the akolastos, the uninhibited or indulgent person, follows appetite, in some way acting on *prohairesis*).

Given the centrality of *prohairesis*, it has justifiably received considerable attention. With such scrutiny, almost every aspect of *prohairesis* is disputed to some extent, but it will be useful to have a general account in place before we consider the way in which *prohairesis* functions in VIII.5.1 Aristotle’s primary discussions of *prohairesis* are found in *Eudemian Ethics* II and *Nicomachean Ethics* III. What we see in these discussions, I think, is Aristotle refashioning a conventional term for technical use.2 In common usage, a *prohairesis* is something like a “plan” or “purpose.” Aristotle precisifies this notion into an explanation of a seemingly quite demanding subset of intentional action.

A *prohairesis*, Aristotle says, going back to the etymology, is the choice (hairesis) of one thing “pro” another (*EE* II.10, 1226b6-7; cf. *NE* III.2, 1112a16-7). Three ways in which this ‘pro’ has been taken point to three important features of *prohairesis*. Karen Margrethe Nielsen argues that this ‘pro’ is really a ‘pros,’ and it expresses a teleological relationship.3 *Prohairesis* is in this sense the choosing of something towards or for the sake of another. Certainly Aristotle emphasizes that a *prohairesis* is both of something and for something:

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1The account of *prohairesis* given here largely aligns with that presented by Lorenz (2009, §3: 184-192). As entry-points into the vast literature on *prohairesis*, see also: Anscombe (1965), Broadie (1991, Ch. 5), Mele (1981), and Segvic (2008).

2Thanks to Gisela Striker for discussion on this point and for sharing her paper on *prohairesis*.

3Nielsen (2017, 14). Alfred Mele also emphasizes that *prohairesis* is “…specifically of things which are pros ends” (Mele, 1981, 406); but he does not explicitly connect this to the etymology of ‘prohairesis.’
A *prohairesis* is the choice of something *as a means* to something else, some *end* (*EE* II.11, 1227b36-37; cf. *NE* III.5, 1113b3-5). The shape of *prohairesis* will be heavily influenced by what we take a “means” to be. John McDowell rightly argues that we need not restrict *prohairesis* to *mere* means—i.e., instrumental means—in a sense which would exclude as objects of *prohairesis* things which are themselves the *realization* of an end.⁴ It may be that virtuous actions, which must be both *chosen* and chosen *for themselves*, are objects of *prohairesis* in this sense.⁵

Aristotle seems to require that the end with reference to which the object of *prohairesis* is chosen be set by wish (*boulēsis*) (*NE* III.2, 1111b26-7; III.5, 1113b3-5).⁶ A *boulēsis* is a desire which in some sense involves the good. This makes it suitable for capturing the motivating character of the end, the sense in which the end is taken to be something to bring about. *Boulēsis*—in general, as such—is often taken to involve the good in the sense that the object of *boulēsis* is desired somehow in relation to an agent’s conception of her own good or living well (however murky and inchoate that might be). Although I will argue against this general understanding of *boulēsis* in Chapter 4, there is good reason to think that an agent’s conception of living well is connected to the kind of end involved in *prohairesis* (or put another way, every *prohairesis* is *in a sense* aimed at living well).⁷

Aristotle famously—infamously—says that “[w]e do not deliberate about ends but about things towards [πρὸς] ends” (*NE* III.3, 1112b11-12).⁸ This claim has provoked much debate, but however we understand the contrast, it at least serves to make clear that there can be deliberation concerning the objects of *prohairesis*—things which are “towards”, i.e., promote or contribute to, ends.⁹

But Aristotle seems to go beyond the claim that it is *possible* to deliberate about the

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⁵Mele (1981) addresses *prohairesis* from this perspective, arguing that even though *prohairesis* is of things *pros* an end, Aristotle does have a unified conception of *prohairesis* which can accommodate choosing things *for themselves*. On Aristotle’s account of choosing something for itself, see also Whiting (2002a).
⁶See Müller (2016), who argues that this condition should be relaxed.
⁷See §4.4 below.
⁸βουλευόμεθα δ’ οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη.
⁹One prominent view is that there is deliberation about ends in the sense that reason plays a crucial role in *specifying* ends; see, e.g., Kolnai (1978, Ch. 3) and Wiggins (1980). In contrast, Moss (2012, Part III) argues for the “face-value” reading of Aristotle’s claim that virtue makes the goal right. And Millgram (1997, §6.7) argues against specificationism as the right account of deliberation, not restricted to Aristotle.
objects of prohairesis; he seems to assert the stronger claim that prohairesis requires deliberation. This brings out a second potential sense of the ‘pro’ in prohairesis: Choosing one thing “pro” another may mean choosing one thing “in preference to” another. In this sense, the ‘pro’ might express the weighing of alternatives often thought to be involved in Aristotelian deliberation. In both the Eudemian and Nicomachean discussions, Aristotle works his way to a redescription of prohairesis as ὀρέξις βουλευτική, “deliberative desire” (EE II.10, 1226b17; NE III.3, 1113a11). In the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle clarifies: “By ‘deliberative’ I mean the starting-point [ἀρχὴ] and cause [ἀιτία] of [the desire] is deliberation—it is desired through having deliberated” (EE II.10, 1226b19-20). Aristotle makes a similar point in the corresponding Nicomachean discussion. This raises an interesting question about what kind of a thing prohairesis is. It may be that prohairesis is not straightforwardly classified, as these passages might suggest, as a desire (a desire with a certain relationship to deliberation). This redescription is one of three: Aristotle elsewhere says that “…prohairesis is either ‘desiderative thought’ [ὄρεκτικὸς νοῦς] or ‘thoughtful desire’ [ὄρεξις διανοητική]” (NE VI.2, 1139b4-5). These descriptions, and especially the way in which Aristotle takes them to apply equally to prohairesis, might be taken to indicate the status of prohairesis as a special kind of thing, neither fully a desire nor fully a thought; but this is beyond our present discussion.

Deliberation is a process of inquiry concerning how to realize some end. A person

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10The ‘pro’ is taken in this way by, e.g., Broadie (1991, 220).
11λέγω δὲ βουλευτικήν, ἧς ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία βούλευσίς ἐστι, καὶ ὀρέγεται διὰ τὸ βουλεύσασθαι.
12He justifies this description there (NE III.3, 1113a11-2), saying: “for discerning through deliberation we desire in accordance with our deliberation” (ἐκ τοῦ βουλεύσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν). There is a textual issue here, but one which does not affect the present point. Most manuscripts read κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν, “in accordance with deliberation”; but at least one manuscript and a reading found in Aspasius have κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν, “in accordance with wish.” Irwin, for instance, adopts this reading, which has the advantage that it nicely brings together the elements of prohairesis: the desire for something on the basis of deliberation according to an end set by boulēsis. However, boulēsis is not required to make Aristotle’s point that prohairesis is ὀρέξις βουλευτική, and it may be that here Aristotle is more closely focused on this point. In any case, Aristotle’s claim that prohairesis involves “discerning through deliberation” makes clear the necessity of deliberation.
13Mele (1984, 152-55) surveys three possible relationships between prohairesis and boulēsis: boulēsis is a compound element in prohairesis; prohairesis is partially derived from boulēsis, but is not, even in part, a desire; and the desiderative element in prohairesis is derived from but not an instance of boulēsis. Whiting (2008, 106-8) emphasizes the importance of Aristotle’s description of prohairesis as both ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς and ὀρέξις διανοητική.
14See esp. NE III.3, 1112b11-24 and NE VI.9. Just as we need not limit the means chosen by prohairesis to merely instrumental means (see above), we need not confine the deliberation about those means to deliberation about merely instrumental means—deliberation may include deliberation about what constitutes the realization of some end. On this point, see, e.g., McDowell (1996).
deliberates about what she should do. Thus one only deliberates about matters within the domain of things which are doable \((NE\ III.3, 1112a30-31)\). In figuring out how to bring about some end, a person works backwards from the end to some action which will promote the end and which the person is capable of doing (either here and now or at least without further deliberation) \((NE\ III.3, 1113a5-7)\). This requirement places important limits on the objects of deliberation; and because it is the result of deliberation which seems to be the object of *prohairesis*, it places important limits on the objects of *prohairesis* (which will be especially relevant to our discussion of *NE* VIII.5, since we must consider what aspects of *philìa* could be the proper objects of *prohairesis*). The process of working, in some sense, backwards from an end brings out the final possible meaning of ‘pro’: It might be taken *temporally* to indicate that the thing chosen is chosen before other things as the first step which the agent can perform in bringing about the end.\(^{15}\)

In outline, then, a *prohairesis* is the *choice* of something on the basis of *deliberation* towards some *end* set by a *boulēsis*. Given the centrality of *prohairesis* in Aristotle’s ethics—and the way in which *prohairesis* is connected to these other important elements, such as *boulēsis*, deliberation, and living well—this argument in VIII.5 represents a significant point of engagement between Aristotle’s account of *philìa* and his ethics more generally.

### 3.2 The Argument That *Philìa* is a Hexis in *NE* VIII.5

Consider, again, our argument from VIII.5:

Fondness [\(φιλέσις\)] seems to be a feeling, and friendship [\(φιλìα\)] [seems to be] a state [\(hexìs\)]; for there is fondness no less towards inanimate things, but they [sc., friends] love [each other] in return involving decision [\(prohairesìs\)], and decision comes from a state; and they wish good things to those whom they love for their own sake not according to a feeling but according to a state.\(^{16}\) \((NE\ VIII.5, 1157b28-32)\)

\(^{15}\)Lorenz argues for this understanding, according to which by means of the ‘pro’ “...Aristotle is noting that forming a decision is always a matter of opting for something or other as a preliminary to something else” (2009, 188). To the extent that the *sequence* is determined with reference to the end, this temporal sense of ‘pro’ may come close to the teleological sense.

\(^{16}\)ἔοικε δ’ ἡ μὲν φίλησις πάθει, ἡ δὲ φιλία ἕξει· ἡ γὰρ φίλησις οὐχ ἧττον πρὸς τὰ ἄψυχά ἐστιν, ἀντιφιλοῦσι δὲ μετὰ προαιρέσεως, ἡ δὲ προαιρέσεως αἱ ἐξεῖσι· καὶ τάγαθα βούλονται τοῖς φιλομένοις ἕκεινοι ἕκεια, οὐ κατὰ πάθος ἀλλὰ καθ’ ἔξω. (On the translation of this passage, see above, 12n8.)
We might start to work through this argument by setting aside, for now, Aristotle’s claim that there can be “philēsis no less towards inanimate things.” Given the compound conclusion announced at the start, we might have expected this claim to figure in an argument that philēsis is a pathos (alongside a parallel argument that philia is a hexis). But this argument is not forthcoming: It is clear enough that the fact that philēsis can have inanimate objects is not a self-standing argument that philēsis must be a pathos rather than a hexis. Pathē, of course, such as anger, can have animate objects; and Aristotle’s notion of a hexis is quite broad—certainly the things with which hexeis are concerned are not restricted to animate things.

The positive argument we are given is rather an argument that philia is a hexis. Sarah Broadie is likely right that Aristotle is implicitly invoking his standard trichotomy of capacity, pathos, and hexis: If neither philēsis nor philia are plausibly capacities, then if philia is a hexis but philēsis is not, then philēsis must be a pathos.17 This veiled structure perhaps accounts for some of the awkwardness of this passage. But even if this structure is in the background, Aristotle does not complete the disjunctive syllogism by explicitly arguing that philēsis cannot be a hexis. Any interpretation of this passage must fill in exactly how the contrast is meant to exclude philēsis—what it is about philēsis for inanimate objects which shows that at least according to the considerations adduced here, philēsis is not a hexis. Of course, there can also be philēsis for living things, and so we must take into account that this argument is an argument from limit cases; and we will find that the standard interpretation has a difficult time making sense of this.18 Aristotle may be reluctant to over-emphasize the extent to which philēsis is a pathos, since as I argued in Chapter 2, philēsis itself seems to have hexis-like features, and so he highlights the argument that philia is a hexis, which runs through prohairesis. This is where we should focus our attention. As we will see, most

18Although I disagree with Stewart’s interpretation of the passage, he rightly recognizes the difficulties involved in the structure of the argument. Commenting on ἀντιφιλοῦσι δὲ μετὰ προαιρέσεως, Stewart says: “This is not a very true or relevant remark if intended merely to bring out the difference between φιλία and φιλήσις: ἄψυχα indeed cannot love in return, but there are many other objects of mere φίλησις which render φιλήσις in return, ἀνεύ προαιρέσεως, and even in many φιλίαι so called, viz. in many of those δὲ ἱδεῖσθαι (cf. especially viii.3.5), love is mutually given ἀνεύ προαιρέσεως. The words ἀντιφιλοῦσι δὲ μετὰ προαιρέσεως serve to distinguish not so much between φιλία and φιλήσις, as between ἡ τελεία φιλία and the inferior kinds...” (1892, 290).
commentators fail to make sense of this argument because they are too quick to latch onto a particular understanding of the contrast with *philēsis*, as I warned against in Chapter 2, before properly understanding the role of *prohairesis*.

This small argument raises three large questions which will concern us for the next three chapters: (i) Why and in what way does reciprocal loving involve *prohairesis*? (ii) Why and in what way does *prohairesis* come from a *hexis*? (iii) And even if reciprocal loving involves *prohairesis* and *prohairesis* comes from a *hexis*, what licenses the conclusion that *philia* is that *hexis*? Here, I will focus on the first question, What is the connection between *philia* and *prohairesis* presumed by this argument? We can gain a foothold for answering this question by considering a related, narrower question: What is the object of the *prohairesis* in this argument?

This passage has received relatively little attention, but to the extent that it has, commentators broadly agree that the object of the *prohairesis* at issue is in a way the *philia* itself or the love involved in the *philia*. This is because they see *prohairesis* as required for the reciprocation required for *philia*. The claim that friends reciprocate love or affection in *philia* might be taken in two ways, either generally or particularly. Taken generally, it might be a claim about the broad attitudes of love and affection friends have towards each other of the sort invoked in Aristotle’s succinct definition of a friend in the *Eudemian Ethics*: “He becomes a friend whenever being loved, he loves in return and this does not in some way escape their notice” (*EE VII.2, 1236a14-15*). We might instead focus on reciprocation at the level of particular actions performed within the context of *philia*. Perhaps to reciprocate love or affection is simply to act towards one’s friend with certain motivations.

Those who adopt what I will simply call the “consensus interpretation” do seem to understand the required reciprocation in general terms, so I will first address this version of the interpretation. Then, I will consider a version in particular terms.

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19 Versions of this interpretation can be found in: Broadie and Rowe (2002, 412), Burnet (1900, 370), Fraisse (1974, 195, 268-70), Fritzsche (1847, 32-33), Gauthier and Jolif (1958, II.681), Grant (1866, II.261), Pakaluk (1998, 86), Stewart (1892, II.290), and Ward (1996, 159). (Irwin (1999), Ross and Brown (2009), and Reeve (2014) do not comment on this aspect of this passage.)

20 φίλος δὴ γίνεται ὅταν φιλούμενος ἀντιφιλῇ, καὶ τοῦτο μὴ λανθάνῃ πως αὐτοῖς.
3.3 Against the Consensus Interpretation

Most commentators interpret this argument as indicating that prohairesis plays a foundational role in philia. Michael Pakaluk, for instance, puts this point in terms of the directedness or aiming involved in philia:

For the argument to have force, we need to understand antiphilēsis here not extensionally, to indicate simply the symmetry of a relation, but rather intensionally, in the sense of showing friendly affection with a view to some anticipated result, or in response to such affection. This implies a measure of deliberateness and control which is reasonably taken to be characteristic of choice. (Pakaluk, 1998, 86)

Pakaluk understands the kind of loving involved in philia as having the friend’s love in view—either as aiming to bring about or continue that love or as being in response to it. It therefore involves a kind of intensionality which requires prohairesis. Friends decide to love each other with particular reasons or aims. Broadie makes a similar point in terms of the “value” of each friend’s love to the other:

...hence we now learn that reciprocal loving [sc. antiphilēsis] (anyway in the paradigm case of friendship) is more than M’s loving N plus N’s loving M, plus their both knowing about it (2, 1155b33-4). What ‘decision’ adds is that intrinsic to M’s love for N is a sense of the value of N’s love for him, and vice versa... (Broadie and Rowe, 2002, 412)

In reciprocal loving, each friend’s love is in a way in response to the other friend’s love. Broadie understands this as a response to the perceived value of the other friend’s love, so that friends are taken to decide to reciprocate love at least in part because of the way they value the other friend’s love.

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21I will use “love”, “loving”, “reciprocal loving”, etc. to capture Aristotle’s claim that friends love each other in return (antiphilousi), i.e., philein each other, even though Pakaluk here and Broadie below put their points in terms of antiphilēsis, which I would rather translate as “reciprocal fondness”. See 12n8 above and discussion below.

22It is not entirely clear what Pakaluk means by “showing friendly affection with a view to some anticipated result.” But I assume that he does not mean to include one-off displays of affection merely in order to achieve some particular good. These would not constitute philia. I take it, then, that at least part of the “anticipated result” is the affection of the friend in return, which serves to constitute and continue the relationship.

23That Broadie intends antiphilēsis here is clear from the text on which she is commenting, which is given as “reciprocal loving [antiphilēsis] involves decision, and decisions flow from dispositions.”

24Broadie’s comment continues: “and presumably, therefore, a settled commitment on each side to maintaining the other side’s valuation, and to making it true by living up to it.” I take this to be a separate point meant to gesture to the relationship between prohairesis and hexis.
According to the consensus interpretation, then, this argument turns on the notion of reciprocation. One-directional fondness (philēsis) does not require prohairesis, but reciprocating love does. Reciprocation is at least in part an intentional act requiring prohairesis because of the way it takes into account the other friend’s love. Philia (at least) requires that friends love each other in return, and so the prohairesis involved in reciprocating love is foundational to philia; it is in essence a decision to be friends. This is especially clear from Broadie’s claim that prohairesis forms an additional condition on philia beyond those laid out by Aristotle in NE VIII.2-3. This claim also highlights what is at stake in interpreting this passage: How exactly do we understand philia—its requirements, its constituents, its basic structure?

3.3.1 Two questionable assumptions of the consensus interpretation

I will argue that the consensus interpretation should be rejected. As outlined in §1.1 above, I argue that the consensus interpretation faces a number of problems. I begin with two assumptions which have made this shape of the argument seem especially clear to commentators.

3.3.1.1 This argument concerns antiphilēsis

First, as seen in Pakaluk and Broadie, commentators routinely assume that this argument concerns the opposition between philēsis and antiphilēsis (§1.1, problem 1). On this assumption, hardly a second thought would be needed to locate the role of prohairesis in the act of reciprocation (and I imagine that this partly accounts for the lack of attention this passage has received). If the argument is framed as a contrast between philēsis and antiphilēsis and if antiphilēsis involves prohairesis but philēsis does not, then surely, it might seem, the explanation of that fact lies in the “anti-” prefix which distinguishes philēsis and antiphilēsis. The “anti-” prefix is taken to indicate reciprocation, and so the consensus interpretation easily concludes that the prohairesis on which this argument relies must be,

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25 This argument is recast in terms of antiphilēsis by, e.g., Broadie and Rowe (2002, 412), Burnet (1900, 370), Gauthier and Jolif (1958, II.681), Pakaluk (1998, 86), Tracy (1979, 69), and Ward (1996, 159).
in some sense, a *prohairesis for reciprocation.*

There are two problems with this assumption. First, it rests on the further assumption that *philēsis* is simply the activity of *philia* in a way that corresponds to *τὸ φιλεῖν*. But as I argued in Chapter 2, this assumption is a mistake. *Philēsis* is a complex emotional condition which involves elements of both *philia* and *τὸ φιλεῖν*, and each of these elements plays an important role in understanding this argument. Similarly to *philia*, *philēsis* seems to be a kind of attachment which has some persistence and takes time and familiarity to develop (I will return to this point in connection with the possible objects of *prohairesis*). Similarly to *τὸ φιλεῖν*, *philēsis* involves a range of attitudes and motivations which includes those involved in loving, but crucially, extends beyond them. I argued in Chapter 2 that it is likely that in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle restricts *τὸ φιλεῖν* to living objects and introduces *philēsis* at least partly to account for the kind of love or fondness directed at inanimate objects. This seems to be the case because *τὸ φιλεῖν*—and certainly the kind of *τὸ φιλεῖν* involved in *philia*—involves wishing goods to its object. But as Aristotle points out (and we discussed in §2.2.1 above), inanimate objects do not have “a good” such that one might wish goods things to them (I will return to this point in giving my own interpretation of this argument). By collapsing the distinction between *philēsis* and *τὸ φιλεῖν* (or in this case, the distinction between *antiphilēsis* and *antiphilein*), the consensus interpretation overlooks the possibility that the point Aristotle is making depends upon a contrast between *philia* and *philēsis* other than reciprocation.

Second, by conceptually substituting the noun ‘*antiphilēsis*’ for the finite verb ‘ἀντιφιλεῖν’, the consensus interpretation erases the subject of the verb. Commentators generally agree that this passage concerns primary *philia*, and the subject of the verb seems to be “good people,” introduced when Aristotle switches midway through VIII.5 to focus on the “*philia* of the good” (φιλία ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν, 1157b25). It may be, then, that this focus on primary *philia* provides important information for interpreting this argument: Perhaps the argument depends upon some feature Aristotle takes to be exclusive to or particularly associated with primary *philia*. But *antiphilēsis* occurs in all three forms of *philia* and so obscures this possibility.
3.3.1.2 ‘Anti’ indicates thick reciprocation

The second assumption commentators often make (§1.1, problem 2) is that “anti” implies a thick sense of reciprocation. Reciprocation in this sense does not merely indicate that a relationship is symmetrical—A loves B and B loves A—but also that the fact of being loved figures into the relationship on each side—A loves B in part because B loves A and vice versa. This is the new condition on philia which Broadie thinks is revealed by this argument, that intrinsic to each friend’s love is “a sense of the value” of the other’s love for her.26 Pakaluk goes so far as to say that “[f]or the argument to have force, we need to understand antiphilēsis here not extensionally…but rather intensionally…”27 But I think that there is good reason to suppose that “anti” does not entail such a thick conception of reciprocation, and so to the extent that such a sense is required for the consensus interpretation, this is an indication that the consensus interpretation is on the wrong track.

It is difficult to establish with certainty that “anti” does not normally convey a thick sense of reciprocation, but considering a few passages in which ‘antiphilēsis’ and ‘antiphilein’ are used strongly suggests that it indicates symmetry rather than intention. Consider first an important passage in the Lysis, which I quote in full because of the way we can see Socrates using ‘antiphilein’ as he works toward the conclusion that friends must love each other:

“So tell me: when someone loves someone else, which of the two becomes the friend of the other, the one who loves or the one who is loved? Or is there no difference?”
“I don’t see any difference,” he said.
“Do you mean,” I said, “that they both become each other’s friend when only one of them loves the other?”
“It seems so to me,” he said.
“Well, what about this: Isn’t it possible for someone who loves somebody not to be loved by him in return [ἀντιφιλεῖσθαι]?”
“Yes, it’s possible.”
“And isn’t it possible for him even to be hated? Isn’t this how men are often treated by the young boys they are in love with? They are deeply in love, but they feel that they are not loved back [ἀντιφιλεῖσθαι], or even that they are hated. Don’t you think this is true?”
“Very true,” he said.
“In a case like this, one person loves and the other is loved. Right?”
“Yes.”

“Then which is the friend of the other? Is the lover the friend of the loved, whether he is loved in return [ἀντιφιλήται] or not, or is even hated? Or is the loved the friend of the lover? Or in a case like this, when the two do not both love each other, is neither the friend of the other?”

“That’s what it looks like anyway,” he said.

“So our opinion now is different from what it was before. First we thought that if one person loved another, they were both friends. But now, unless they both love each other [ἄν μὴ ἄμφότεροι φιλῶσιν], neither is a friend.” (Lysis 212a8-d3)

Each time Socrates uses ‘antiphilein’ the focus seems to be on whether the love is mutual, that is, on whether the one whom someone loves also loves her. I see little indication that the grounds or aims of the love are at issue (although of course these issues will come to the fore over the course of the dialogue, but not in terms of antiphilein). Rather, ‘antiphilein’ seems to be simply a useful way to distinguish the two sides of the relationship so that Socrates can ask about the love of A for B and the possible love of B for A. Socrates also considers that the one who is loved may respond in at least two ways, by loving in return or even by hating. But surely Socrates is not suggesting that the hating would be because of being loved; rather, both loving in return and hating seem to be considered as attitudes which are independent of the fact of being loved. Finally, and most telling, when Socrates summarizes the conclusion, after repeatedly using ‘antiphilein,’ he says simply that “unless both love, neither is a friend” (212d3).28 “Anti” has been dropped, and Socrates seems to think that each friend loving the other captures the sense in which each friend’s love is returned.

We find a similar focus on the symmetry of the relationship in Aristotle’s uses of ‘antiphilein.’ For instance, when Aristotle argues that loving is more characteristic or essential to philia than being loved, he appeals to the case of asymmetrical maternal love:

An indication is that mothers enjoy loving. For some give away their own children to be raised, and knowing [the children,] they love [them,] but they do not seek to be loved in return [ἀντιφιλεῖσθαι], if both [ἀμφότερα] are not possible; rather, it seems to be enough for them if they see that they are doing well, and they love them even if on account of ignorance they render none of the things befitting a mother.29 (NE VIII.8, 1159a28-33)

Aristotle’s appeal to familial relationships raises interesting questions about the structure and unity of his account of philia, given that these relationships can lack features which

28...ἄν μὴ ἄμφότεροι φιλῶσιν, οὐδέτερος φίλος.
29...Ἀντιφιλεῖσθαι δ’ αὐτῷ ζητοῦσιν, ἐὰν ἄμφότερα μὴ ἐνδέχεται, ἀλλ’ ἱκανὸν αὐτοῖς ἐκεῖνον ἐνδέχεται ἐὰν ἄροσαν εὐ πράττοντως, καὶ αὐταὶ φιλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς κἂν ἐκεῖνοι μηδὲν ἄν μητρι προσηκεῖ ἀπονέμωσι διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν.
appear essential to Aristotle’s “official” analysis. Maternal *philia*, as we see here, may even lack reciprocation, and yet Aristotle views this case as paradigmatic enough to draw conclusions from it about *philia* in general. We might view this as further evidence against over-intellectualizing *philia*, since surely mothers do not “decide” to love their children in the way suggested by the consensus interpretation; but I will not pursue that point here.

However, this passage does clearly suggest that the significance of *antiphilein* is in the symmetry of the relationship. Mothers “…do not seek to be loved in return, if both are not possible…” From the context, “both” seems to refer to both loving the child and *being loved* by the child. There is no need to supply a thick sense of reciprocation. The point is rather that *loving* is more characteristic of *philia* than being loved, because in some cases, such as maternal love, asymmetrical loving is enough to preserve a kind of *philia*.

The strongest evidence comes from the way in which Aristotle himself builds up to the claim that *philia* involves *antiphilēsis* in *NE* VIII.2-3. When Aristotle first considers the common understanding of *philia* as “goodwill among those who bear it in turn (ἐν ἀντιπεπονθόσι)”, he immediately raises the question of whether the qualification must be added that this goodwill “does not go unnoticed” (μὴ λανθάνουσαν). And Aristotle does think that this qualification is required, because it could happen both that someone has goodwill towards people she does not know and that one of these people has goodwill towards her, in which case there would be goodwill “among those who bear it in turn” (*NE* VIII.2, 1155b32-1156a3); but of course we would not call this a *philia*. Clearly then the ‘anti’ in ἀντιπεπονθόσι does not imply intentional reciprocation. So when a few lines later at 1156a8-9 Aristotle attaches the same qualification, that it not go unnoticed, directly to *antiphilēsis*, not only would this qualification be redundant, if *antiphilēsis* implied intentional reciprocation, but there is also positive reason to think that it does not, given Aristotle’s concerns with

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30 Certainly mothers may love their children as their children, and they may wish to be loved in return by their children as their mothers. But I do not think that these relational terms indicate the kind of thick reciprocation assumed by the consensus interpretation. This is clear from the way in which Aristotle will go on to analyze parental love: Parents love their children “as being something of themselves” (ὡς ἑαυτῶν τι ὄντα), and children love their parents “as being something from them” (ὡς ἀπ’ ἐκείνων τι ὄντα) (*NE* VIII.12, 1161b18-19). On this passage, see Whiting (2006, §8) whose translation I follow.

31 Thus Ross’ translation of “τοῦτο δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ κἂν ἔκεινον τις πάθοι πρὸς τούτον” at 1156a1-2 as “and one of these might return this feeling” is liable to obscure Aristotle’s point if “return” is taken as intentional reciprocation.
ἀντιπεπονθόσι just before. Thus, I think it is likely that the “anti” in antiphilēsis (and antiphilein) indicates symmetry rather than intentional reciprocation.\(^{32}\)

### 3.3.2 Reciprocation and the objects of prohairesis

The consensus interpretation is often unclear on exactly what one is choosing when one is choosing to reciprocate. For instance, Pakaluk puts it in terms of “affection” and seems to especially have in mind the reciprocation of philēsis; Broadie refers to “love” in general, perhaps intending to capture more than affection; and Ward even says directly that the hexis of philia is a “chosen state.”\(^{33}\) However, as the general account of prohairesis above suggested, prohairesis deals with a certain domain of objects—not just anything can be chosen by prohairesis. Thus even if we were to allow that antiphilēsis and antiphilein imply the thick sense of reciprocation invoked by the consensus interpretation, we must still consider whether Aristotle would take such reciprocation to be a matter of prohairesis. I argue that prohairesis cannot play the foundational role envisioned by the consensus interpretation because philēsis and philia seem to be the wrong kind of things to be the object of prohairesis.

As we saw above, the general view that emerges from Aristotle’s discussion of prohairesis in *Eudemian Ethics* II and *Nicomachean Ethics* III is that acting on the basis of prohairesis is a particularly robust kind of intentional action. This is because a prohairesis is a decision to perform some action on the basis of deliberation about how to achieve some end. A prohairesis is thus the choice of something, in some sense, as a means—every prohairesis is, as Aristotle says, “of something and for the sake of something” (*EE* II.11, 1227b36-7).\(^{34}\) This structure and the role of deliberation impose two constraints on the objects of prohairesis which are particularly important for the present discussion.

\(^{32}\)The concept of mutual or reciprocal exchange, which Aristotle addresses in *NE* V.5/*EE* IV.5, is clearly relevant here, although beyond the scope of this discussion. However, note that there Aristotle especially connects τὸ ἀντιπεπονθός (often translated “reciprocation” or “reciprocity”) with a kind of equality, and it seems to refer to the symmetry of the items to be exchanged rather than to the act of exchange. “There will be reciprocation whenever there is equality...” (Ἴσται δὴ ἀντιπεπονθός, ἵσταν ἵσσαθή, 1133a31-2), and this symmetry makes possible the exchange, which may require a notion of intentional reciprocation, i.e., giving X in order to receive Y, etc.


\(^{34}\)Again, we need not understand “means” here in a way which requires that the “means” to an end be sharply distinguished from an instance of or realization of the end.
Deliberation is essentially about what one should do. The end of the deliberation involved in prohairesis is thus an end in the domain of things which are doable. Aristotle puts this point by saying that the objects of deliberation are things which are “up to us.” Deliberation involves reasoning about how this end is to be brought about, and it proceeds until one determines what step can be taken towards bringing about this end the execution of which does not itself require further deliberation. Deliberation ceases when one “brings the starting-point back to oneself” (NE III.3, 1113a5-6) The product of deliberation, which is also the object of prohairesis, is thus a determinate action which can be taken with a view towards realizing the end. Thus an object of prohairesis must be (1) “up to us” and (2) suitably specific to be performed without further deliberation.

These restrictions make prohairesis ill-suited to play the kind of foundational role in philia that the consensus interpretation assigns to it. One way to see this is to consider the categories involved in the argument: pathos and hexis. The consensus interpretation often conceives of the argument in terms of the reciprocation of philēsis, and in any case, philēsis is required for love (philein) and friendship (philia). But here we find out that philēsis is a pathos, and pathē do not seem to be proper objects of prohairesis. A pathos, as the term indicates, is something that in a way happens to someone—it is a way in which one is affected.

Aristotle appeals to this fact in his earlier discussion of virtue in NE II.5. There Aristotle asks of virtue the same question we are considering of philia: What kind of a thing is it? Aristotle narrows the candidates down to those things which “come about in the soul”—pathē,

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35E.g., NE III.3, 1112a30-31: “We deliberate about the things that are up to us and doable” (βουλευόμεθα δὲ περὶ τῶν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν καὶ πρακτῶν).

36On this point especially see Cooper (1975, Ch. I). Cooper emphasizes the distinction between the operation of reason involved in deliberation and the operation of perception involved in implementing deliberation such that deliberation can conclude in an object of prohairesis which can be implemented by perception without further deliberation. If, as McDowell has argued, deliberation is itself the operation of a perceptual capacity, then it may be that deliberation is more involved in implementing a prohairesis than Cooper supposes (1996). However, this would not make the object of prohairesis more general, but rather make the operation of deliberation more particular.

37NE III.3, 1113a2-5: “The object of deliberation and the object of prohairesis are the same, except the object of prohairesis is already determinate; for what has been judged from deliberation is an object of prohairesis.” (βουλευτὸν δὲ καὶ προαιρετὸν τὸ αὐτὸ, πλὴν ἀφωρισμένον ἤδη τὸ προαιρετὸν· τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς κριθὲν προαιρετὸν ἐστὶν.) There is a question whether the conclusion of deliberation and object of prohairesis is a particular action which can be done here and now or a particular action type which can be done at some point without further deliberation, although the answer to this question does not matter for present purposes. See Cooper (1975, Ch. I).
And he eliminates *pathos* as a candidate for virtue partly on the grounds that “we get angry and feel fear without *prohairesis*, but the virtues are *prohairesiseis* of a sort or not without *prohairesis*” (NE II.5, 1106a2-4). Pathē are not under our control in the way required for an object of *prohairesis*. We cannot simply *decide* to become angry. The pathē are involuntary responses, or at least not sufficiently voluntary to be the objects of intentional actions done by *prohairesis*. Virtue, however, involves just such prohairetic actions, and so virtue cannot be a *pathos*.

And so *philēsis*, as a *pathos*, does not seem up to us in a way such that it can be the object of a *prohairesis* which establishes a *philia*. Additionally, *philēsis* does not seem to be specific enough to be the object of *prohairesis*. Becoming fond of something—having *philēsis* for it—is not a single action which might be chosen. Aristotle makes this clear when he contrasts *philēsis* and goodwill (*eunoia*) in NE IX.5. Part of the difference between them is that *philēsis* requires time and familiarity to develop, whereas goodwill can come about suddenly (NE IX.5, 1166b34-1167a1). *Philēsis* is developed gradually, and as such, cannot be the object of *prohairesis* as a whole. We might instead think of the object of *prohairesis* as that first step in the process of developing *philēsis*—introducing oneself, inviting the person to lunch, etc.—but this would still run up against the problem that *philēsis* is not up to us, and moreover, this would not seem to count as reciprocating *philēsis* in the way envisioned by the consensus interpretation.

Although Broadie and Pakaluk treat this argument as though it concerns the contrast between *philēsis* and *antiphilēsis*, as I discussed above, Aristotle in fact contrasts *philēsis* with *antiphilein*, loving or having *philia* with each other. Recognizing this, we might say that

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38 ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γινόμενα τρία ἐστί, πάθη δυνάμεις ἕξεις, τούτων ἄν τι εἴη ἡ ἀρετή.
39 ὅτι οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γινόμενα τρία ἐστί, πάθη δυνάμεις ἕξεις, τούτων ἄν τι εἴη ἡ ἀρετή.

Burnet refers to this passage in his comment on our argument from NE III.5. But this attempt to locate a parallel fails for two reasons. First, Aristotle does not here use the fact that virtue involves *prohairesis* as a *direct* argument that virtue is a *hexis*, as he does in VIII.5; rather, he uses this fact to eliminate *pathos* as a candidate for virtue as part of a *disjunctive* argument. Second, the way in which virtue turns out to involve *prohairesis* is not that it is *established* by *prohairesis*, as the standard interpretation understands Aristotle’s argument in VIII.5.

40 This is not to say that there are not steps one could take to try to *make oneself feel some pathos*. One might try to make oneself angry by calling to mind instances of injustice, but this still seems to fall short of *deciding to be angry*.

41 Fraisse (1974, 195) rightly acknowledges the “passivity” of *philēsis* but fails to recognize the consequences of this.
the thing being reciprocated—the object of prohairesis—is in some sense philia, not philēsis. Of course, as discussed in Chapter 2, philia involves philēsis, and so insofar as philēsis is not a proper object of prohairesis, then it seems that philia, as a whole, will not be a proper object of prohairesis either. But it might be objected that even though philēsis is a part of philia, philēsis does not have to be understood as part of the object of the prohairesis at issue; rather, we might think that where philēsis already exists between two people, prohairesis could be involved in making a kind of rational commitment which forms the philia. Pakaluk notes that the view expressed in VIII.5, at least as he interprets it, is plausible at least in those cases “…in which the reciprocity is expressed in an agreement, vow, or oath…”42 Along similar lines, Gauthier and Jolif suppose that after a potential friend’s character is tested, there is an “intervention of the intellect” to act on the wish to be friends.43 But Aristotle does not seem to think that primary philia involves this kind of explicit agreement. In fact, as I will argue more fully in Chapter 5, Aristotle seems to contrast the other forms with primary philia on precisely this point. Primary philia takes a long time to develop, whereas utility philia, in which Aristotle includes contractual relationships, and pleasure philia, which includes erotic relationships, can come about quickly—even, we might think, by agreement or by decision. Given that the argument in VIII.5 seems to concern primary philia in particular, it a problem for the consensus interpretation if it seems better fitted to other kinds of philia.

It would be a mistake, I think, to view the process of becoming friends in the artificially regimented way suggested by Gauthier and Jolif. We need not think that potential friends go through a “testing phase” and then each make a rational commitment which establishes their friendship. The process of two people spending time with each other, getting to know each other, learning about and testing each other’s characters just is the process of becoming friends. It is the process of acquiring the hexis of philia. In this respect, the process of becoming friends mirrors the process of becoming virtuous. Certainly, as Aristotle says in the passage cited by Gauthier and Jolif, two people cannot be friends until they both know that the other person is “lovable” (NE VIII.3, 1156b25-32); but there is no reason to suppose

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43 Gauthier and Jolif (1958, II.681).
that when this becomes known there is a further act of the intellect needed to constitute the
philia. Indeed it is often difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint the moment at which you
“became friends” with someone, and we need not interpret Aristotle, who shows remarkable
sensitive to the nuances of human relationships, as denying this point.

It is also not clear what aspect of philia this “rational commitment” might add. We are
assuming that it does not add the philēsis, and it also seems unlikely that it would add the
other main feature of philia, rational desire (boulēsis) for goods for one’s friend. There
is good reason to suppose (as we saw in §2.2.3.2) that philēsis may already bring with it a
connection to boulēsis. Moreover, boulēsis itself, like philēsis, does not seem to be a proper
object of prohairesis. This seems to be part of Aristotle’s notorious claim that we “deliberate
not about the ends but about the things towards the ends” (NE III.3, 1112b11-12). Ends,
which are set by boulēsis, establish the framework within which one makes a prohairesis of
some means as being toward that end, and so however we understand Aristotle’s claim about
deliberation, it at least seems clear that one does not choose an end.

Finally, while the exact relationship between prohairesis and hexis will require a thorough
investigation in Chapter 4, thinking of the object of prohairesis as a rational commitment
does not seem to help us explain why, according to this argument, philia is a hexis. It is
not clear why whatever a rational commitment adds would be the thing which somehow
constitutes or establishes the hexis. And in fact, once we frame the issue in this way, we can
see that we might doubt whether this is even possible. In general, a hexis is a particular kind
of durable condition. Aristotle offers two examples of hexeis in the Categories, virtue and
knowledge (epistēmē). Virtue, as we find out in the Ethics, is a state of the non-rational part
of soul which is developed over time through habituation. Moreover, Aristotle even claims

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44I focus here on philēsis and wishing goods for each other because these are the two primary features
Aristotle identifies in NE VII.2-3. It seems equally unlikely that prohairesis would add any of the other
features Aristotle discusses, e.g., in NE IX.4.

45This issue is complicated and contentious. It has seemed to many commentators that Aristotle must
be understood as leaving room for deliberation about ends in the sense of deliberating about what would
count as a realization of some end or how to specify some end. But even if we do acquire boulēseis through
deliberation in the sense of coming to have boulēseis for narrower specifications of the end or for intermediate
ends or means towards the end, it still does not seem right to say that these boulēseis are chosen. The object
of choice is the result of deliberation, what has already been made determinate by deliberation (NE III.3,
1113a2-5). More generally, what we choose is not whether to have some boulēsis or not, but what will help
us to fulfill that boulēsis.
that knowledge, which we might think could be acquired *quickly*, e.g., through teaching, must “grow together, and this requires time” (*NE* VII.3, 1147a22). It is possible that Aristotle holds generally that *hexeis* (at least of the sort relevant to psychology) are developed over time, and as we have already seen, Aristotle does hold that both *philía* and *philēsis* take time to form. And thus whatever is added by the *prohairesis*, it does not seem that it could be the thing which constitutes or establishes the *hexis*.

### 3.3.3 “*prohairesis* comes from a *hexis*”

Finally and most importantly, taking *prohairesis*—whatever its object—to play a foundational role in *philía* does not make sense of Aristotle’s argument. I have thus far appealed to considerations about what constitutes a proper object of *prohairesis* or how the object of *prohairesis* might be understood on the consensus interpretation, and these are difficult issues in their own right; but the consensus interpretation is open to the stronger objection that its general form does not fit Aristotle’s argument. Consider again Aristotle’s argument in VIII.5:

Fondness [*philēsis*] seems to be a feeling, and friendship [*philía*] [seems to be] a state [*hexis*]; for there is fondness no less towards inanimate things, but they [sc., friends] love [each other] in return with decision [*prohairesis*], and decision comes from a state; and they wish good things to those whom they love for their own sake not according to a feeling but according to a state.\(^\text{46}\) (*NE* VIII.5, 1157b28-32)

Aristotle is arguing that *philía* is a *hexis* because of the involvement of *prohairesis*. And according to the consensus interpretation, the involvement of *prohairesis* is in *establishing* the *philía* through reciprocation requiring *prohairesis*. If *this* involvement of *prohairesis* were to show that *philía* is a *hexis*, then Aristotle would need to rely on the claim that *hexeis* come from *prohaireseis* in order to conclude that *philía* is a *hexis* because it is established by *prohairesis*. But in fact Aristotle relies on the opposite claim, that *prohaireseis* come from *hexeis*. And so if the role of *prohairesis* in this argument were as the consensus interpretation claims, then Aristotle’s argument here would not show that *philía* itself is a *hexis*, but rather...
that there is a prior hexis from which the prohairesis establishing the philia arises. Thus if there is a way to interpret the role of prohairesis in this argument which makes sense of it as an argument for the claim that philia is a hexis, then we should prefer that interpretation.

3.3.4 Particular reciprocation

As stated, the consensus interpretation makes reciprocation seem monolithic: It is a matter of reciprocating the general attitudes which constitute philia. In order to rescue the consensus interpretation from the problems which arise from this general reciprocation, one might instead think of reciprocation in terms of the particular iterative actions done within the context of the philia—actions done in response to or with a view to other particular actions of one’s friend. Although this view would answer concerns about whether reciprocation can be the proper object of prohairesis, it would inherit some of the other problems of the consensus interpretation. It relies on “anti” implying the same thick sense of reciprocation, and because it still ties the role of prohairesis to reciprocation—particular instead of general—it similarly has a difficult time making sense of Aristotle’s argument. If there is no philia unless and until there is reciprocation, and if reciprocation requires prohairesis, then given Aristotle’s claim that prohairesis comes from a hexis, this view still fails to show that philia itself is a hexis (but rather shows that there is some other hexis from which the prohairesis which make philia possible arise). But let us set these difficulties aside.

If we emphasize a concern with reciprocation in the sense of responding to past and prompting future friendly actions, then it makes it look as though friends are motivated by and value the relationship, the philia itself. Broadie perhaps comes close to this view when she claims that “intrinsic” to each friend’s love is “a sense of the value” of the other friend’s love.47 It is more explicit in Nussbaum’s view that in Aristotelian philia “…lovers will have emotions toward their relationship itself, and the activities it involves.”48 Konstan has argued against this view on the grounds that Aristotle would place philia in the category of relation, but he says, “It is hard to imagine experiencing love for a relation, as Aristotle understands

48 Nussbaum (2001b, 474).
the term." A full answer to it would need to take into account Aristotle’s identification of philia as a kind of koinōnia, “community” (which I discuss further in Chapter 5). If a koinōnia is a matter of having a common good made possible by the relationship, then it is perhaps possible that friends might value this good as a proxy for the relationship.

But Konstan is certainly right that, whether it is possible or not, Aristotle’s account does not make valuing the relationship itself an important element of philia. In fact, Aristotle seems much more concerned to show that friends are motivated by the interests of their friends themselves. Thus this interpretation of VIII.5 as emphasizing particular reciprocation appears to skew Aristotle’s account of philia by making friends more concerned about the relationship than their friends. And further, if we were to characterize the kind of hexis associated with this particular reciprocation (again, bracketing the previous concerns), it would seem to imply a hexis for keeping up the philia more than a hexis constituting the philia itself.

Perhaps the term “reciprocation” makes the claim sound more complicated than it is meant to be: Perhaps the consensus interpretation could be taken to mean that to reciprocate is merely to interact with the person as a friend. But even in this case, it does not make sense to treat the philia itself as the object of prohairesis because choosing to do the actions within philia is not the same thing as choosing to have the hexis from which these actions arise. This would be to make the mistake of thinking that the hexis is purely constituted by the actions. But it is the nature of a hexis to continue to exist even when not being actualized. Indeed this is part of Aristotle’s point in arguing that philia is a hexis: Friends continue to be friends even when they are not interacting.

It is helpful to compare philia with virtue in this regard. We would not identify virtue with virtuous actions themselves. This is clear from Aristotle’s claim that you cannot do the virtuous actions as the virtuous person would do them before becoming virtuous (NE II.4).

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49 Konstan (2018, 44). Cf. Konstan (2006, 178): “Philia does not, I think, have the abstract status of a relationship, in the sense of a bond distinct from each friend’s love. It is not the kind of entity of which it is possible to say that friends ‘will have emotions toward their relationship itself,’ any more than it can impose obligations on those who love each other.”

50 Konstan is surely right you could not love a relation, if loving involves wishing for the good of the object to be promoted. So I refer to “valuing” more generally, which is more in line with Broadie and Nussbaum.
It is the *hexis* of virtue which makes possible the performance of actions in a certain way. Likewise, it is the *hexis* of *philia*, I think, which makes possible the performance of actions *as a friend*. So even if we think of reciprocation at the level of particular actions, because you cannot do those actions *as a friend* before actually *being friends*, this reciprocation does not involve a *prohairesis* to be friends.

### 3.4 An Alternative Interpretation: The Decisions of Friends

I conclude that the consensus interpretation will not work. However, when we clear away the two assumptions on which it was based and give proper attention to the structure of the argument, things easily fall into place.

Aristotle asserts that *prohairesis* comes from a *hexis*. If this claim is to be used to show that *philia* itself is a *hexis*, then when Aristotle says that *philia* involves *prohairesis*, he must have in mind *prohairesis* which comes from *philia*—not *prohairesis* to reciprocate which establishes *philia*. *Prohairesis* which comes from *philia* is readily intelligible. Aristotle requires that friends have goodwill towards each other; but as we saw in *NE* IX.5, mere goodwill is only a hollowed-out sense of *philia*. Friends act on their goodwill towards each other. More than that, friends act in the deliberate, thoughtful, and intentional way described by *prohairesis*. These *prohairetic* actions flow from their *philia*.

According to the consensus interpretation, we find out about a *new* requirement for *philia*: It requires a thick sense of intentional reciprocation; each friend loves the other by *prohairesis* with the love of the other in view. This would be a substantial new requirement. It would be surprising for Aristotle to introduce this requirement with so little discussion and after the main account already seems to be in place (and especially surprising, given that there is reason to doubt that Aristotle uses ‘anti’ to indicate such reciprocation). But if this argument in VIII.5 concerns the *prohairesis* which friends make regarding each other in the context of a *philia*, then we “learn” something which would have been natural to assume all along: Friends not only wish good things to each other, but act on this wish. Thus what we find in this argument is an analogue to the *Rhetoric’s* claim that τὸ ϕιλεῖν involves both
wishing good things to your friend and “being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about” (Rhet. II.4, 1380b34-1381a3).

The consensus interpretation has a difficult time making sense of the contrast with philēsis (§1.1, problem 5). The claim that “there is philēsis no less towards inanimate things” is meant to play some role in the argument. But if, as the consensus interpretation holds, you can reciprocate philēsis by prohairesis, then you must be able to have philēsis by prohairesis. The consensus interpretation offers no explanation for why one could decide to have philēsis for a person but not an inanimate object. And so if it is this prohairesis which implies a hexis, then the same argument could be used to show that the philēsis which one has for an inanimate object by prohairesis is also a hexis. The consensus interpretation can rightly claim that it is impossible to reciprocate philēsis to an inanimate object, because it cannot have philēsis for you in the first place. But we have been given no reason to think that a prohairesis to reciprocate bears a different relationship to a hexis than a prohairesis for philēsis on its own.

According to my interpretation, the prohairesis in this argument refers to the way in which friends act on their goodwill by prohairesis. My interpretation thus appeals to the other feature which Aristotle claims distinguishes philēsis from philia in VIII.2. There Aristotle argued that philēsis for inanimate objects is not philia because it lacks reciprocation and because it lacks well-wishing. My interpretation thus provides a clean contrast and explains why this argument cannot be used to show that philēsis for inanimate objects is a hexis: Inanimate objects do not even have a good such that one could wish good things to them and act on those wishes by prohairesis (which prohairesis implies a hexis).

In general, the consensus interpretation is vague on the way in which this argument shows that philia is a hexis—as I have argued, necessarily so, because the consensus interpretation’s understanding of the role of prohairesis would better fit the claim that a hexis come from prohairesis, rather than the reverse, as Aristotle claims. My interpretation offers a clear answer to the question of why prohairesis requires a hexis. I will argue for this answer more

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51If the consensus interpretation were to explain this by appealing to a difference between philēsis and τὸ φιλεῖν—even though expositors of the consensus interpretation often put it in terms of philēsis—then this would only further indicate that it is not reciprocation which is at issue.

52Although I do not explore it here, I take it to be a virtue of my interpretation that it could be used to show that certain instances of non-reciprocal loving also count as hexis, such as maternal love.
fully in Chapter 4, but in sum: *Prohairesis* requires an end set by one’s *hexis*. This answer fits Aristotle’s moral psychology more generally. As discussed above (§3.1), Aristotle seems to require that the end of a *prohairesis* be set by a *boulēsis*, and he closely connects *prohairesis* with a person’s character. This answer also fits with the context of this argument. Aristotle continues, with no explicit transition, to say that “they wish good things to those whom they love for their own sake not according to a feeling but according to a *hexis*.” This suggests that the way in which friends wish good things to each other and act on that wish has been at issue all along. Friends act to promote the good of their friend not *as they feel like it* but *deliberately, intentionally* and from the stable state of *philia*. 
4.0 **Boulēsis**

The argument that *philia* is a *hexis* in *NE* VIII.5 crucially relies upon the premise that *prohairesis* comes from a *hexis*. I have argued that we should reject the consensus interpretation of this argument, which connects *prohairesis* to reciprocation. We should rather understand *prohairesis* in this argument to refer to the way in which friends act on *prohairesis* towards the good of their friend. In this chapter, I support this understanding of the argument in VIII.5 by providing an explanation for the connection between *prohairesis* and *hexis*.

It is fairly easy to find the rough outline of such an explanation in Aristotle: As Anscombe suggests, Aristotle seems to connect *prohairesis* to one’s conception of the good or living well and then to connect one’s conception of living well to one’s *hexis* of character. This suggests that in some sense the end with reference to which a *prohairesis* is made must be set by one’s *hexis*. However, the details of such a view are quite controversial, and so it would be worth thoroughly reviewing it (and I do discuss many of the details below). But here I take a slightly different approach offered by Aristotle’s argument in VIII.5, which has received much less attention.

I begin in §4.1 by suggesting that there is a recognizable way of desiring something as good which does not relate to one’s conception of the good: Sometimes something just strikes us as good, and I call this “spontaneous *boulēsis*.” Most interpretations of Aristotelian *boulēsis* rule out spontaneous *boulēsis* because they connect *boulēsis* as such to a conception of one’s good. But I argue in §4.2 that Aristotle recognizes in *NE* VIII.5 a distinction between two ways of having *boulēsis*, according to *pathos* (κατὰ πάθος) and according to *hexis* (καθ’ ἕξιν). I further argue in §4.3 that this distinction should be understood in terms of desiring something as good on a whim and desiring something as good in a way which relates to one’s conception of the good. Thus if, as I argue in §4.4, Aristotle does connect *prohairesis* to one’s conception of the good, then we can offer the more specific explanation that *prohairesis* requires a *boulēsis* which is had as a matter of one’s *hexis*, but not all *boulēseis* are like this.

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1Anscombe (1965, 61).

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4.1 The Possibility of “Spontaneous Boulēsis”

It is intuitively true that some of our desires are more important to us than others. Not necessarily in the sense that we value those desires themselves more than others—that they have a higher second-order value—although this may be the case. Rather, some of our desires are more reflective of “who we really are.” They are more deeply embedded or play more central roles in our motivational framework. Bennett Helm fashions this intuition into a distinction between “values” and “cares.” To value something is to see its import as connected to one’s own self. One identifies (an aspect of) oneself with the object in such a way that one’s own sense of self-worth is tied to the object. By contrast, to care about something is to recognize that thing as having shalower import, not connected to one’s self. “Values are, therefore, deeper than cares insofar as they provide a framework of meaning in terms of which one can understand who one is, a framework that can provide direction to one’s life as a whole.”

According to Helm’s distinction, the desires which are more important are those which are aimed at values. They have as their objects things which are deeply connected to one’s self through identification. But we might instead take the perspective of the origin of the desire. Gary Watson appeals to such a distinction to make sense of free will: Roughly, we act freely as long as we do not act on a desire which arises independently and in opposition to our rational evaluation. In order to explain how we might fail to act freely in this sense, Watson appeals to a roughly Platonic division between reason and appetite according to which each is capable of motivating independently.

Watson distinguishes between what he calls the “valuational system” and the “motiva-

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2See Helm (2001, §4.1). Helm’s distinction is a distinction between kinds of import, general value. However, I will be concerned with desires. The relationship between value and desire may be complicated, but on Helm’s view at least, desires are “felt evaluations” which motivate “in light of an essential connection with import” (2001, 82). I take it, then, that Helm’s distinction can be applied to desires as well as directly to values.

3The distinction Helm makes between valuing and caring is thus, as Helm acknowledges (2001, 100), a distinction within Harry Frankfurt’s more general notion of caring as involving identification, as Frankfurt explains: “A person who cares about something is, as it were, invested in it. He identifies himself with what he cares about in the sense that he makes himself vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits depending on whether he cares about is diminished or enhanced” (Frankfurt, 1988, 83).


tional system.” The valuational system encompasses an agent’s ability to make judgments about what should be done. This involves assigning values to states of affairs and ranking them such that an agent can form “all things considered” judgments about what should be done in given circumstances. The motivational system is the “set of considerations which move [an agent] to action.” An agent’s all things considered judgments about what should be done are among the considerations that motivate her to action, and to that extent, an agent’s valuational system and motivational system overlap. The possibility of conflict between what an agent values, as part of her valuational system, and what she wants, as part of her motivational system, exists because there can be motivations which arise independently of judgments of value.

Watson argues that appetites and passions are capable of moving us to action directly because they do not motivate through evaluative judgments. These motivations are in a sense “blind.” They allow for the possibility of being motivated independently of, and even in conflict with, an agent’s judgments of value. Thus an agent can be unfree in the sense that what she does is not what she most wants to do: An appetite or passion may move her to an action which conflicts with her considered judgment about what she should do. And of course what makes such action “unfree” is that the agent is identified with her valuational system, her rational and evaluative capacities. This gives sense to a distinction between desires in terms of their origin: Some desires are more important to us because they come from who we really are, our rational selves, whereas other desires come from, as it were, outside us—outside our system of values. (However, as Watson notes, this is not at all to deny that appetites and passions can be integrated into our valuational system; it is only to draw out the importance of the possibility of conflict.

Watson’s distinction is a distinction in kind. It is a distinction between “blind” motivations—bare urges or pleasure-directed appetites—and motivations involving judgments of value.

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8Watson allows for a distinction between mere passions and more complex emotions which although similar to passions in some regards, may involve evaluations and beliefs of the valuational system. This, Watson comments, “may be the basis for Plato’s positing a third part of the soul which is in a way partly rational—viz. Thumos” (2004, 21n6).
Although they together comprise the motivational system, they are very different kinds of motivation. However, I think we can recognize a similar distinction in degree or quality even within Watson’s evaluative desires. Among desires which involve a judgment about what to do (or desires which are formulated in terms of goodness rather than pleasure), some are more important to us than others. Even if the agent is identified with her rational valuational system, some value-based desires are more fundamental, more central to who she is.

This distinction can be seen in (at least) two cases: First, low-stakes desires for things like harmless pleasures—things which might fall under “tastes”—which although often connected with pleasure, need not be pursued in purely appetitive ways. Second, “one-off” desires for things which strike one as good, but which might even conflict with one’s considered views about the good.

As an example of the first sort, imagine standing in line at an ice cream shop: How do you come to desire a particular flavor? It could be that you form a purely appetitive desire for fudge swirl: You see the glistening chocolate ribbons and straightaway, impulsively desire the pleasure of those contrasting textures, the richness of the chocolate, etc. Or you could form a reasoned desire for vanilla: “Blueberry will stain my teeth (and I just had them cleaned); coffee will keep me up (and I have an early meeting), etc. So I think it would be good to choose vanilla.” But there seems to be room between these desires: You might have a desire for mint chocolate chip which is formulated in terms of goodness rather than pleasure, and so not a mere appetite, but which is not the result of a reasoned process of evaluation.11 You are not seized by pleasure and you are also not engaged in forming an all things considered judgment about what flavor to choose. It just seems to you to be a good thing to order mint chocolate chip. If there is room for such a desire, then it is (in some sense) a rational desire, but one far removed from one’s self. It is not a desire either aimed at an object one values as part of oneself or a desire which arises from who one really is.12

If this kind of desire were limited to harmless pleasures or tastes, then we might worry

11On “reasoned” versus “unreasoned” desire, see Grönroos (2015, 6), who argues that “wish is a basic, unreasoned desire for the human good...”

12Again, this is not to say that tastes, for example, could never be integrated into one’s conception of oneself. Of course they could: “Sophisticated people eat pistachio,” “my mother always loved praline,” etc. This is rather to point out the space for desires which are neither purely appetitive nor deeply connected to one’s self.
that it is restricted to low-level objects or objects about which one has no prior evaluation. But examples of the second sort suggest that there is room for this kind of desire at higher levels. Imagine a cinephile who believes that proper enjoyment of cinematic works is an important part of the good life and whose own devotion to the cinema forms an important part of who she is. She has exacting standards for what counts as worthy of cinematic appreciation. She reveres Kurosawa and despises bland, consumer-driven Hollywood blockbusters. But going to the cinema one afternoon, it just seems good to her to see the latest Marvel movie—she decides to see it on a whim.\textsuperscript{13} This desire is not a mere appetite, and it is certainly not a reasoned desire or a desire involving an all things considered judgment of her valuational system. In fact, if she thought about it too much, she might talk herself out of seeing it. Certainly if she started regularly seeing such movies, we might say that her conception of the good life had changed or we might even doubt her past devotion to the cinematic classics. But there does seem to be room for this sort of “one-off” desire or whim.

Aristotle distinguishes between pleasure-directed appetite (epithumia) and a form of rational desire aimed at the good (boulēsis). So to put this distinction into Aristotelian terms, we would say that some boulēseis are more important, more central than others. The boulēsis for mint chocolate chip ice cream or for seeing the latest Marvel movie is less reflective of who one really is than, for example, the boulēsis for the health of one’s spouse, for a fulfilling career, or for a meaningful hobby. The kind of less reflective boulēsis I have in mind has at least two important phenomenological features: (1) It seems to come about suddenly. It is not a desire formulated through a process of reasoning. As such, (2) it appears to spring up independently of one’s valuational system, to use Watson’s term. It is a desire which does not bring with it connections to one’s system of values. Call this spontaneous boulēsis to call attention to both its suddenness and independence (the way it seems to arise “sua sponte”).

Does Aristotle allow for spontaneous boulēsis? Most accounts of Aristotelian boulēsis, at least, make it difficult to see how he could. There is broad agreement that the sense in which boulēsis is aimed at “the good” is that the goodness of the object is explained with reference to one’s own good—the general conception one has, in some sense, of one’s good

\textsuperscript{13}Thanks to Jennifer Whiting for this example.
(or doing well, living well, *eudaimonia*). All *boulēseis* would thus invoke one’s good in a way that spontaneous *boulēsis* might not.

Interpretations of Aristotelian *boulēsis* can be roughly categorized, as Giles Pearson usefully articulates, along two dimensions. First, views differ on the way in which an agent’s conception of her good figures into her occurrent *boulēsis*, the having of the desire. According to some accounts, the object of *boulēsis* is desired as being conducive to or part of an agent’s conception of the good. Following Pearson, I will call these “direct reference” views. When an agent has a *boulēsis* for some object, she *has in mind* or *directly refers to* the connection between that object and her conception of the good. Other accounts require only that an agent’s *boulēsis* “express” her conception of the good (“reflect,” in Pearson’s terminology). On these views, the object of *boulēsis* does fit into her conception of the good, and that is why she desires it; but she need not have that connection in mind when desiring it.

Second, there are differences in what it means to say that an agent “has a conception” of the good. It may mean that an agent possesses something like a system of ends which either (a) can be and is articulated (i.e., it is explicit) or (b) can be but is not necessarily articulated. Or (c) to have a conception of the good may not involve content which can be articulated in the form of general, universal ends; but rather to have a grasp of one’s good may be, as McDowell has argued, to have something like an habituated perceptual capacity.

These dimensions can be put together in complex ways—perhaps more complex than Pearson acknowledges. Pearson recognizes three kinds of views: direct reference views with explicit conceptions of the good, expressive views with explicit conceptions of the good, explicit conceptions of the good, and expressive views with explicit conceptions of the good.

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14 Pearson (2012, 143). My discussion here and below is indebted to Pearson (2012, Ch. 6). I agree with him that *boulēsis* does not always invoke a conception of one’s good, but as I discuss below, I disagree with him on the relationship between prohairesis and one’s good.

15 Anscombe suggests that *boulēsis* “…should be explained in terms of what is wanted being wanted *qua* conducive to or part of ‘doing well,’ or blessedness” (1965, 67). See discussion in Mele (1984, 144).


17 (a) is often associated with “grand end” views; see, e.g., Cooper (1975, 59) and Kraut (1993). Pearson does not distinguish category (b), but Broadie’s discussion of articulacy may suggest such a view, although it does not appear to be hers (1991, 237).

18 As McDowell puts it, “In this contrasting picture, there is nothing for grasp of the content of the universal end to be except a capacity to read the details of situations in the light of a way of valuing actions into which proper upbringing has habituated one” (1996, 26).
and expressive views with inarticulable conceptions of the good.\textsuperscript{19} I will briefly mention two difficulties with Pearson’s classification, although these difficulties will not concern us. First, if we allow for a middle category—conceptions of the good which can be but are not yet articulated—then there may be additional possibilities. This would seem to be an importantly distinct category, because (i) given that the end is not \textit{yet} articulated, the agent’s subjective grasp of the end will importantly differ from explicit views, and (ii) given that the end \textit{can} be articulated, it involves a different kind of content than inarticulable views. Second, it may be more difficult to categorize views as direct-reference or expressive than Pearson supposes. It may be that having a \textit{boulēsis} involves the \textit{thought} that realizing the end would contribute to one’s good (or an \textit{application} of the concept ‘\textit{eudaimonia}’) without involving an articulated or even articulable grasp of one’s good. This kind of view would seem to be closer to a direct reference view than an expressive view, if expressive views do not require that an agent think in terms of one’s good or \textit{eudaimonia} at all. Thus direct reference views may not be restricted to explicit conceptions of one’s good. This distinction between direct reference and expressive views is the most important for bringing out the difficulty of accommodating spontaneous \textit{boulēsis}, but a rough distinction will be sufficient.

According to direct reference views, the agent’s subjective description under which an object of \textit{boulēsis} is desired makes reference to the agent’s conception of the good. If direct reference views are restricted to explicit conceptions of the good, as Pearson supposes, then it is clear why direct reference views might have a hard time accommodating spontaneous \textit{boulēsis}. An agent can express the general values which make up her conception of the good life and roughly how these values fit together, and she can reason about particular ends using these values. If every \textit{boulēsis} is aimed at something which is good in the sense of fitting into such a conception of the good, then every \textit{boulēsis} brings with it connections which prevent it from seeming to arise \textit{spontaneously}. Such \textit{boulēsis} might arise \textit{suddenly}—although this view naturally lends itself to generating reasoned desires—but the suddenness is explained in terms of an agent’s facility in recognizing the relationships to higher-order ends which make particular ends desirable. But spontaneous \textit{boulēsis} seems to lack precisely this recognition.

}\textsuperscript{19}Pearson (2012, 144)
there is still the problem that every *boulēsis* at least explicitly invokes the concept of one’s good, but this concept does not seem to be involved in spontaneous *boulēsis*.)

Expressive views may capture the phenomenon of spontaneous *boulēsis* but at the expense of the distinction between spontaneous and other *boulēsis*. According to expressive views, the object of *boulēsis* is an object the goodness of which is explained by reference to one’s good, but the agent need not be able to articulate the system of values which make up her good or the precise way in which a particular object of *boulēsis* fits into that system. In desiring the object of *boulēsis*, an agent need not even invoke the concept of “a good.” A *boulēsis* might arise, like spontaneous *boulēsis*, suddenly and apparently independently, because it is merely the expression of one’s conception of the good, which may be “grasped” only intuitively. But nevertheless every *boulēsis* does arise from a conception of one’s good, and thus every *boulēsis* is reflective of who one really is and what one values (in the stronger sense of what constitutes living well, not merely what one “cares” about). There is in a sense only a single source for *boulēsis*—one’s conception of one’s good, however inarticulate or even inarticulable it might be—but spontaneous *boulēsis* seems to depend on a distinction between the desires which arise, as it were, within and without of one’s valutational system.

It would be disappointing if Aristotle could not accommodate spontaneous *boulēsis*. It seems to be a recognizable feature of human psychology—sometimes we desire things because they seem good but not in a way which rises to the level of invoking our conception of our good. More importantly, if the process of acquiring a conception of the good is to be a partly cognitive process—involving something more than Watson’s “blind” appetites and emotions—then we need something like spontaneous *boulēsis* to capture the way in which we desire things as good before the point at which we can be said to have a conception of the good. It is plausible that at some point it seems good to a child, for example, to tell the truth, but not yet because this refers to or expresses a conception of the good (or to put this into Aristotelian terms which will presage my argument, not because the desire arises from the child’s character). And even with mature agents, we may want to make room for uncharacteristic action: Actions done on the basis of *boulēsis* but without a view to or

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20 Burnyeat (1980, e.g., 76-77) argues that learning to take pleasure in something in the right way involves an important cognitive element. Jimenez (2015) argues against the “pleasure-centered” view of moral development and in favor of a larger role for the noble. See also Broadie (1991, §2.X).
even in conflict with one’s conception of one’s good. Uncharacteristic action may play an important role in our ability to purposefully change our conception of the good—to alter aspects of our character.\footnote{Callard (2018) argues that acquiring new values is a distinctive process of aspiration in part because the values which one is aiming to acquire are only partially intelligible from one’s current condition.}

I think there is prima facie reason to suppose that spontaneous boulēsis would pose a problem for views of boulēsis which tie boulēsis to a conception of one’s good. But even the brief summary above suffices to make clear that such views are complex combinations of subtle elements and can take a variety of shapes. It may be that this kind of view could be adapted to accommodate spontaneous boulēsis, perhaps by: recognizing multiple ways of conceiving of and relating to one’s good; combining articulated and unarticulated elements in one’s good; or allowing for conflicts, compartmentalization, blind spots, etc. in one’s good. So in my argument below, I will focus on the fact that Aristotle recognizes a distinction in boulēsis which needs to be accommodated, rather than the secondary question of how this distinction might be accommodated by existing views. And it is by focusing on this distinction, I think, that we can see why Aristotle claims that prohairesis comes from a hexis.

4.2 Ways of Having Boulēsis

4.2.1 Boulēsis, prohairesis, and suddenness

Aristotle does point to one feature of spontaneous boulēsis—suddenness—in the course of giving his account of prohairesis. In both the Eudemian Ethics and Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle outlines his own account of prohairesis by distinguishing prohairesis from various candidates, including the voluntary, belief, spirit, appetite, and boulēsis. In both the Eudemian and Nicomachean accounts, prohairesis is partially distinguished by the fact that prohairesis is not sudden. In the Nicomachean discussion, this fact is used to distinguish prohairesis from voluntary action in general (NE III.2, 1111b6-10); but in the Eudemian discussion, Aristotle directly contrasts prohairesis with boulēsis on this point.\footnote{I do not think this is indicates a difference in the view of boulēsis, since I see no suggestion in the Nicomachean discussion that boulēsis cannot be sudden. It might have to do with the curious feature that in}
We do many things that we wish suddenly, but no one decides on \( \text{προαιρεῖται} \) anything suddenly.\(^{23}\) (\( EE \text{ II.8, 1224a3-4} \))

And a bit later:

Therefore since \( \text{prohairesis} \) is neither belief nor \( \text{boulēsis} \) individually and it is not both (for no one decides \( \text{προαιρεῖται} \) suddenly, but people do think they should\(^{24}\) act and they wish [suddenly]), it is then from both.\(^{25}\) (\( EE \text{ II.9, 1226b2-4} \))

In both of these passages, Aristotle contrasts \( \text{prohairesis} \) and \( \text{boulēsis} \) on the grounds that \( \text{boulēsis} \) can be “sudden” (\( \text{ἐξαίφνης} \)) but \( \text{prohairesis} \) cannot, although he emphasizes different aspects in each passage. In the first passage, the emphasis is on the \text{action}: It is possible to \text{act} suddenly on a \( \text{boulēsis} \). And in the second passage, the emphasis is rather on the \( \text{boulēsis} \) \text{itself}: It is possible to \text{come to have} a \( \text{boulēsis} \) suddenly.\(^{26}\)

Aristotle accepts that \( \text{boulēsis} \) is somehow involved in \( \text{prohairesis} \), as the second passage makes clear (and see §3.1 above). But however \( \text{boulēsis} \) figures into \( \text{prohairesis} \), \( \text{boulēsis} \) cannot in that context manifest the same characteristics that it can on its own. It is tempting to see here something like the rejection of a “common factor” explanation at the level of \( \text{boulēsis} \): It is not \( \text{boulēsis} \) as such which is involved in \( \text{prohairesis} \), but rather a particular \text{kind} or \text{quality} of \( \text{boulēsis} \) which would explain the difference in characteristics within and without of \( \text{prohairesis} \). This would parallel, as I understand it, the move Aristotle \text{does} make to limit the \( \text{boulēseis} \) which may be involved in \( \text{prohairesis} \) to those towards which there can be deliberation. “Idle wishes” are importantly different from the kinds of \( \text{boulēseis} \) which can figure in \( \text{prohairesis} \).\(^{27}\) Similarly, we might look to explain this difference in suddenness

delineating the voluntary in \( EE \text{ II.7,} \) Aristotle makes a point of distinguishing the voluntary from \( \text{boulēsis} \), but \( \text{boulēsis} \) is generally left out of the discussion in \( NE \text{ III.1.} \)

\(^{23}\)πολλὰ δὲ βουλόμενοι πράττομεν ἐξαίφνης, προαιρεῖται δ’ οὐδὲις οὐδὲν ἐξαίφνης.

\(^{24}\)Following Inwood and Woolf, I translate with Susemihl’s proposed supplement, \( \text{δεῖν} \).

\(^{25}\)ἐπειδὴ οὖν οὔτε δόξα οὔτε βούλησίς {ἐστι} προαίρεσίς ἐστιν ὡς ἑκάτερον, οὐδ’ ἄμφων (ἐξαίφνης γὰρ προαιρεῖται μὲν οὐδεὶς, δοκεὶ δὲ πράττειν καὶ βούλονται)’ ὡς ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἄρα.

\(^{26}\)Translations often obscure the point of the second passage by not getting the right relation between the “thinking” (\( \text{δοκεῖ} \)) and the “wishing” (\( \text{βούλεται} \)). Thus Inwood and Woolf translate the \( \text{καί} \) as “or”, presumably treating it as an epegeitical; and Kenny changes subjects from “one” to “people.” However, Aristotle is here giving a reason why \( \text{prohairesis} \) is not the same thing as belief and \( \text{boulēsis together} \) (having already distinguished them individually earlier). And the reason is that even the \text{combination} of belief and \( \text{boulēsis} \) has a characteristic that \( \text{prohairesis} \) lacks: One and the same person can \text{suddenly} come to have both the belief that she should act and a \( \text{boulēsis} \), but \( \text{prohairesis} \) is not sudden in this way. It is important, then, that belief and \( \text{boulēsis} \) are treated as distinct elements had at the same time.

\(^{27}\)I agree with Pearson’s general point that idle wishes seem to indicate that not all \( \text{boulēseis} \) are connected to one’s good (2012, §6.2(a)).
by appealing to a difference between an end (boulēsis) being set or arrived at suddenly, on the spur of the moment, or more slowly, endurably, as a part of one’s character.

But it may be too quick to conclude that these passages support any distinction within boulēsis itself. Of course it could be that the difference in suddenness is to be explained not by reference to a difference in boulēsis, but by reference to the operation of deliberation. It could be that prohairesis cannot be sudden because it involves a temporally extended process of deliberation. However, many would be reluctant to accept this explanation, because then, as Cooper puts it, “...Aristotle would seem to hold that moral decisions are much more excogitated than in general they are.” But if (a) boulēsis can be sudden and prohairesis, which involves boulēsis, cannot and (b) the difference is not to be found in deliberation, then we may want to pursue a distinction in boulēsis to explain this difference.

This denial of sudden prohairesis also needs to be squared with a passage in NE III.8 where Aristotle appears to claim that not only is sudden prohairesis possible, but sudden prohairetic action is in some sense better:

...but it is characteristic of a courageous person to endure things which are and appear fearful to humans because [enduring them] is noble and not [enduring them] is shameful. And that is why it seems to be characteristic of a more courageous person to be without fear and untroubled in unforeseen fears than foreseen ones; for it is more from hexis because less from preparation. For someone might choose things which are foreseen from calculation and reason, but sudden things are [...] according to one’s hexis.29 (NE III.8, 1117a16-22)

This is a dense and difficult passage. One central issue concerns how to understand “more courageous” in the second sentence. As C.C.W. Taylor notes, this may be taken either in the sense of indicating a person who is more courageous or in the sense of “more strongly indicative of courage.”30 Both senses seem to be in play. Sudden actions are especially revealing of one’s hexis or character, and by revealing one’s character, they also reveal the extent to which one has acquired, for example, the hexis of courage. Sudden actions come more directly from one’s hexis because they come less from “preparation.” Such actions reveal one’s hexis more fully because they present one’s hexis unobscured by rational measures

28Cooper (1975, 7).
29ἀνδρείου δ’ ἦν τὰ φοβερὰ ἀνθρώπῳ ὄντα καὶ φαινόμενα ὑπομένειν, ὅτι καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν τὸ μή. διὸ καὶ ἀνδρειοτέρον δοκεῖ εἶναι τὸ ἐν τοῖς αἰφνιδίοις φόβοις ἀφοβον καὶ ἀτάραχον εἶναι ἢ ἐν τοῖς προδήλοις· ἀπὸ ἐξεως γάρ μᾶλλον ἦν, ὅτι ἦττον ἐκ παρασκευῆς· τὰ προφανῆ μὲν γάρ κἂν ἐκ λογισμοῦ καὶ λόγου τις προκλητο, τὰ δ’ ἐξαιροφυς κατὰ τὴν ἐξεως.
aimed at making up the shortfall in one’s character. Sudden actions in the face of fear also seem to indicate that the agent is more courageous in the sense that the agent has more fully realized the virtue of courage which, as a hexis itself, rests not in one’s actions but in one’s character. The person who can do the courageous action straightaway is in this sense “more courageous” than the person who can do the courageous action after giving herself a pep-talk, even though under a certain description they both do the same action in the end (although of course only the truly courageous person does the courageous action as the courageous person would do it).

The way in which one’s character is revealed in this passage appears to be through prohairesis, as Aristotle claims elsewhere. Different circumstances of action impact what prohairesis is able to reveal. Foreseen things, Aristotle says, might be chosen (προέλοιτο) “from calculation and reason,” but sudden things are, presumably, chosen “according to one’s hexis” (κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν). There is no verb provided in the second clause (as indicated by the ellipsis), leaving open the possibility that we are meant to supply a form of “to be,” so that sudden actions merely are “according to one’s hexis.” However, as Alfred Mele points out, if this were meant to mark a contrast, then it would have the odd result of making the actions which are said to be either characteristic of a more courageous person or more indicative of a courageous person be done not by prohairesis; but virtue and virtuous actions are especially associated with prohairesis.

It seems, then, that we should supply ‘προέλοιτο’ from the previous clause (but with an important change in mood discussed below).

If this passage is taken to refer to sudden prohairesetic actions, then it appears to directly contradict the passages in which Aristotle asserts that prohairesis is not sudden. However, most of the attention on this passage has focused on another apparent inconsistency: In the accounts of prohairesis in EE II and NE III, Aristotle heavily emphasizes the role of deliberation, to the extent that it may seem that explicit deliberation is required prior to a prohairesis. But the sudden prohairesetic actions in this passage, especially given that they are contrasted with actions chosen “from calculation and reason,” do not seem to involve prior deliberation.

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31EE II.11, 1228a1-4; NE III.2, 1111b5-6.
Interpreters have pursued at least three strategies for explaining how sudden prohairetic actions might nonetheless involve deliberation. Richard Sorabji points out that there is something at least “analogous” to deliberation in cases of sudden action because there is still the identification of some particular as being conducive to an end. This process may be similar enough to deliberation to allow for sudden prohairesis. Mele argues that we need not label this process as merely “analogous” to deliberation because even according to Aristotle’s account, deliberation itself may be sudden and does not require an extended process. Taylor argues that a sudden action, even though not deliberated, may be deliberate in the sense of being an intentional action in accordance with a “pattern of practical reasoning” which has been “internalized.” It may be either that this internalized pattern can be brought to mind and applied quickly enough to explain sudden action or that it is enough that the agent can explain after the fact the kind of reasoning in the background of her action.

It is likely that the sense in which sudden actions might nonetheless involve deliberation can be explained in one or more of these ways. But focusing on deliberation can only get us so far: Attempting to vindicate sudden prohairetic action in this passage only makes the conflict with apparent denials of sudden prohairetic action more vivid; and explaining sudden prohairetic action by allowing sudden deliberation only makes the conflict seem more difficult to resolve. If it is not an extended process of deliberation which explains why prohairesis cannot be sudden, then what is the explanation? We could provide such an explanation if we could appeal to differences in the boulēsis involved in prohairesis.

Although most of the attention on this passage in NE III.8 has been focused on deliberation, the emphasis both in this passage and its larger context is rather on the way in which the virtue of courage sets the end. Just what it means that virtue sets the end and how it might do so is very controversial; but it is clear enough that there is an important

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37At EE II.10, 1226b9 Aristotle himself says that prohairesis is “from deliberative belief” (διὸ ἐκ δόξης βουλευτικῆς ἐστιν ἡ προαίρεσις). Perhaps, then, sudden prohairesis might come from previously held beliefs arrived at through deliberation.
38Mele (1981, 419n23) suggests that perhaps Aristotle only means that there are some instances of sudden action which are voluntary but not by prohairesis. But not only does this not seem to be what Aristotle means at NE III.2, 1117b7-8, this ignores the more emphatic denial at EE II.8, 1224a3-4.
connection (and I will gesture again at this connection at the end of chapter). In *NE III.7*, Aristotle asserts that there is a correspondence between the end of an activity and the end of the corresponding *hexis*. Aristotle then uses this correspondence to argue that because the end of the *hexis* courage is the fine, the end of courageous action is likewise the fine. And thus, “It is for the sake of the fine that the courageous person endures and does the things in accordance with courage” (1115b17-24). Aristotle repeatedly emphasizes this claim (e.g., 1116a10-13). If we focus our attention on the role of the *end* instead of *deliberation*, then we can *both* explain the contrast Aristotle makes between acting on *prohairesis* and *boulēsis* and square the apparent denial of sudden *prohairesis* action with the apparent endorsement of sudden courageous action we have been considering.

The key claim to be supplied is that *prohairesis* requires an end set by one’s *hexis*, although this is not the *only* way to have an end. Given this claim, we can understand the contrast Aristotle makes in this way: We can get and act on an end suddenly, an end which is set by *boulēsis*; but such action is not *prohairesis* action at least because the kind of end required for *prohairesis* cannot be gotten suddenly. If the contrast is understood in this way, then we can likewise explain away Aristotle’s apparent contradiction concerning sudden *prohairesis* actions: If the end with reference to which a *prohairesis* is made is already set as a matter of one’s character, then (perhaps with the addition of previously held deliberative beliefs) sudden *prohairesis* action is possible. But if the end is not yet set and must be “acquired,” then sudden *prohairesis* action is impossible because the kind of end required for *prohairesis* cannot be acquired suddenly—in contrast to the way that one might have and act on mere *boulēsis* suddenly. Understood in this way, there is a kind of scope ambiguity in Aristotle’s apparent denial and assertion of sudden *prohairesis* action. Recall that a *prohairesis* is both of something and for the sake of something: If the process of making a decision is restricted to the “of something” then sudden *prohairesis* is possible, but if the process of making a decision includes *both* elements (although of course not both as *objects* of decision), then sudden *prohairesis* is not possible.

This view is not as odd as it might seem at first. A *prohairesis* reveals the *ends or values* of a person because these values are in a sense embedded in the *prohairesis*. Deciding, for example, to go for a walk for the sake of *health* and deciding to go for a walk for the sake of
money are different prohaireseis. As I will argue in §4.4 below, prohairesis relates to one’s conception of living well, and so prohairesis ultimately engages, in some way, the values which inform one’s conception of the good life. Certainly these values themselves cannot be acquired suddenly; but Aristotle may also have in mind the way in which in particular circumstances it can take time to figure out—and here deliberation may reenter—the way in which one’s values bear on a situation, and thus it can take time to “acquire” in the sense of “locate” the kind of end required for prohairesis. Other times the bearing of one’s values may be obvious. But in either case, there is a sense in which a full explanation of one’s prohairesis reveals that the prohairesis as a whole was not sudden.

If we return to the passage above from NE III.8 where Aristotle contrasts acting prohairetically in the face of foreseen and unforeseen dangers, we might worry that the proposed distinction in ways of having boulēsis implies that the person deciding on foreseen dangers does not act on a boulēsis had as a matter of character or hexis. There Aristotle seems to contrast the way the person acting on foreseen dangers acts “from calculation and reason” with the way the person acting on unforeseen dangers acts “according to one’s hexis.” This implication would be problematic because as I will argue, (a) we should align the boulēseis had as a matter of character or hexis with the boulēseis connected to one’s good and (b) every prohairesis invokes one’s good. But the passage from III.8 does not have this implication.

Aristotle’s primary focus in that passage is on the attribution of motive. The courageous person decides to endure fearful things because doing so is fine, and this is more readily apparent in reacting to sudden dangers than foreseen dangers. This is not because decisions in the face of foreseen dangers do not involve one’s hexis, but rather because the potentially more elaborate chain of reasoning involved may obscure one’s motive, and so we are less inclined to attribute the evident motive to one’s hexis. This is the importance of the change in mood between Aristotle’s claim that one might choose foreseen things from calculation and reason which invoke motives which are not immediately apparent, but one does choose sudden things according to one’s hexis. One may do “the fine thing,” but if one does so reasoning on the basis of other ends—safety, reputation, etc.—then what might have appeared to be the motive is not the real motive. Whatever boulēsis is involved in one’s prohairesis is in fact, as I will argue, attributable to one’s character, and Aristotle’s point in this passage is
that in the case of foreseen dangers we are less certain exactly what that *boulēsis* is.

### 4.2.2 A distinction in *boulēsis*

Up to this point, I have suggested that we might reconcile Aristotle’s apparent denial and assertion of sudden *prohairesis* by positing a distinction in ways of having *boulēsis*. But it would be helpful to have more direct evidence of a distinction in *boulēsis*, and I think we find that evidence in our touchstone passage from *NE* VIII.5. After arguing, as we saw in Chapter 3, that the role of *prohairesis* in *philia* shows that *philia* is itself a *hexis*, Aristotle adds:

> ...and they wish good things to those whom they love for their own sake not according to a feeling [*κατὰ πάθος*] but according to a state [*καθ’ ἕξιν*].

(NE VIII.5, 1157b31-32)

The disinterested wishing of goods for one’s friend, i.e., wishing goods for one’s friend for her own sake, is a key component of *philia*—or rather, as I will argue in Chapter 5, *primary philia*. Here Aristotle indicates a qualification in the way that is done: It is done “not according to a feeling [*κατὰ πάθος*] but according to a state [*καθ’ ἕξιν*].” In order to fully understand this qualification, we need to understand both what aspect of disinterested well-wishing is being qualified and how it is being qualified. In the rest of this section, I argue that this is a qualification in the *way* the wisher wishes—it is a qualification in the *way* the *boulēsis* is had. Then in §4.3, I argue that the qualification introduced by this distinction corresponds to the distinction posited earlier: A *boulēsis* may be either a longer-lasting, more stable part of one’s character (*καθ’ ἕξιν* or *καθ’ ἔξω*) or a more sudden, fleeting whim (*κατὰ πάθος*).

In order to see in this passage the kind of distinction in *boulēsis* which I suggest, we need to see three things:

(a) *This is not a distinction in the object.* Connecting *hexis* to character, the phrase “*καθ’ ἕξιν*” might remind us of Aristotle’s description of primary or virtue *philia* as character *philia*. Then we might think that this is another way of putting Aristotle’s point that in primary *philia* friends love each other *for who they really are*—they love each other’s character or *hexis*. But we should not understand *καθ’ ἕξιν* in this way for at least two reasons. First, if

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39καὶ τἀγαθὰ βούλονται τοῖς φιλομένοις ἐκείνων ἐνεκά, οὐ κατὰ πάθος ἀλλὰ καθ’ ἕξιν.

40E.g., *NE* IX.1, 1164a12; *NE* IX.3, 1165b8-9. See Cooper (1977a, 628-9).
we are to keep the distinction consistent, then we must hold that just as the *hexis* is a *hexis of the object*, so the *pathos* of *κατὰ πάθος* is a *pathos* of the object. But it is not clear that the distinction between *hexis* and *pathos* lines up with the distinction between essential and accidental features. Certainly we would want more information to confirm that the *pathos* for which the person is loved is not an essential feature or caused by an essential feature of the person. Moreover, the idea of loving someone for her *pathos* itself is not quite clear; certainly Aristotle himself does not seem to appeal to this notion elsewhere. And while it might be made to fit pleasure *philia*, it would not seem to fit *utility philia*.

Second, taking this distinction to refer to the object of well-wishing makes less sense in context. This claim immediately follows the argument examined in Chapter 3 that *philia* is a *hexis*. In fact, it is so closely connected that it looks like it is meant to support that conclusion, either by providing another argument or recapitulating the main point of the argument from a slightly different angle. But if we understand the distinction between *καθ’ ἕξιν* and *κατὰ πάθος* as a distinction in the object, then this distinction provides no support for the conclusion that *philia* is a *hexis*. Goodwill, as Aristotle explains it in NE IX.5, may involve wishing goods to someone on account of her character, but such goodwill need not be a *hexis*. In fact, as we saw in §2.2.3, Aristotle contrasts goodwill with *philēsis* on this point: Goodwill may come about *suddenly* and seems to lack the stability of a *hexis*. If, on the other hand, we understand this distinction, as I suggest, as a distinction in ways of having *boulēsis*, then this distinction supports the claim that *philia* is a *hexis* by pointing out that one of the central features of (primary) *philia*—wishing goods to one’s friend—is itself had as a *hexis*.

(b) *This is not the distinction between dispositional and occurrent desires.* We might think that with the qualification *καθ’ ἕξιν* Aristotle is marking a contrast between *dispositional* and *occurrent* desires. To the extent that *philia* is an extended relationship characterized by wishing goods in some sense, friends will have what we might call a standing or dispositional desire for good things for their friends. But I do not think the contrast between merely dispositional and active or occurrent desires is what Aristotle has in mind here. First, this might seem to be an odd choice of terms to convey this point. At the start of this chapter, *NE* VIII.5, Aristotle distinguishes between being called good *καθ’ ἕξιν* and *κατ’
ενέργειαν (“according to activity”). Here Aristotle does seem to contrast the inactive hexis of philia with the activity of philia, and this might seem to be a clearer way to mark the distinction between dispositional and occurrent desires. But second, the distinction between dispositional and occurrent desires does not seem to fit the context. Surely Aristotle does not mean to say that those who wish good things to their friends for their own sake have merely dispositional desires? Aristotle’s point is rather, I think, that the occurrent desire for goods for one’s friend might be either καθ’ ἕξιν or κατὰ πάθος, and that this distinction indicates an important difference in the character of the desire itself.

(c) Boulēsis κατὰ πάθος is not impossible. Finally, it might be that there is no real distinction here because one of the options, boulēsis κατὰ πάθος, is not a live possibility. Then Aristotle might be taken to argue along the lines that of course the kind of boulēsis involved in wishing goods to one’s friend for her own sake is καθ’ ἕξιν because it cannot be κατὰ πάθος. In fact, the way in which boulēsis is often treated as a rational desire might seem to support this interpretation. Boulēsis is often held to be rational in the sense that it is a desire of reason, belonging to the rational part of the soul. If boulēsis is reason’s “own form of desire,” as Lorenz puts it, we might wonder what it might mean for there to be boulēsis κατὰ πάθος—or whether this might even be possible.

However, it is clear that Aristotle does recognize boulēsis κατὰ πάθος because this is the kind of well-wishing which, as we will see, characterizes some pleasure philiai, especially erotic philiai. This recognition of boulēsis κατὰ πάθος has two important consequences. First, it suggests a closer link between boulēsis and non-rational elements, such as pathē. It may point towards the kind of view defended by Jessica Moss according to which boulēsis may be rational desire in the weaker sense that “wishes are based on beliefs which are mere assents to appearances.” I touch on this issue in developing the distinction below, although my primary focus is defending this distinction and its relevance for prohairesis. Second, if boulēsis κατὰ πάθος is the kind of well-wishing which at least sometimes characterizes, for example, erotic philiai and Aristotle is contrasting this kind of well-wishing with the kind had by those who wish good things for their friends for their own sake, then this is yet another

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41 See, e.g., Irwin (1975, 570-1) and Lorenz (2009, 184). Cf. discussion of this view in Grönroos (2015, §2).
42 Lorenz (2009, 184).
piece of evidence that not all kinds of philia must involve genuine goodwill (I address this issue more fully in Chapter 5).44

4.3 Boulēsis Kath Hexin and Kata Pathos

The distinction between boulēsis καθ’ ἕξιν and boulēsis κατὰ πάθος is bound up with the issue with which we began, the relationship between boulēsis and a conception of one’s good, so I will treat these issues together. Aristotle does not explain this distinction, nor does he give an explicit account of the relationship between boulēsis and one’s good. This passage in NE VIII.5 is the only place I find where Aristotle explicitly contrasts talk of something καθ’ ἕξιν with talk of that thing κατὰ πάθος, but he does use these qualifications elsewhere independently.

In this section, I will focus primarily on Aristotle’s use of ‘κατὰ πάθος,’ which is especially revealing. I argue that Aristotle uses the qualification ‘κατὰ πάθος’ to refer to the kind of disorder and instability which would indicate a lack of a conception of one’s good. It is then natural, especially given Aristotle’s views on character, to connect boulēsis καθ’ ἕξιν with boulēsis in accordance with a conception of one’s good, and this connection is strengthened by considering the relationship between hexis and prohairesis in the next section. Aristotle especially applies the qualification ‘κατὰ πάθος’ to the operations of the young and the base or vicious; and I consider these cases in turn. My argument will proceed along parallel tracks, arguing in each case both that the use of ‘κατὰ πάθος’ fits my proposed interpretation of the distinction and that the young and the vicious likely have boulēsis but lack a conception of the good.

Before turning to the passages, it will be useful to address two preliminary points. A prominent theme in these passages is the contrast between between living κατὰ πάθος and living in some sense according to reason. First, if this is a contrast between, roughly, living emotionally and living rationally, then we might think that boulēsis would fall on the rational

44Admittedly, one might alternatively read this contrast as the claim that all philiae involve genuine goodwill, but some κατὰ πάθος and some καθ’ ἕξιν. But as I argue more fully in Chapter 5, I think the balance of evidence is against this reading.
side. And if so, then we might worry about understanding *boulēsis κατὰ πάθος* along the lines of living *κατὰ πάθος*. But of course this worry is based on the assumption that *boulēsis* is rational in a sense which excludes *boulēsis κατὰ πάθος*. If, as I have argued, Aristotle recognizes *boulēsis κατὰ πάθος*, then we need not take living *κατὰ πάθος* in these contrasts to indicate living *completely* without reason, i.e., without even the *thought*, intimately connected to or perhaps constitutive of *boulēsis*, that something is *good*. If we make this allowance, then the distinction as drawn in these passages fits the distinction between *boulēsis καθ’ ἑξιν* and *κατὰ πάθος*, as I understand it. If *boulēsis καθ’ ἑξιν* is *boulēsis* which invokes one’s good, then it is precisely this kind of *boulēsis* which would allow the orderly, rational pursuit of ends which Aristotle contrasts with living *κατὰ πάθος*. Second, we need not take the discussion of reason in these passages to indicate that reason rather than one’s *hexis* of character sets one’s ends. There is still a substantial and important role for reason to play in determining *which* ends to pursue *when* and *in what way*, although I will largely set aside this difficult issue.

4.3.1 *Boulēsis* of youths

In a famous passage from *NE* I.3, Aristotle explains why youths cannot yet benefit from lectures on politics, including ethics, presumably of the sort Aristotle will go on to give:

That is why a youth is not a suitable student of political [science], for he is inexperienced in the actions of life, and the accounts are from these and concerning these. Furthermore, since he is prone to follow his feelings, he will listen in vain and without use, since the aim is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether one is young in age or youthful in character. For the defect is not a matter of time but on account of living according to feeling [*κατὰ πάθος*] and pursuing each thing [according to feeling].\(^{45}\) (*NE* I.3, 1095a2-8)

Youths have a tendency to follow their feelings: They live *κατὰ πάθος* and pursue each thing *κατὰ πάθος*. Youths are poor students of ethics because they are less able to translate *knowing* what to do into actually *doing* it, which is the aim of ethics. This is because they cannot yet bring their reason to bear on their desires. They do not have, we might think,

\(^{45}\) διὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖος ἀκροατὴς ὁ νέος· ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δὲ ἕκαστον καὶ περὶ πολλῶν· ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ κατὰ πάθος ἢ κατὰ ἑξιν ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ ἑξιν ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατὰ λάθος ἢ κατapulta.
the right kind of desires to be rationally ordered. Instead, they desire and act as it strikes them.

Aristotle returns to this point in *NE* X.9 in considering how one might go about making citizens more virtuous. Instruction through *argument* will not be enough: “For the one who lives κατὰ πάθος will not listen to or furthermore understand dissuading argument: How is it possible to persuade such a person to change?” (*NE* X.9, 1179b26-28). The problem posed by living κατὰ πάθος is not so much the mere *fact* of living on the basis of one’s emotions. Aristotle’s solution is not that the *pathē* should somehow be *disregarded* or *bypassed*. Rather, “There needs to be in a way beforehand character suitable for virtue, loving the fine and hating the shameful” (*NE* X.9, 1179b29-31). One’s character needs to be shaped in such a way that one has the fine as an end, loving it and taking pleasure in it (setting aside the question of how this relates to reason). Living κατὰ πάθος is problematic because it especially implies that one’s emotions have not yet been *shaped* into a form which either allows for or constitutes having a conception of one’s good on the basis of which and with the aid of reason one might structure and order one’s pursuits.

We see this more explicitly in Aristotle’s discussion of the *philiai* of youths, who love much the same as they live. The fact that youths live κατὰ πάθος explains why their *philiai* are generally on the basis of pleasure:

> The *philia* of youths seems to be on account of pleasure; for they live κατὰ πάθος, and they especially pursue what is pleasant to them and what is present. And as their age changes their pleasures also become different. (*NE* VIII.3, 1156a31-34)

And then, continuing this passage, the fact that youths live κατὰ πάθος also explains why their *philiai* seem to come and go quickly:

> And that is why they become friends and stop [being friends] quickly; for their *philia* changes along with what is pleasant, and the change of such pleasure is quick. And youths are prone to erotic love; for the greater part of erotic [*philia*] is κατὰ πάθος and on account of pleasure. That is why they love and stop [loving] quickly, often changing in the same...
day. But they do wish \(\betaούλονται\) to spend time together and to live together; for in this way what is in accord with their \textit{philia} comes about for them.\textsuperscript{49} (\textit{NE} VIII.3, 1156a34-b6) To live \textit{kατὰ πάθος} is particularly associated with pursuing pleasure, so youths, who live \textit{kατὰ πάθος}, generally form \textit{philiai} on the basis of pleasure, especially erotic \textit{philiai}. But youths do not pursue pleasure in a reflective way, like a committed hedonist aiming to maximize pleasure. Youths also do not pursue pleasure according to a fixed sense of what is pleasant; what pleases them quickly changes. Rather, living \textit{kατὰ πάθος} is especially to pursue the \textit{present} pleasure in an unstable, disorganized manner—whatever strikes one as pleasant at the moment.\textsuperscript{50}

These youths clearly have \textit{boulēsís}: They are said to \textit{wish} to live together, and there is no suggestion that their \textit{philiai} lack well-wishing of some sort, which is a feature of all \textit{philiai}, including pleasure and erotic \textit{philiai}. I suspect that in contrasting well-wishing \textit{καθ’ έξων} and \textit{kατὰ πάθος} in VIII.5, Aristotle has these sorts of \textit{philiai} in mind. And the view of \textit{kατὰ πάθος} which emerges from these passages is precisely the pursuit of things in the kind of unstable and disorganized way which would imply the lack of a guiding conception of the good. The kind of well-wishing \textit{kατὰ πάθος} which we find in youthful \textit{philiai}, then, seems to be a matter of wishing someone well \textit{on a whim} or \textit{as it strikes one}; and wishing someone well \textit{καθ’ έξων} is rather to wish them well from a firm, stable aspect of one’s \textit{character} and as a part of one’s conception of the good. More generally, then, in recognizing a distinction between \textit{boulēsís kατὰ πάθος} and \textit{καθ’ έξων}, Aristotle recognizes a distinction between thinking something good in a fleeting, superficial way and thinking something good in an enduring, engaging way.

This distinction helps to solve a problem which confronts those who restrictively tie \textit{boulēsís} to a conception of the good. These accounts generally deny that humans have \textit{boulēsís} until the age at which they at least start to have something like a conception of their good. But youthful \textit{philiai} certainly seem to imply \textit{boulēsís}, and we cannot appeal to the fact that in these passages Aristotle refers to “youths” (\textit{νέοι}), who may be older

\textsuperscript{49}\textit{διὸ ταχέως γίνονται φίλοι καὶ παύονται ἃμα γὰρ τῷ ἡδεῖ ἡ φιλία μεταπίπτει, τῆς δὲ τοιαύτης ἡδονῆς ταχεῖα ἡ μεταβολή. καὶ ἐρωτικοὶ δ’ οἱ νέοι κατὰ πάθος γὰρ καὶ δι’ ἡδονῆν τὸ πολὺ τῆς ἐρωτικῆς· διόπερ φιλοῦσι καὶ ταχέως παύονται. πολλάκις τῆς αὐτῆς ημέρας μεταπίπτοντες. συνημερεύει δὲ καὶ συζῆν οὗτοι βούλονται γίνεται γὰρ αὐτοῖς τὸ κατὰ τὴν φιλίαν οὕτως.}

\textsuperscript{50}We can see echoes of this in the passage above from \textit{NE} I.3, where youths are said to pursue each thing (\textit{διώκειν ἕκαστα}) \textit{kατὰ πάθος}.
adolescents, because Aristotle also refers to *philia* between “children” (*παιδες*)—and not referring to familial *philia* (*NE* VIII.4, 1157a28-29; IX.3, 1165b25-29). Furthermore, these youthful *philiai* fit a further piece of evidence which most views of *boulēsis* must reject: In the *Politics* Aristotle says:

And as the body is prior in order of generation to the soul, so the irrational is prior to the rational. The proof is that anger and *boulēsis* and appetite are implanted in children from their very birth, but reason and understanding are developed as they grow older.\(^{51}\) (*Pol.* VII.15, 1334b20-25)

Here Aristotle claims that the three forms of desire, including *boulēsis*, are present from birth. According to most accounts, this passage must be an anomaly—Aristotle cannot really mean what he says. And interpreters often take Aristotle to *really* mean that *boulēsis* is somehow “basic” to human nature and so to be placed on the innate side, but must await the development of reason to be realized. For instance, Grönroos suggests that this passage may just describe the “propensity for wish”; and Broadie attributes to Aristotle the very difficult view that children in some sense have *boulēseis* but not yet the means to satisfy them.\(^{52}\) However, Aristotle’s concern in this passage is *precisely* to distinguish between those things which are present immediately and those things which must be developed. It is unlikely, then, that he would be imprecise on this point.

We can make sense of attributing *boulēsis* to children by supposing that they are capable of *boulēsis κατὰ πάθος*: They can view things as *good* and pursue them on that basis.\(^{53}\) But they are not yet capable of *boulēsis καθ’ ἕξιν*: They do not have a conception of their own good such that they can have *boulēsis* for things as promoting their good or in a way that *expresses* their conception of the good. There is further evidence for this view, I think, in Aristotle’s discussion of self-love in the *Eudemian Ethics*, although I will only be able to sketch it here.\(^{54}\) Aristotle argues that children do not yet have self-love:

But everyone seems good to himself...That is why in the human case each person himself

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\(^{51}\) ὡσπερ δὲ τὸ σῶμα πρῶτερον τῇ γενέσει τῆς ψυχῆς, οὔτω καὶ τὸ ἄλογον τοῦ λόγων ἔχοντος. φανερὸν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο: θημός γὰρ καὶ βούλησις, ἔτι δὲ ἐπιθυμία, καὶ γενομένως εἴθος ὑπάρχει τοῖς παιδίοις, ὁ δὲ λογισμὸς καὶ ὁ νοῦς προϊοῦσαν ἐγγίγνεσθαι πέφυκεν.


\(^{53}\) This view would especially not be surprising, given that Aristotle allows that there can be utility *philiai* between animals, which seems to require some kind of awareness of the “friend” as *useful* (*EE* VII.2, 1236b5-10). I address Aristotle’s argument in this passage from the *Eudemian Ethics* in other work.

\(^{54}\) I discuss Aristotle’s account of self-love in other work.
seems to be a friend to himself, but not in the case of other animals; for example, a horse
does not seem good to itself, \(^5\) and so is not a friend to itself. But neither are children
except at the time which they also have \textit{prohairesis}. For at this time the child\(^6\) disagrees
with his appetites. \(\) \(\) \(\) (EE VII.6, 1240b27-34)

Children do not have the reflexive capacity to seem \textit{good to themselves}. This ability goes
hand in hand with the capacity for \textit{prohairesis}. Aristotle’s point, I think, is that this reflexive
capacity to seem good to oneself is at least a conceptual prerequisite for having a conception
of the good on which, as we will see, \textit{prohairesis} depends. This also helps us to see how we
might retain the manuscript reading of \textit{παῖς}, “child,” in the last sentence: Aristotle elsewhere
identifies a \textit{human} as the kind of starting-point (\textit{ἀρχὴ}) that is \textit{prohairesis} (NE VI.2, 1139b4-
5); so \textit{prohairesis} and seeming good to oneself mark the ability to delineate \textit{oneself} and what
is \textit{good for oneself} from the kinds of appetites which merely “happen” to oneself. So we can
say that it is “the child,” identified as the \textit{prohairetic} \textit{ἀρχὴ}, that disagrees with his appetites.
So then a child might have \textit{boulēsis}— \textit{κατὰ πάθος}, closely associated with his feelings and
appetites—but lack a conception of the good, which rather goes along with \textit{prohairesis}. We
will find a similar situation in the case of the vicious.

4.3.2 \textit{Boulēsis} of the vicious

Mele, for instance, argues on the basis of the passage from I.3 above, which argues that
youths are not proper students of politics, that children do not have the kind of action-guiding
principles he associates with \textit{boulēsis}\(^5\). \(\) But Mele fails to note that that same passage applies
not only to those young in age but also to those young in \textit{character}. But it is more difficult to
hold that Aristotle denies \textit{boulēsis} to \textit{adults}, particularly because Aristotle ascribes \textit{boulēsis}
to the base or vicious, whom Aristotle also describes as living \textit{κατὰ πάθος}\(^5\).

\(^{55}\)It seems that we need some supplement for the argument, and I prefer Ross’ supplement, \textit{<οὐ δοκεῖ ἀγαθὸς>}, to Rieckher’s, \textit{<οὐκ ὀρεκτὸς>}, accepted by the OCT. Ross’ supplement better fits the argument
from 1240b27. However, both supplements would work for my purposes.

\(^{56}\)Retaining the \textit{παῖς} of the MSS.

\(^{57}\)\textit{άλλα δοκεῖ πάς αὐτὸς αὐτῷ ἀγαθός...διό εἰς ἀνθρώπου μὲν δοκεῖ ἐκαστὸς αὐτὸς αὐτῷ φίλος, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων <οὐ>, οἷον ἵππος αὐτὸς αὐτῷ <οὐ δοκεῖ ἀγαθός>, οὐκ ἦρα φίλος. ἀλλ' ὀνὸς τὰ παιδία, ἀλλ' ὅταν ἦδη ἔχῃ προαιρέσειν· ἦδη γάρ τότε διαφωνεῖ ὁ παῖς πρὸς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν.}

\(^{58}\)Mele (1984, 143).

\(^{59}\)Aristotle refers to bad people using a variety of terms, e.g., \textit{φαῦλοι}, \textit{κακοί}, \textit{μοχθηροί}. The passages I
discuss below typically refer to \textit{φαῦλοι}, often translated as “base,” although I will use “base” and “vicious”
interchangeably. See Müller (2015, 1) on Aristotle’s terms for the vicious.
There has been much debate about whether or not Aristotle offers a single, consistent account of vice and the vicious person. Aristotle sometimes seems to describe the vicious person as someone who acts on prohairesis for things which are bad, thinking them to be good. Thus Aristotle describes vice as making “its prohairesis for the sake of the opposite things” as virtue (EE II.11, 1228a4-5). This vicious person appears to be remorseless because “vice escapes the notice” of the person who has it (NE VII.8, 1150b36). But sometimes, particularly in NE IX.4, Aristotle describes the vicious person as constantly in a state of turmoil and at odds with herself, which makes the vicious person seem “unprincipled.” This person is wracked with regret (NE IX.4, 1166b24-25). My own view is that these accounts cannot be reconciled: In attempting to accommodate both we inevitably fail to do justice to some feature of one or the other. But we need not settle this issue. I think there is good evidence that Aristotle allows for some kind of “unprincipled” vicious person. And this vicious person seems to have boulēsis but lack a conception of the good.

In NE IX.8, Aristotle contrasts the blameworthy self-love associated with the base or vicious person with the proper self-love of the virtuous:

That is why [the decent person] would especially be a self-lover, according to a different kind [of self-lover] than the one reproached, and differing so much as living according to reason [differs] from living κατὰ πάθος, and desiring the noble [differs] from desiring what seems beneficial. (NE IX.8, 1169a3-6)

In describing the vicious person as living κατὰ πάθος, Aristotle does not seem to mean that the vicious lack boulēsis (they do not live purely according to feeling in the way that would be implied if boulēsis were put fully on the side of logos). Indeed they do desire what they think is beneficial or advantageous. As in the case of youths, these vicious live κατὰ πάθος in the sense that they do not live according to a conception of the good which (in some way) supplies a measure of order or structure. This fits the closely related chaotic depiction of

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60 A good overview of the debate can be found in Müller (2015), who argues for a consistent account of “unprincipled” vice, and Nielsen (2017), who argues in favor of a “principled” account. But as I mention below, I think that both of these accounts fail to do justice to the full range of features found in Aristotle’s discussions of vice.

61 ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ κακία τῶν ἐναντίων ἕνεκα ποιεῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν.

62 I am tempted to locate the “unprincipled” vicious person of IX.4 on a continuum below the “principled” vicious person and approaching the “beastly” person of VII.4.

63 διὸ φίλαυτος μάλιστ’ ἂν εἴη, καθ’ ἕτερον εἶδος τοῦ ὀνειδιζομένου, καὶ διαφέρειν τοσοῦτον ὅσον τὸ κατὰ λάγον ζῆν τοῦ κατὰ πάθος, καὶ ὀρέγεσθαι ἢ τοῦ καλοῦ ἢ τοῦ δοκοῦτος συμφέρειν.
the vicious in IX.4.

We find something similar in Aristotle’s discussion of the proper object of *boulēsis* in *NE* III.4. Some say that the proper object of *boulēsis* is what is actually good and others that it is the apparent good. Each view raises problems. Aristotle’s own account solves these problems by combining aspects of both:

> But if these things are not satisfactory, should we then say that the proper object of *boulēsis* without qualification and in truth is the good, but to each person it is the apparent [good]? Then to an excellent person it is what is good in truth, but to a base person it is whatever chance thing [*τὸ τυχόν*]...

Aristotle’s claim that the vicious have *boulēsis* for the chance or happenstance thing (*τὸ τυχόν*) is noteworthy. It fits well Aristotle’s descriptions of those who are immature in character in I.3 and the vicious in IX.8, both of whom he describes as living *κατὰ πάθος*—pursuing things, especially the present pleasure, as it strikes them. Nielsen has argued that Aristotle often assimilates the vicious person to the “indulgent” person, the *akolastos*, who pursues the present pleasure on the basis of *prohairesis* and thus seems to have some conception of the good (*NE* VII.3, 1146b22-23). However, a hallmark of the *akolastos* is that she has no regret; but the vicious in IX.4 are said to be full of regret. Moreover, it is not clear that the *akolastos* is indiscriminate in her pursuit of pleasures. Aristotle particularly associates the *akolastos* with bodily pleasure, especially shameful pleasures (*NE* VII.9, 1151b21-22). So while there may be a kind of person who pursues a certain kind of “present pleasure” on the basis of a conception of the good and thus feels no regret, I take it that there is also a person who pursues things *κατὰ πάθος* without a conception of the good and feels remorse as what strikes her as good changes.

If we can read III.4 in this way, then this helps to allay a worry we might have about distinguishing between *boulēsis* *κατὰ πάθος* and *καθ’ ἕξιν*: There might seem to be a sense in which *every boulēsis* is *καθ’ ἕξιν* because one’s “character” determines which things appear good to one. But the reference in III.4 to the chance thing might rather be taken to

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64. εἴ δὲ δὴ ταῦτα μὴ ἀρέσκει, ἀρα φατέον ἀπλώς μὲν καὶ κατ’ ἀλήθειαν βουλητὸν εἶναι τἀγαθόν, ἐκάστῳ δὲ τὸ  

66. Meyer claims that “[a]n agent’s moral character will be the set of dispositions that together determine the full range of an agent’s sentiments and interests” (1993, 31).
indicate that some “characters” fail to determine that anything appears good to one in a consistent way. Their characters have not yet been shaped into something which might be said to possess or embody a conception of the good. It may be “characteristic” of these people to live κατὰ πάθος, but that is a wider use of ‘character.’ Or to put it another way, it may be a particular kind of character flaw to fail to live in a way according to which one might be said to live καθ’ ἕξιν.

This seems to be the kind of character flaw Aristotle discusses in EE I.2:

Paying attention to these things, everyone capable of living according to their own prohairesis should set some aim of living finely, either honor or reputation or wealth or education, looking to which one will perform all their actions (as not arranging one’s life in relation to some end is an indication of great folly)... (EE I.2, 1214b6-11)

It is foolish not to organize or arrange one’s life, not to structure it in relation to some aim or end. This fits well the thought that someone—even someone mature in age but immature in character—might live and even have boulēsis κατὰ πάθος, while at the same time failing to have a conception of the good as a matter of character (hexis). (And we can accept this thought, I think, without worrying too much about the way in which one sets or comes to have this end. The process of establishing this end need not be as straightforward and rational as this passage might suggest.)

This passage from EE I.2 also brings prohairesis into view. I take Aristotle’s point to be here that having some “aim of living finely” is necessary for prohairesis. Aristotle thinks that some people are by nature incapable of prohairesis (e.g., Pol. III.9, 1280a32-4; VII.14, 1333a16-30). Of those who are potentially capable of prohairesis, it would be foolish not to set some end which would allow them to live according to their prohairesis. This general thought is confirmed, as we will see, by NE VI.2.

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67I have translated with the reading δεῖ θέσθαι, as Inwood and Woolf do, from a marginal note accepted by Gigon.

68περὶ δὴ τούτων ἐπιστήσαντας, ἀπάντα τῶν δευτέρων ζῆν κατὰ τὴν αὑτοῦ προαίρεσιν θέσθαι τινὰ σκοπὸν τοῦ καλοῦ ζῆν. ἢ τοῦτο ἢ δόξαν ἢ πλούσιον ἢ παιδείαν. πρὸς ὅν ἀποβλέπουσα ποιήσεται πάσας τὰς πράξεις (ὡς τὸ γε μὴ συνετάθαι τὸν βιόν πρὸς τί τέλος ἀφροσύνης πολλῆς σημείων ἔστώ)...  

69McDowell (1980, §6) questions whether the supplement “should” is necessary (see 89n67 above) but allows for a reading similar to the one I offer. See also Nielsen (2017, 20-21).
4.4 Prohairesis and Eupraxia

I have argued that Aristotle makes a distinction between two ways of having boulēsis, κατὰ πάθος and καθ’ ἕξιν, and that we should understand this distinction in terms of desiring something on a whim, as it strikes one or rather desiring something as a stable aspect of one’s hexis. I have further suggested that boulēsis καθ’ ἕξιν is boulēsis which relates to a conception of one’s good. If prohairesis is linked to a conception of one’s good, then we will have an explanation of the requirement that prohairesis comes from a hexis (and also an explanation for the way Aristotle closely links these this requirement to the distinction in boulēsis in VIII.5).

The evidence that prohairesis is linked to a conception of one’s good in the main discussions of prohairesis in NE III and EE II is disappointing. There Aristotle focuses on the general nature of prohairesis as being of a means towards some end without making explicit that this end is in some sense one’s good or living well. Aristotle illustrates his point with comparisons to the crafts, which might be taken to suggest a connection: The doctor does not deliberate about whether to heal her patients, but how; the politician does not deliberate about whether to govern well, but how; etc. But the telos of the doctor is healing, as the telos of the politician is to govern well, so perhaps we should conclude that the end relevant to prohairesis is the telos of the agent, living well? But this conclusion is hardly clear: These comparisons might just as well support the view that Aristotle allows merely “technical” prohairesis.70

4.4.1 Prohairesis and eupraxia in NE VI.2

Instead, commentators generally turn to NE VI/EE V for more direct evidence, especially NE VI.2, where Aristotle seems to connect prohairesis (and character) to “doing well” (εὐπραξία). Aristotle ostensibly sets out in VI.1 to investigate the “correct reason” (orthos logos) in accordance with which the mean-states at which the virtues aim are determined (1138b18-20). But then after quickly dismissing the character virtues, since they have already

been discussed in Books III-V, Aristotle turns to examine the *intellectual* virtues (1139a1-3). (There is presumably a connection between the “orthos logos” and the intellectual virtues, but Aristotle does not make that connection explicit here.) The intellectual virtues can be identified by determining the best state(s) of the rational part(s) of the soul, and so Aristotle begins here, dividing the rational part of the soul into theoretical and practical parts. The best state of each part, in turn, is to be determined with reference to each part’s particular *telos*.

There is then a fairly abrupt transition to VI.2, which begins with the assertion that there are three elements in the soul which are controlling (*κύρια*) of action: perception, intelligence, and desire (1139a17-18).\(^{71}\) The relevance of this claim is not made immediately obvious, but we can make it clear by supplying that the *telos* of the practically rational part of soul is a certain kind of “truth” *in action*. So in order to determine the virtue of this part of soul, we must determine the proper state of the elements which lead to action. This explains the special emphasis on *prohairesis* in this chapter. Although other elements are “controlling” of action, it is *prohairesis* which Aristotle identifies as the starting-point or source (*ἀρχὴ*) of action:

[A]: Then the source of action is *prohairesis*—from which the *motion* [comes] but not that for the sake of which—[and the source] of *prohairesis* is desire and reason which is for the sake of something.\(^{72}\) (*NE* VI.2, 1139a31-33)

Desire and thought come together in *prohairesis* in such a way as to be the source or origin of (the motion of) action.

This has further implications for the condition of the agent who has *prohairesis*:

[B]: That is why without understanding and thought or without a *hexis* of character there is no *prohairesis*.\(^{73}\) (*NE* VI.2, 1139a33-34)

Given that *prohairesis* requires reason (*λόγος*) and desire (*ὄρεξις*) in [A], *prohairesis* is also said to require understanding (*νοῦς*) and thought (*διάνοια*) and also a *hexis* of character here in [B]. This second set of requirements is supported by appealing to *ἐνπραξία*:

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\(^{71}\)The chapter divisions are of course artificial, but in this case it is difficult to identify a nearby division which would make the transition in topics clearer.  
\(^{72}\)πράξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις—ὅθεν ἡ κίνησις ἀλλ’ οίχ ὁ ἔνεκα—προαίρεσις δὲ ὄρεξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἔνεκά τινος.  
\(^{73}\)διὸ οὐτ’ ἄνεν νοῦ καὶ διανοίας οὐτ’ ἄνεν ἠθικῆς ἕστιν ἔξεως ἡ προαίρεσις.  

91
For there is no εὐπραξία and its opposite in action without thought and character.\(^74\)

(NE VI.2, 1139a34-35)

Thought and a state of character are required for εὐπραξία and its opposite (I return to this claim below). But if the requirements of εὐπραξία are to be a guide to the requirements of prohairesis, then there must be a strong connection between εὐπραξία and prohairesis. One way of filling out this connection would be to suppose that every prohairesis aims at εὐπραξία. And this supposition seems to be confirmed by the way in which Aristotle proceeds:

[D]: Thought itself moves nothing, but thought which is for the sake of something and practical [does]; for this rules productive [thought]. For everyone who produces does so for the sake of something, and what is producible [ποιητόν] is not the end without qualification (rather [it is] in relation to something and of something), but what is doable in action [πρακτόν]. For εὐπραξία is the end, and desire is of this.\(^75\)

(NE VI.2, 1139a35-b4)

This is a dense and difficult passage, but we can trace a path from practical thought to εὐπραξία. The kind of thought which moves someone (presumably, to action) is for the sake of something. The unqualified end at which it aims is not the product (ποιητόν) but what is doable in action (πρακτόν). This is because the end in acting is acting well (εὐπραξία). Every action thus aims at εὐπραξία, and we can bring this back to prohairesis by supplying that prohairesis itself aims at some action (πρακτόν). Thus it seems that we should hear Aristotle’s initial claim that prohairesis is the source of action with nomological force: Every action has a prohairesis as its source.

If every prohairesis ultimately aims in some way at εὐπραξία, then given the way in which Aristotle endorses connecting εὐπραξία to τὸ εὖ πράττειν and eudaimonia (NE I.8, 1098b20-22), every prohairesis in some sense aims at one’s good. This sequence of connections in VI.2 also assigns some role to hexis of character. This fits well the thought that prohairesis requires a hexis because it requires an end set by a boulēsis καθ’ ἕξιν. However, there are a wide range of views about the role of a hexis of character in this passage. The important dividing line among these views for our purposes is between those views which allow for a positive contribution from a hexis of character and those which assign a negative role to it.

\(^{74}\)εὐπραξία γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐν πράξει ἄνευ διανοίας καὶ ἤθους οὐκ ἔστιν.

\(^{75}\)διάνοια δ’ αὐτὴ οὐθὲν καὶ αὐτή τοῦ καὶ πρακτική· αὐτὴ γὰρ καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἤρχεται· ἐνεκα γὰρ τοῦ ποιεῖ πάσα ὁ ποιός. καὶ αὐτὴ τοῦ ἀπόλλων (ἀλλὰ πρὸς τι καὶ τινός) τὸ ποιητόν. ἀλλὰ τὸ πρακτόν· ἡ γὰρ εὐπραξία τέλος, ἡ δ’ ἀρέξεις τοῦτον.
Some scholars have claimed that a *hexis* of character is not required for the *prohairesis* itself but for *acting* on it. C.D.C. Reeve, for instance, comments on [B] and [C] above that *prohairesis*’ “effectiveness in achieving its end depends on whether the appetites and emotions in the soul’s desiring part are in a mean, and thus on the states of character that are the desiring part’s virtues (or vices)...”

Reeve supposes that independently of a *hexis* of character, there is already a *prohairesis* which has an end, and a *hexis* of character merely plays a role in determining whether that end can be achieved. Thus Reeve and others take the reference to *hexis* of character to be a reference to *virtue* in particular—*prohairesis* as such does not require a *hexis* of character, but its smooth implementation requires *virtue*. In order to find room for *boulēsis* καθ’ ἕξιν as an integral part of *prohairesis*, we need to show that a *hexis* of character here plays more than a merely negative role.

### 4.4.2 Eupraxia and character

I think that VI.2 does show both that a *hexis* of character makes a positive contribution to *prohairesis* and that this positive contribution is the *desire* connected to ἐὐπραξία. We can see this more clearly by attending to two important features of the discussion which commentators often fail to note: (1) VI.2 appeals to *prohairesis* in general to support claims about excellent *prohairesis* in particular; and (2) Aristotle refers in [C] to both ἐὐπραξία and its opposite.

(1) VI.2 divides roughly in half: There is one line of argument running from the start of the chapter to the claim that the good state (τὸ ἔδ) or telos of the practical part is “truth being in agreement with correct desire” (1139a29-31). Although it is very difficult to fill out exactly what Aristotle means by this statement, this stretch of argument clearly answers to the project announced at the end of VI.1 of finding the best states of the rational parts of the soul, beginning here with the practically rational part. And this argument runs through the claim that excellent *prohairesis* requires true reason and correct desire.

The second line of argument begins in [A] above, where Aristotle pivots to a claim about

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76Reeve (2014, 273n418).
77Cooper (1988, 35-36) presents a similar view. He takes the virtuous person to act from distinct motives: the rational motive of *prohairesis* and the independent, non-rational motives of the character virtues.
78Burnet (1900, ad loc.) takes this to be a reference to virtue.
prohairesis in general: It is the source of action (πρᾶξις), and the source of prohairesis is reason and desire. Aristotle supports this claim by working through a series of connections which are meant to show that prohairesis requires practical thought and desire for the end, εὐπραξία, in [D]. Thus if prohairesis as such requires these two elements, then excellent prohairesis, as the first argument assumed, requires that both of these elements also be in excellent condition, i.e., that the reason be true and the desire correct.

The importance of this structure is that whatever account we give of the relationship between a hexis of character, εὐπραξία, and prohairesis should not be limited to the case of excellent prohairesis, as some commentators assume. And the sequence of pairs in these passages strongly suggests that the role of a hexis of character is to supply the desire for the end, εὐπραξία, towards which prohairesis aims. In each section, Aristotle is careful to touch on both the rational and desiderative elements which are required for prohairesis. The rational elements run from reason in [A], to understanding and thought in [B], to thought again in [C], and finally to practical thought in [D]. The desiderative elements similarly run from desire in [A], to hexis of character in [B], to character in [C], and finally to desire for εὐπραξία in [D]. If, as I have suggested, the successive pairs are meant to help justify the initial claim that prohairesis depends upon reason and desire, then it certainly appears that hexis of character is meant to be connected to desire for εὐπραξία.

(2) We can reach the same conclusion by considering Aristotle’s curious remark in [C] that “εὐπραξία and its opposite in action” require thought and character. What is the opposite of εὐπραξία? Assuming, as I think we should, that Aristotle connects εὐπραξία to eudaimonia, the opposite of εὐπραξία could perhaps be understood either objectively or subjectively. We might take eudaimonia in an objective sense to be the proper life for humans, which it is the aim of Aristotle’s ethics to elucidate; and the opposite of εὐπραξία in this sense would be some kind of failing to do what is actually good. It would be a strange claim to make that failing to act well in this sense also requires character. Moreover, the claim that εὐπραξία and its opposite require character is meant to help explain the previous claim in [B] that prohairesis requires a hexis of character. But if hexis of character in [B] refers to virtue, as Reeve and others take it, then the fact that both εὐπραξία and its opposite require character hardly supports this claim.
It is much better, I think, to understand the opposite of εὐπραξία subjectively. In this sense, it would be failing to achieve whatever a person takes to constitute the good life (e.g., the life of pleasure, wealth, honor, etc.). This gives Aristotle a clear point connected to the argument: In order to count as either succeeding or failing in living well, an agent must have some conception of living well as a goal with respect to the attainment of which success and failure can be measured. The person who fails to even set up, in some sense, a goal around which she might organize her life has no standard for determining whether she has succeeded or failed. This person is like the foolish people in EE I.2, discussed above, who fail to set up some end so that they might actualize their capacity to live according to their own prohairesis.

Even an unsuccessful prohairesis, if measured as one which fails to achieve some aspect of εὐπραξία, still thereby invokes one’s conception of living well. And Aristotle seems to hold that one’s conception of living well is a matter of one’s character, and so in this subjective sense, even the opposite of εὐπραξία requires character, as Aristotle claims in [B]. Thus, on a subjective interpretation of εὐπραξία and its opposite, Aristotle is indicating that every prohairesis, whether successful or not, still invokes one’s conception of the good and thereby requires a hexis of character.79 VI.2 seems to show, then, that every prohairesis relates to one’s conception of the good and that this aspect of prohairesis is a positive contribution of a hexis of character.

However, some scholars have attempted to put some distance between prohairesis and a hexis of character. They argue that VI.2 shows that a hexis of character is required in general for prohairesis, but not every prohairesis derives from or reflects that hexis: One

79This explanation of how both εὐπραξία and its opposite require character and how both εὐπραξία and its opposite relate to prohairesis helps to explain how the connection between εὐπραξία and character in [C] supports the connection between prohairesis and a hexis of character in [B]. Greenwood would delete [C], exclaiming: “If obvious and complete inappropriateness and logical unsoundness is warrant enough for bracketing a passage, the words εὐπραξία γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐν πράξει ἀνεκ διανοίας καὶ ἔθους σιχ ἐστιν ought to be bracketed” (1909, 176). And again: “So if the words εὐπραξία γὰρ κτλ. are to be kept, they must present the absurdity of a statement, hitherto unproved, about a derived notion, brought forward to support a statement, already proved, about the notion from which the former is derived” (1909, 176-7). But if the account I have given here is correct, then Greenwood misunderstands the relevance of this remark in supplying a connection between the εὐπραξία at which prohairesis aims and the hexis of character required for εὐπραξία. And in general, Greenwood seems to misconstrue the sequence of argument in this passage, given that Greenwood takes the meaning of εὐπραξία to depend on prohairesis rather than the other way around.
must be the kind of person with a *hexis* of character in order to be capable of *prohairesis*.

On this point our passage from *NE* VIII.5 provides an important bit of evidence. There Aristotle makes the general claim that *prohairesis* comes from a *hexis*. Alone, this claim might be read as requiring a *hexis* of character in general, although the “comes from” (ἀφ’ ἔξεως) makes this reading difficult.

But in context, Aristotle is using this claim to argue that *philia* itself is a *hexis*. First, I take it that Aristotle does not intend to show that *philia* is a *hexis* in the sense that it is one’s *hexis* of character in general; rather, as I will argue in Chapter 5, there is some specific *hexis* which is justifiably identified with *philia*. Thus Aristotle seems to have a more fine-grained understanding of the relationship between *prohairesis* and *hexis*. Second, Aristotle’s argument that *philia* is a *hexis* because it involves *prohairesis* would be a poor one, if *prohairesis* were as disconnected from *hexis* as this opposing view supposes. Instead, Aristotle seems to think that there is a strict enough and particular enough connection between *prohairesis* and *philia* that the mere fact of *prohairesis* (of a certain sort) in *philia* is enough to show that *philia* must be a *hexis*.

### 4.5 Conclusion: “Virtue Makes the Goal Right”

In this chapter, I have argued that Aristotle recognizes a distinction between two ways of having *boulēsis*, κατὰ πάθος and καθ’ ἔξω, as illustrated by the contrast in *NE* VIII.5 between two ways of wishing goods to someone in *philia*. Aristotle’s use of the qualification κατὰ πάθος suggests that *boulēsis* κατὰ πάθος is wishing for something on a whim or as it strikes one. This allows Aristotle to accommodate “spontaneous *boulēsis*.” *Boulēsis* καθ’ ἔξω, by contrast, seems to be wishing for something stably, in a way which relates to one’s conception of the good. I have further argued that *prohairesis* requires an end set by *boulēsis* καθ’ ἔξω, which helps to explain the key claim in the argument in VIII.5, that *prohairesis* comes from a *hexis*.

This distinction in *boulēsis* goes against the common view that *boulēsis* as such involves  

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some connection to one’s good; and I have suggested that *boulēsis* κατὰ πάθος challenges the conception of *boulēsis* as reason’s own desire. But the view that I have argued for could still be accommodated in a wide variety of ways: It could be that a *hexis* of character is itself a rational *hexis* which could directly produce *boulēsis*; or it could be that a *hexis* of character supplies content which gives rise to *boulēsis* through the assent of reason.\(^81\) The notion of *boulēsis* καθ’ ἕξιν is likewise consistent with a variety of ways of understanding the role and character of a “conception” of one’s good. But I want to conclude this chapter by merely *gesturing* at the way in which the view I have defended would fit well with a straightforward understanding of Aristotle’s famous claim that “virtue makes the goal right.” And connecting my view with this claim would help to shore up two assumptions which I have been making along the way: First, that by ‘*hexis*’ in the claim that *prohairesis* comes from *hexis* Aristotle means a *hexis* of *character*; and second, that *boulēsis* καθ’ ἕξιν is the *contribution* of this *hexis*.

Aristotle describes virtue as a *ἕξις προαιρετική* (*NE* II.6, 1106b36; VI.2, 1139a23; *EE* III.1, 1230a27). And he explains what he means by this description in *EE* III.1, “...that it makes one choose everything for the sake of something, and this is that for the sake of which, the fine” (1230a27-29).\(^82\) The sense in which virtue is connected to *prohairesis* appears to be through its connection to the *end*. This is why Aristotle can claim that *prohairesis* are a good guide to a person’s character, even better than actions are: A person’s character is judged by her *end*, that for the sake of which she acts, and this is revealed through her *prohairesis* (*EE* II.11, 1228a1-4). This fits Aristotle’s repeated claim that “virtue makes the goal right.”\(^83\) These claims have been very controversial; and most scholars have been reluctant to take them at face-value.\(^84\) However, even without discussing these issues in detail, it is clear that Aristotle maintains some important connection between *prohairesis* and a *hexis* of character through the *end* involved in the *prohairesis*. And I take this connection to provide further support for the key claim that I build on in Chapter 5: When Aristotle asserts that *prohairesis* comes from a *hexis* in VIII.5, there is good reason to think that

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\(^81\)The first kind of view is suggested by the *kind* of account give by Lorenz (2009), although it may not be his view; the second kind of view is put forward by Moss (2012, 163).

\(^82\)Ὅτι ἑνεκά τινος πάντα αἱρεῖσθαι ποιεῖ, καὶ τούτῳ ἐστι τὸ ὁ δὲ ἑνεκα, τὸ καλὸν

\(^83\)For example: *EE* II.11, 1227b23-25, 34-38; *NE* VI.12, 1144a7-9; VI.13, 1145a5-7; VII.8, 1151a15-19.

\(^84\)See Moss (2012, Ch. 7) for a thorough discussion of the opposing views.
Aristotle is especially concerned with the *ends* involved in *philia.*
5.0  *Eunoia*

In Chapter 4, I argued that the general connection between *prohairesis* and one’s conception of the good or *εὐπραξία* shows that *prohairesis* must come from a *hexis* because the *boulēseis* which relate to one’s conception of the good (and thus which figure in one’s *prohairesis*) must themselves be had as a matter of one’s *hexis*. We might still wonder how this general connection shows that *philia* itself must be a *hexis*: What licenses the conclusion that *philia* is that *hexis* from which the relevant *prohairesis* arises?

Answering this question requires examining the role of goodwill (*εὔνοια*)—wishing goods to someone for her own sake—in *philia*. And it is intimately connected to one of the problems which face the consensus interpretation of *NE* VIII.5 (§1.1, problem 6): The consensus interpretation cannot make sense of this argument as applying to *primary philia* in particular, given that reciprocation is a feature of all *three* kinds of *philia*. In §5.1, I argue that pleasure and utility *philai*, unlike primary *philia*, do not require goodwill. I then appeal to Aristotle’s connection between *philia* and *koinōnia* (“community”) to explain in §5.2 why Aristotle would extend his account of *philia* to cover self-interested relationships. Finally in §5.3, I use the structure of a *koinōnia* to show that pleasure and utility *philai* depend upon one’s antecedent values in a way that primary *philia* does not: Primary *philia* requires that one come to value one’s friend herself and have her good as an end in a way which justifies describing this *philia* as a *hexis*.

5.1  *Philia* and Goodwill

5.1.1 Utility and pleasure *philai* at first glance

It is hard to deny that Aristotle at least gives the impression that pleasure and utility *philai* lack goodwill—an impression strong enough, I think, to make this the default view.\footnote{Historically, this has been the more prevalent view, from Aspasius on. I am especially indebted to the excellent treatment of Price (1989, Ch. 5).}
There is a question of what exactly would count as lacking goodwill, and as we will see, part of the dispute on this issue concerns this question. *Philia* is partially distinguished from mere goodwill—the self-standing attitude—by the fact that friends *act* on their goodwill. One way in which a friend might exhibit self-interested well-wishing rather than goodwill would be to perform the activities of *philia* in some sense *directly* motivated by one’s own good; for example, if one benefits one’s friend *in order to* receive a benefit oneself. Another way would be to have one’s motivations *conditioned* on the good one receives from or gives to one’s friend; for example, if one must tally the “score” before deciding how to respond. Cooper, for instance, argues that utility and pleasure *philiai* do not lack goodwill in the first way and that the kind of conditioning of motive which *is* involved is not serious enough to *deny* goodwill in the second way. But at least at first glance, Aristotle’s characterization of pleasure and utility *philiai* indicates that they lack goodwill in both ways.

This is suggested by several general features of pleasure and utility *philiai*. In both cases the relationship ceases whenever the pleasure or utility ceases; so not only are these sorts of relationships in some sense *based* on pleasure or utility, but there is clearly an *ongoing* concern with it. These relationships are also different enough from primary *philia* that Aristotle must pause at least twice to consider whether they should be counted as kinds of *philia* at all (*NE* VIII.4, 1157a25-33; cf. VIII.6, 1158b5-11). We might plausibly expect these relationships to differ from primary *philia* in a significant respect. And even the base, whom Aristotle characterizes as especially self-centered in IX.8, may be friends on account of pleasure or utility (*NE* VIII.4, 1157b1-3). This appears to be a departure from the *Lysis*, where Socrates argues that the wicked cannot be friends because they act unjustly (214c). Aristotle may be making room for friendships between the base by relaxing the kind of attitudes and actions required for these relationships.

The suggestion is even stronger in Aristotle’s characterization of utility *philia*. Utility *philia* occurs especially between people who are contrary to each other in some sense, each possessing something which the other wants (*NE* VIII.8, 1159b12-15). Utility *philia* is thus like an exchange of goods, and it is characteristic of “market-goers” (*ἀγοραῖοι*) (*NE* VIII.6, 1158a21). Those who are friends on account of utility may not even like to be around each

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2Cooper (1977a, 639-40, *passim*).
other, “...for they are only pleasant to the extent that they have hopes of [something] good” (NE VIII.3, 1156a29-30). Utility friends seem to always have an eye on prospective benefits. Moreover, utility philia seems to have a transactional nature: It is not just that friends have a general concern that the relationship remain useful, utility friends interact within the relationship on transactional terms.

Aristotle divides utility philia into two kinds, ethical or character-based (ἠθικὴ) and legal (νομικὴ) (NE VIII.13, 1162b22-23). In legal utility philia, which includes contractual relationships and “hand to hand” exchanges, one may not trust the friend enough to reciprocate appropriately and so terms are set explicitly. It is noble, Aristotle says, to benefit someone not in order to be benefited in turn (NE VIII.13, 1162b36-1163a1), but this noble motive appears supererogatory in utility philia. In ethical utility philia, one gives “as a friend” in the sense that explicit terms need not be set beforehand, but one still gives thinking that one should “...receive equal or better, as it was not given but loaned” (1162b31-33). And in both types of utility philia one friend may help the other “...on the grounds that he receive the same” (NE VIII.13, 1163a18-19). Thus Aristotle says that utility friends are “not friends of each other but of profit” (NE VIII.4, 1157a14-16; cf. IX.1, 1164a10-11). As such, utility friends are especially prone to complaint, “...for using [or: dealing with] each other for advantage they always need more...” (NE VIII.13, 1162b16-17)

Likewise in cases of mixed philiai in which, e.g., one friend loves on account of pleasure and the other on account of utility. In such cases, each friend “is intent on those things which he happens to lack—and it is for the sake of this, at any rate, that he gives these things” (NE IX.1, 1164a20-22). It
seems that friends in pleasure and utility philiai may give in order to get.

There seems to be a strong prima facie case to be made that the philiai of pleasure and utility need not involve goodwill. Aristotle refers to the hopes, expectations, and grounds for particular actions in ways that suggest self-interestedness. I have confined this survey to the Nicomachean Ethics because it is generally agreed that the Eudemian Ethics is clearer on this point: There Aristotle plainly states that goodwill is not a feature of pleasure or utility philiai (EE VII.7, 1241a4 ff.). It could be that the Nicomachean and Eudemian accounts of philia differ on this point, although it would be a significant difference and one we might expect to be marked more clearly. But instead, there is the strong impression that the Nicomachean account agrees with the Eudemian on this point, which makes this impression all the more persuasive.

5.1.2 That all philiai involve goodwill

Motivation to reject the traditional view has come primarily from three issues, two philosophical and one textual. First, many of our relationships would seem to fall into the category of utility or pleasure philia. Certainly Aristotle sets a high bar for primary philia. But then if utility and pleasure philiai do not involve goodwill, we seem to be left with a dim view of human relationships—self-centered, egoistic, or even exploitative. Second, despite the differences between relationships based upon the good, the useful, and the pleasant, Aristotle nonetheless identifies them as kinds of philia. Goodwill may seem to be so central that without it, we might wonder what would make these three kinds of the same thing, namely philia. This worry goes naturally with the thought that Aristotelian philia is something like our notion of friendship, which seems to require goodwill. But this worry also has a basis in the third issue, which requires more explanation: NE VIII.2 is often read as culminating in a general definition of philia which includes goodwill.

In NE VIII.2, after determining the objects of love and characterizing philēsis, Aristotle

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10Versions of the view that all three types of philia require goodwill can be found in, e.g., Cooper (1977a), Pangle (2002, Ch. 2), Whiting (2006), and Nehamas (2010).

11Cooper, for example, worries that alternative interpretations “commit [Aristotle] to holding that almost everyone has nothing but selfish motivations” (1977a, 643). Joachim’s description of the friend on account of utility as “the man who exploits his friend” might incite this worry (1951, 248).

12Cf. Cooper (1977a, 643-4) and Nehamas (2010, 219).
begins to discuss *philia* and being friends. His starting point is the common view that “one should wish goods to one’s friend for his own sake” (1155b30).\(^{13}\) People call those who have this kind of well-wishing “good-willed,” and they think that when two people have goodwill for each other, this is *philia*. Aristotle argues for adding the qualification that this well-wishing “not go unnoticed,” because surely two people who happen to have goodwill towards each other without knowing it should not count as *friends*. This leads to his statement that they “need to be good-willed towards each other and wish goods, not escaping their notice, on account of some one of the things mentioned” (1156a3-5). This apparently general claim might be taken as a kind of definition of friendship each part of which is meant to apply to each kind of *philia*. Thus if “being good-willed” means having disinterested well-wishing for each other, then each kind of *philia* would involve wishing goods to one’s friend for her sake.

On this line of thinking, the room for disinterested well-wishing in pleasure and utility *philias* is then found in two features of Aristotle’s subsequent account. First, Aristotle describes pleasure and utility *philias* as “on account of” (διὰ) pleasure and utility (*NE* VIII.3, 10-16). If this is read as prospective, “for the sake of,” then pleasure and utility *philias* would seem to be self-interested in the sense that friends aim at the pleasure or utility they receive from their friends. But as Cooper argues, we need not take ‘διὰ’ in this sense: We might instead read it as having a kind of retrospective force, describing the ground of the relationship.\(^{14}\) If pleasure and utility *philias* are merely based on pleasure or utility in this way, then it might be that the ground of the relationship is separated from the aims of the friends within it—at least separate enough to allow for goodwill.

But Aristotle clearly holds that in some sense, pleasure and utility *philias* are inferior to primary *philia*. The second important feature of Aristotle’s account of pleasure and utility *philias* helps to explain how, if all *philias* involve goodwill, as this interpretation supposes, nevertheless there are important differences between them. Aristotle claims that pleasure and utility *philias* are based on (διὰ) accidental features of the friend. The basis, in some sense, of the *philia* is the pleasure or utility one gets from one’s friend, but the fact that one’s friend is pleasant or useful to oneself is merely an accidental feature of the friend. Aristotle

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\(^{13}\)τῷ δὲ φίλῳ φασὶ δεῖ βούλεσθαι τἀγαθὰ ἐκείνου ἕνεκα.

\(^{14}\)Cooper (1977a, 632-3). Whiting (2006, §7) expresses more serious doubts that Aristotle does use ‘διὰ’ to express final causation.
contrasts this way of loving with primary friendship in which friends love each other *for themselves* (καθ’ αὑτοὺς). On this view, then, all three types of *philia* involve goodwill, but only in primary *philia* is that goodwill for the friend herself in the sense of who she really is, not an accidental property of her.\(^\text{15}\)

### 5.1.3 That not all *philiai* involve goodwill

This debate has been well-litigated, with diminishing hope of a decisive resolution. I will not touch on every point. Instead, discussing the main issues and contributing what I can, I will aim to make plausible the view that primary *philia* is partially distinguished by the presence of goodwill. We will then be in a position to see how this understanding of *philia* and my interpretation of the argument from VIII.5 are mutually illuminating. I consider the first and third motivations for attributing goodwill to all three kinds of *philia* here and consider the second motivation in §5.2 below.

#### 5.1.3.1 Liminal *philiai*

*Philia* in the *primary* sense—*complete philia*—is between good, virtuous people who love each other on account of their virtue. Such *philiai* are necessarily rare, both because virtuous people are themselves rare and because the intensive nature of the relationship limits the number of such friends one can have. Does this imply that if goodwill is not required in pleasure and utility *philiai*, then as Cooper worries, “almost everyone has nothing but selfish motivations”?\(^\text{16}\) (Such relationships might not even seem to be friendships at all.) But limiting goodwill need not have this implication.

Cooper himself recognizes that we need not restrict primary *philia* to the fully virtuous. Aristotle also refers to this kind of *philia* as based on *character*. The important contrast for Aristotle seems to be between loving someone for an accidental property *in relation to oneself*—being pleasant or useful *to oneself*—and loving someone for “being who he is” in himself (*NE* VIII.3, 12-16). This means that many more *philiai* will begin to resemble the

\(^{15}\)See, e.g., Cooper (1977a, 634-7) and Whiting (2006, 287).
\(^{16}\)Cooper (1977a, 643).
primary sort. If you transition from thinking “this person makes me laugh” to “this person has a great sense of humor” or from “this person is useful to me” to “this person is good at her job”, then you are moving away from a relationship based purely on the pleasure or utility you receive yourself and towards a relationship based on character—with an accompanying change in the attitudes involved in the relationship. Starting to see this person as good at her job instead of merely useful to you, you may wish that she receive a promotion for her own sake, not yours.

Aristotle is also not unaware of the complexities involved in human relationships. Aristotle recognizes relationships in which parties want different things from the relationship, e.g., one pleasure and the other utility. Aristotle recognizes that the same relationship might involve multiple sources of motivation. It is rare, Aristotle thinks, that the same person has the accidental properties of being pleasant to you and useful to you, although it can happen. But it is an important feature of primary philia that it involve goodness, pleasure, and utility; so the closer a friendship comes to approximating the paradigmatic case, the more these motivations will converge (NE VIII.3, 12-15). Finally, Aristotle recognizes that relationships may involve a change in basis over time: A relationship may begin as an erotic relationship but transition to a relationship based on character (NE VIII.4, 1157a10-12).

The combination of these two factors—the role of character and the complexities of human relationships—means that many of our relationships will be “liminal” friendships, existing in between types or in transition towards one type or another. Many of our relationships will be aspiring primary philiai—based on features of the friend herself, her sense of humor or her skill, but in an incomplete way. This is what accounts for our intuition, I think, that even pleasure and utility philiai involve goodwill: In many of our relationships which are predominantly based on the pleasure or utility we receive, there is still an element of appreciating something about the friend herself, which can ground goodwill towards her.

The question is not, as this objection supposes: What would the possible absence of goodwill in pleasure and utility philiai imply about most human relationships? To answer this question, a relationship would first need to be categorized, and that may be more difficult than this question supposes—and I do not think that Aristotle is unaware of the

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17Price (1989, 159) makes a similar point appealing to a kind of basic, universal goodwill.
difficulty. Aristotle recognizes the way in which a relationship may need to be tested in order to determine what kind of a relationship it really is (e.g., *NE* VIII.4, 1157a6-14). The question is rather: Does a relationship which does not involve goodwill still count as a kind of *philia*? There seems to be strong evidence that *philiai* based purely on pleasure or utility may lack goodwill (and as we will see in §5.2, there is good reason for Aristotle to consider this wider class of relationships). But this possibility has seemed to some to be ruled out by Aristotle’s discussion of goodwill in VIII.2.

5.1.3.2 Goodwill and well-wishing in *NE* VIII.2-3 and IX.5

Aristotle concludes VIII.2 by saying, apparently referring to “friends,” that “they need to be good-willed towards each other and wish goods, not escaping their notice, on account of some one of the things mentioned” (1156a3-5). This might be read as a general definition which requires that each kind of *philia* involve goodwill. As Anthony Price notes, the chapter divisions are arbitrary; and if the division were shifted a few lines down, then this apparent definition would not look so final, since it is immediately qualified. Even so, the place of this apparent definition at the confluence of two methodological tracks gives us ample reason to regard it as provisional. First, Aristotle is trying to identify the possible objects of love before explaining *philia* in relation to them. Second, Aristotle is considering the common opinion concerning what is required of a friend.

This common opinion, that friends must wish goods to each other for their own sake, is introduced as part of the argument that there is no *philia* with inanimate objects; and this argument itself is still part of Aristotle’s identification of the objects of love, restricting *philia* to objects with goods capable of reciprocating. It is easy to see why, in order to distinguish *philia* from *philēsis*, Aristotle would reach for the case of wishing goods to someone for her

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18 This would also explain why Aristotle tends to use such stark examples of pleasure and utility *philiai*, erotic relationships and business relationships.

19 As Irwin points out, this claim may refer either to (a) those who have goodwill from the previous sentence or to (b) friends in general; and if (a), the Aristotle “just says what needs to be added to mutual goodwill to create friendship” (Irwin, 1999, 275).

20 Price (1989, 150): “However, like Walker (as it happens), Cooper places too much weight on the traditional division between 8.2. and 8.3, and so draws a conclusion too soon: in the final definition at 1156a8–10 ‘wishing well’ survives while ‘for his sake’ disappears. It is unnecessary to take Aristotle, instead, at his penultimate word.”
own sake as a clearer contrast to the attitude one might have towards, for example, one's wine (which might up being quite close to Aristotle's account of utility philia). Once introduced, Aristotle works with this common opinion towards some notion of being a friend which can then be considered in relation to each of the objects of love.

Both of these methodologies suggest that Aristotle may be starting with the paradigm case before working out the way in which the inferior kinds relate to it (which better fits Aristotle's method in VIII.3-4). Cooper claims that because the three kinds of philia have not yet been distinguished, this apparent definition must apply to all three. It is just as plausible that because the three kinds of philia have not yet been distinguished, this must be merely a provisional definition, pending its application to each object of love.

If VIII.2 is taken to require goodwill in all three kinds of philia, then something must be said about Aristotle's discussion of goodwill in IX.5, which at least appears to deny goodwill in pleasure and utility philiai. Aristotle says that goodwill does not turn into pleasure or utility philia:

for goodwill does not come about towards these. For the one who has been benefited renders goodwill in return for what he has received, because he is doing what is just. And the one wishing to benefit someone because he has hope of assistance through him does not seem to be good-willed towards him, but rather to himself, just as [...] not a friend [...] if he attends him because of some use.

Aristotle clearly denies something about goodwill in relation to pleasure and utility philiai. Cooper argues that Aristotle denies here that goodwill can come about prospectively towards someone as pleasant or useful, leaving open the possibility that goodwill might be felt retrospectively for someone who has been pleasant or useful to oneself. As Price notes, not only is it difficult to get this distinction from "towards them" (ἐπὶ τούτοις), but also denying prospective goodwill based on utility conflicts with Aristotle's claim in VIII.2 that "many have goodwill towards those whom they have not seen, supposing them to be decent or useful" (1155b34-1156a1)

This strongly suggests that one could have goodwill prospectively towards someone on the grounds that she is useful (although perhaps not useful to

21 Cooper (1977a, 625).
22 οὐδὲ γὰρ εὔνοια ἐπὶ τούτοις γίνεται. ὁ μὲν γὰρ εὐεργετήθηκεν ἀνθ' ὧν πέπονθεν ἀπονέμει τὴν εὔνοιαν, τὰ δίκαια δρῶν· ὁ δὲ βουλόμενος την ἐπιραγκῖν, ἐλπίζων ἐπιραγείας δι' ἐκείνου, οὐκ ἔοικ' εὔνους ἔκεινος εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐκεῖνος, καθέτερ οὖσα ὀφέλος, εἰ θεραπεῖαι αὐτῶν διὰ τινα χρήσιν.
23 πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰσὶν εὔνοι αἱ σῶς ἐκωρίκασιν, ὑπολαμβανόμενοι δὲ ἐπιεικεῖς εἶναι ἦς χρησίμουσ.
It is perhaps better to suppose, as Jennifer Whiting argues, that IX.5 denies to pleasure and utility philiai a technical sense of goodwill as being based on some virtue or decency (1167a19). This leaves open the possibility that Aristotle does require that these philiai have goodwill in the less-restrictive sense of wishing goods to someone for her own sake. However, Aristotle begins IX.5 with a backwards reference (apparently to the claim in VIII.2 that goodwill can come about towards those one does not know) and gives little indication that he is altering the sense of goodwill in this chapter.

Moreover, the attitude of the person to whom Aristotle denies goodwill in the final sentence of this passage seems quite close to Aristotle’s description of utility philia elsewhere, as we saw above. It would be natural to supplement the final clause (as I have indicated with ellipses) with elements from the previous one, as Irwin does. Then this clause would read, “just as [he seems to be] not a friend [to him, but rather to himself] if he attends him because of some use.” And Aristotle does make almost this same claim about utility friends elsewhere: They are “not friends of each other but of profit” (NE VIII.4, 1157a14-16; cf. IX.1, 1164a10-11). There is a case to be made, then, that NE IX.5 does deny goodwill to pleasure and utility philiai, just as EE VII.7 does.

What Aristotle takes from the apparent definition of being friends in VIII.2 is that philia requires antiphilēsis which does not go unnoticed and some form of wishing goods (NE VIII.3, 1156a8-10). The form of wishing goods is connected to the way of loving: “those who love wish goods to each other in the way in which they love” (1156a9-10). Aristotle seems to have left goodwill behind, replacing it with different forms of wishing goods in the different kinds of philia. Those who argue that wishing goods for the friend’s sake is presupposed in this claim appeal to two features of the way in which Aristotle applies this formula. As

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24 Cooper cites in support of his view 1167a14-15: ὁ μὲν γὰρ εὐεργετηθεὶς ἀνθ’ ὧν πέπονθεν ἀπονέμει τὴν εὔνοιαν, τὰ δίκαια δρῶν. But if δρῶν has causal force, as strongly suggested by the parallel of ἔχων in the following line, then Aristotle may be arguing that goodwill is not a starting-point of utility philia either retrospectively or prospectively. Pakaluk (1998, 179) argues for this view.


26 Price (1989, 153-4) and Pakaluk (1998, 179) both argue for this interpretation on different grounds: Price takes the second sentence of this passage to describe an attitude which Aristotle allows might characterize utility philia; Pakaluk argues that these two sentences together form an argument that goodwill can come about towards utility neither retrospectively nor prospectively.

27 οἱ δὲ φιλόντες ἄλληλοις βούλουσι τάγαθα ἄλληλοις ταύτη ᾗ φιλοῦσιν.
we saw above, Aristotle describes each kind of philia as being “because of” (διὰ) the object of love, and this object of love is an accidental property in the case of pleasure and utility philiai but an intrinsic feature in primary philia. We should first note that while Aristotle does emphasize that pleasure and utility philiai are διὰ an accidental property of the friend, he is careful to note (repeatedly) that this accidental property is in relation to oneself. And this feature may matter to Aristotle just as much as (or more than) the fact that the property is accidental. Whether this is the case depends on what exactly the relation is between loving and wishing goods.

Cooper argues that the loving and the wishing goods may come apart in the sense that the loving is based on or grounded in (διὰ) the pleasure or utility but pleasure or utility is not the aim of wishing goods to one’s friend. The plausibility of understanding Aristotle in this way has been taken to depend partly on whether or not διὰ has efficient causal or final causal force. But before turning to that point, it is clear that the ground of the philia and the aims of the friends within it cannot be completely disconnected: Aristotle claims that philiai of pleasure or utility dissolve whenever the pleasure or utility is gone (e.g., NE VIII.3, 1156a22-24). This means that the pleasure or utility is not merely the starting-point of the relationship, but its ongoing basis. The attitudes of friends within philia must refer to the grounds of the relationship in some way. Cooper argues that part of the connection is that particular instances of wishing goods to one’s friend “...must be compatible with the retention of that special property under which, as his friend, one wishes him well in the first place.”

And he also recognizes that particular actions must not be so burdensome that they would somehow nullify the general benefit or pleasure on which the philia is based. The need to honor this connection between the ground of the philia and the aims of the well-wishing within it raises two concerns about Cooper’s attempt to make room for goodwill. Together, they show the narrow path this interpretation must tread: If the connection between the ground and the aim is too close, then there does not appear to be room for goodwill; but if the ground and the aim are too far apart, this view is psychologically implausible.

First, once we admit that there must be at least the kind of connection Cooper acknowl-

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28 Cooper (1977a, 637).
29 Cooper (1977a, 640).
edges, then we may worry that there is not enough room for goodwill. Nehamas puts the point well:

True, when I wish you good things provided they do not interfere with my interests, I do not do so for my own sake; but if I will stop when they do, I am not wishing them for your own sake either. That requires more of me: nothing less, in fact, than to be willing in some instances to sacrifice an interest of mine, whatever it might be, for yours—as we commonly and correctly say, for your sake. Without that, we are still within the domain of the instrumental. (Nehamas, 2010, 223-4)

If friends in a pleasure or utility *philía* wish each other goods *only* after first ensuring that their wishes are not contrary to their own interests in the *philía*, then this might seem to be a hollow sense of goodwill. (I return to this point below.)

But then, second, if the sense of *goodwill* is stronger the more the aims of the well-wishing are *removed* from the grounds of the *philía*, we might worry that this view becomes psychologically implausible. Cooper suggests that those who have enjoyed or been benefited by another person will “...tend to wish for and be willing to act in the interest of the other person’s good, independently of consideration of their own welfare or pleasure.”30 (This claim itself may be too strong in light of the limitations which as we have seen, Cooper himself will go on to recognize, but set this issue aside.) But how psychologically plausible is it that the attitudes within a relationship would be this disconnected from the *ongoing* ground of the relationship? What plausibility this view has, I think, might rather rest upon a subtle shift of the sort I described in “liminal” *philía*. It may be that being pleased or benefited by someone leads you to think of her as having qualities which go beyond her being pleasant or useful to you. I find it more psychologically plausible that the ground of the *philía* is more closely connected to the aims of the friends within it, and this also seems to be Aristotle’s understanding.

Whether friends aim at their own pleasure or utility in these sorts of *philía* has been taken to depend on whether ‘*διὰ*’ could imply final causation in Aristotle’s claim that friends in these relationships love each other *διὰ* their own pleasure or utility. Whether Aristotle uses ‘*διὰ*’ to describe final causation may be a difficult question to answer, but it may also

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30Cooper (1977a, 633-4). Cf. Whiting’s description: “So it is plausible to read Aristotle as claiming that people tend, as a matter of psychological fact, to become fond of those they find pleasant or those who have been useful to them; and that people tend, as a matter of psychological fact, to wish goods to those of whom they are fond and to do so for the latter’s sake (as distinct from their own)” (2006, 285).
not be required; this connection is suggested by several points:

(1) When Aristotle says that pleasure and utility philiai cease when the pleasure or utility ceases, he explains that the philia was πρὸς those things (NE VIII.3, 1156a23-24). This ‘πρὸς’ may, as Irwin translates it, suggest final causation; it at least makes clear that the pleasure and utility are the ongoing basis of the philia. (Aristotle also routinely uses ‘πρὸς’ to express that someone is a friend to someone else, which might suggest, as Aristotle does elsewhere, that pleasure and utility friends are really friends to the pleasure or utility.)

(2) Aristotle also appears to restrict wishing goods for the sake of one’s friend to primary friendship, when he says: “Those who wish goods to their friends for their sake (ἐκείνων ἑνεκα) are especially friends; for they are disposed in this way on account of themselves and not incidentally” (1156b9-11). Cooper argues that the context suggests that this should be understood as the claim that only primary friends wish goods for who the friend really is. However, it is striking that this is the first use of ‘ἐκείνων ἑνεκα’ in VIII.3, which certainly makes it look like this does not apply to pleasure and utility philiai, and we have not been prepared for a special use of this phrase as referring to “who the friend really is.” Rather, this seems to be a general claim: There is a change in subject to the general “those who wish” (οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι) and what looks to be a general connection between loving someone for her sake and loving her for herself. Aristotle then uses this claim to draw the conclusion that primary friendship is especially stable (1156b11-12). And given that Aristotle allows some ongoing connection between the ground of the philiai and the friend’s attitudes within it, this general claim is intuitively plausible: If I wish goods to you for your sake, then this is not διὰ some property in relation to myself.

(3) Finally, Aristotle himself connects διὰ and ἑνεκα when he considers the kind of mixed philia exemplified by pederastic relationships in which one party aims to get pleasure out of the relationship and the other aims to get utility:

Such things [sc., complaints] happen whenever the one loves the beloved διὰ pleasure but the other loves the lover διὰ utility, but these do not belong to both. For when the philia is διὰ these things it is dissolved whenever [the things] do not come about for the sake of...

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31οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι τὰ γαθὰ τοῖς φίλοις ἐκείνων ἑνεκα μᾶλλα μᾶλλοι φίλοι· δι᾽ αὐτούς γὰρ οὕτως ἔχουσι, καὶ οὐ καὶ συμβεβηκός
32Cooper (1977a, 641).
which (ἕνεκα) they loved.  

Here Aristotle directly links the grounds διὰ which the philia exists to the aims ἕνεκα which each friend loves the other. When the parties are no longer pleasant or useful, then the philia dissolves because these are also the things at which each respective party aims. It certainly appears that each friend is really concerned about what accrues to himself from the relationship, such that Aristotle might plausibly deny that well-wishing with such aims really qualifies as for the sake of one’s friend rather than for the sake of oneself.

It remains to explain why Aristotle employs the technical distinction between loving someone for an accidental property and loving someone for herself. Aristotle may, of course, have more than one purpose for this distinction. But what I think needs to be emphasized is that Aristotle clearly uses this distinction to make a point that he also makes in the Eudemian Ethics. In EE VII.5 (discussed in §2.1 above), Aristotle analyzes philia between opposites as instances of utility philia. Opposites desire each other as being useful for bringing themselves into the mean state. As such, opposites are only incidentally friends because their desire is really for the mean state and only incidentally for the friend (to the extent that the friend helps them achieve the mean). Moreover, whenever the mean state is achieved, they no longer desire the opposite and so are no longer friends (1239b27-28).

Aristotle makes the same point in the Nicomachean discussion, both using the technical distinction to make it more precise and applying it more generally to pleasure and utility philiai:

Indeed those who love on account of [διὰ] what is useful love [στέργουσι] on account of what is good to them, and those [who love] on account of pleasure [love] on account of what is pleasant to them, and not insofar as the one loved is [who he is] but insofar as he is useful or pleasant. These philiai are incidental [κατὰ συμβεβηκός]; for it is not insofar as the one loved is who is that he is loved, but insofar as some provide something good and others provide pleasure. Such [philiai] are easily dissolved, when they do not remain the same. For if they are no longer pleasant or useful, they cease loving.  

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34 συμβαίνει δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἐπειδὰν ὃ μὲν δι’ ἡδονὴν τὸν ἐρώμενον φιλῇ, ὃ δὲ διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον τὸν ἔραστην, ταῦτα δὲ μὴ ἄμφοτα ὑπάρχει. διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ τῆς φιλίας οὐδὲς διάλυσις γίνεται, ἐπειδὰν μὴ γίνεται ὡς ἕνεκα ἔφιλον’ οὐ γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἔστεργον ἀλλὰ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, οὐ μόνιμα ὡς τοιαῦτα· διὸ τοιαῦτα καὶ αἱ φιλίαι.  

35 οἵ τε δὴ διὰ τὸ χρῆσιμον φιλοῦντες διὰ τὸ αὐτοῦς ἁγαθὸν στέργουσι, καὶ οἱ δ’ ἡδονὴν διὰ τὸ αὐτοῦς ἢδι, καὶ οἵς ἢ ὁ φιλοσομοῦν ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ ἢ χρήσιμος ἢ ἢδι. κατὰ συμβεβηκός τε δὴ αἱ φιλίαι αὐτὰ εἰσίν’ οὐ γὰρ ἢ ἔστιν ὃσπερ ἐστίν ὁ φιλοσομοῦν, ταῦτα γινέσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἢ πορίζοντων οὐ μὴν ἁγαθὸν τι οἳ δ’ ἡδονὴν, εἰδιδαλλοὶ δὴ αἱ τοιαῦτα εἰσί, μὴ διαμεμείλοντον αὐτῶν ὁμοιῶν· ἀλλ’ ἢ ἔστεργον τι οἳ δ’ ἡδονήν, εἰδιδαλλοὶ δὴ αἱ τοιαῦτα εἰσί, μὴ διαμεμείλοντον αὐτῶν ὁμοιῶν· ἀλλ’ ἢ ἔστεργον τι οἳ δ’ ἡδονήν, εἰδιδαλλοὶ δὴ αἱ τοιαῦτα εἰσί, μὴ διαμεμείλοντον αὐτῶν ὁμοιῶν· ἀλλ’ ἢ ἔστεργον τι οἳ δ’ ἡδονήν, εἰδιδαλλοὶ δὴ αἱ τοιαῦτα εἰσί, μὴ διαμεμείλοντον αὐτῶν ὁμοιῶν· ἀλλ’ ἢ ἔστεργον τι οἳ δ’ ἡδονήν, εἰδιδαλλοὶ δὴ αἱ τοιαῦτα εἰσί, μὴ διαμεμείλοντον αὐτῶν ὁμοιῶν·
This passage culminates in the claim that pleasure and utility philiai are incidental and easily dissolved. Certainly such philiai are less stable because accidental properties themselves are less stable, but that is only part the explanation. Aristotle emphasizes here, as in EE VII.5, that the accidental property is in relation to oneself—getting pleasure or utility for oneself. Just as in EE VII.5, these philiai are incidental because the friend herself is only incidentally related to the reason why she is loved. And again just as in EE VII.5, such incidental relationships are unstable because the primary aim, for pleasure or utility, is more stable than the desire for the friend which derives from it. There is thus no need to search for a role for this technical distinction to play: Here too we find continuity with the Eudemian Ethics which further suggests that pleasure and utility philiai need not involve goodwill.

5.1.3.3 Qualified goodwill

I have argued that there is good reason to think that pleasure and utility philiai may lack goodwill: Aristotle’s descriptions, especially of utility philia, give this impression; we need not read VIII.2 as offering a general definition of philia; Aristotle seems to understand the grounds of the relationship and the attitudes of the friends within it as closely connected; and we can see continuity with the Eudemian account, especially in the incidental nature of pleasure and utility philiai but perhaps also in the denial of goodwill in NE IX.5.

However, views which require goodwill in all three kinds of philia may still fit the argument I will go on to give, depending upon how goodwill is incorporated into pleasure and utility philiai. Nehamas, for instance, argues that the object of love in these philiai is the person as qualified by the accidental attribute. One loves the pleasant Socrates or the useful Socrates. The sense in which I have goodwill for my friend in this qualified manner depends upon the way in which my friend’s good relates to the qualification on which our friendship depends. Some of the things which are good for my friend will also promote my own interests, some will harm my interests, and some will not concern me. According to Nehamas, I will wish goods to my friend both when it is in my interests and when it does not concern me. This preserves, Nehamas thinks, a sense in which I do not wish goods to

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36 Cooper (1977a, 636).
my friend only for my own sake. But as Nehamas recognizes:

Since my own interests determine whether I will do so or not, it is clear that I do not wish you well for your own sake: that is the difference between benefit and pleasure, on the one hand, and virtue on the other. (Nehamas, 2010, 227)

Although I will sometimes wish goods for my friend which do not benefit myself, my own interests are still controlling. It is with reference to my own interests that the manner and extent of wishing goods within the philia is determined. This may create the space for wishing goods for the friend’s sake in pleasure and utility philiai, but it also makes clear that in these relationships one is not, in a sense, directly related to the good of one’s friend. Wishing goods to one’s friend is always “filtered” through one’s own interests. And this is the key claim moving forward: that in pleasure and utility philiai one is not properly related to the good of one’s friend.

### 5.2 Philia and Koinōnia

We can see more clearly why Aristotle might be concerned with relationships of philia which lack goodwill and also work towards an understanding of the hexis of primary philia by considering the related concept of koinōnia (often translated as “community” or “association”). Philia and koinōnia (along with justice, which I will mostly set aside) share the same domain (NE VIII.9, 1159b25-31). And “every philia is in koinōnia” (NE VIII.12, 1161b11). By examining Aristotle’s conception of koinōnia, we can better understand both the structure of individual philiai and what unites the domain of philia.

A koinōnia is a matter of individuals sharing something in common. A koinōnia thus requires at least two distinct members. This prompts Aristotle to question whether one can wrong oneself or have philia with oneself. And in both cases, Aristotle allows a restricted or analogical sense of injustice or philia with oneself to the extent that there can be two or more “parts” of oneself (NE V.11; EE VII.6, 1240a14-21). Although koinōniai require multiple distinct members, their unity is not measured in the number of members, but in the

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37 Ἐν κοινωνίᾳ μὲν οὖν πᾶσα φιλία ἐστιν...
closeness of their relations within the koinōnia. This prompts Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s Republic that by seeking to make the polis as unified as possible—by, for example, sharing wives, children, and property in common—Plato actually does away with the polis (Pol. II.2, 1261a13-22). The koinōnia which is the polis requires a certain degree of separation among its members; and Plato erases this separation, creating something more like a family than a polis.

Proper members of a koinōnia must be distinct from each other in the sense that they each possess their own independent good. As discussed in Chapter 2 (§2.2.1), Aristotle contrasts this with cases in which the good of one thing depends upon or rests in the good of another:

Since it holds likewise, soul in relation to body and craftsman in relation to tool and master in relation to slave, of these there is no koinōnia. For there are not two things, but the one and the other belongs to it.38 Nor is the good for each separable, but rather the good of both is [the good] of the one for whose sake [the other] is.39 (EE VII.9, 1241b17-22)

A tool or instrument, for example, is in a sense for the sake of the artisan. The instrument possesses no “good” independent of the good of the artisan served by it. A saw can be “taken care of” by being sharpened, but again, this does not benefit the saw itself, but rather makes the saw better suited for the artisan’s use (EE VII. 1242a13-19). There can thus be no koinōnia (or justice or philia) between the instrument and the artisan because there are not two things—two independent goods—but only one.

The requirement that members of a koinōnia possess independent goods seems to depend upon two further features of koinōnia. First, every koinōnia aims at some good, as Aristotle argues at the start of Pol. I.1:

We see that every polis is a koinōnia of some sort, and that every koinōnia is established for the sake of some good (for everyone performs every action for the sake of what he takes to be good). Clearly, then, while all koinōniai aim at some good, the koinōnia that has the most authority of all and encompasses all the others aims highest, that is to say, at the good that has the most authority of all.40 (Pol. I.1, 1252a1-7; Reeve, trans., modified)

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38 On the translation of this passage, see 22n37 above.
39 ἐπεὶ δ’ ὁμοίως ἔχει ψυχή πρὸς σῶμα καὶ τεχνίτης πρὸς ὄργανον καὶ δεσπότης πρὸς δοῦλον, τούτων μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν koinōnia. οὐ γὰρ δῆτ’ ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἐν, τὸ δὲ τοῦ ἐνός, {οἴδεν}. οὐδὲ διαιρετῶν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἑκατέρῳ, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀμφοτέρων τοῦ ἑνὸς οὐ ἔνεκα ἐστίν.
40 Ἐπειδὴ πάσης πόλεως ὁμοίως καὶ κοινωνίας των οὖσαν καὶ πάσαν κοινωνίαν ἀγαθοῦ των ἑνίκου συνεστηκυῖαν (τοῦ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ δοκοῦντος ἀγαθοῦ χάριν πάντα πράττουσα πάντες), δῆλον ὡς πάσαι μὲν ἀγαθοὶ των στοχαζόνται, μάλιστα δὲ καὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου πάντων ἢ πασῶν κυριωτάτη καὶ πάσαις περιέχοντας τὰς ἄλλας.
Aristotle clearly asserts here that “all koinōniai aim at some good.” The reasoning behind this claim is less clear. Although translators do not usually bring it out, this passage appears to give an argument from the claim that “every koinōnia is established for the sake of some good” to the conclusion that “all koinōniai aim at some good” (as indicated by the structure Ἐπειδὴ...δῆλον ὡς). This may shed some light on Aristotle’s use of ‘διὰ’ in his account of philia, discussed above: Aristotle seems to think that koinōniai are founded with ongoing purposes. However, it is important that the purposes of a koinōnia may change, as Aristotle claims that the polis “comes to be for the sake of living, but it remains in existence for the sake of living well” (Pol. I.2, 1252b29-30). And depending upon when a koinōnia is taken to be established, the account of primary philia which I go on to give may assimilate primary philia to the koinōnia of the polis in this way: It may be that a koinōnia, once established, gives its members access to a good which they could not directly aim at beforehand.

The fact that a koinōnia aims at some good helps to show why each member of a koinōnia must have an independent good or well-being, because Aristotle also requires that each member of a koinōnia also participate in the good at which it aims (Pol. VII.8, 1328a25-33). Without an independent good, the good produced through the koinōnia would not be good for them, and so they would not really share in the good. Aristotle sometimes seems to claim that each member of the koinōnia must share in the same thing, like sustenance or land (as at Pol. VII.8, 1328a26-28). But given that Aristotle recognizes mixed philiai in which, for instance, one friend gets pleasure and another gets utility, it is perhaps better to require only that each member share in some good made possible by the koinōnia.

In Chapter 2, I argued that Aristotle’s introduction of philēsis allowed him to restrict τὸ φιλεῖν and philia to animate objects possessing independent goods. This enables Aristotle to match philia to the domain of koinōnia to which it belongs. Koinōniai describe the kinds of shared bases which allow individuals to be brought together in specific forms of interaction.

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41The way in which this argument relies upon the premise that “for everyone performs every action for the sake of what he takes to be good” might make us doubt that it really shows that all koinōniai aim at some good, because at least some koinōniai, like that between parents and children, appear to be non-voluntary.

42Whiting (2006, 286) appeals to this claim to support Cooper’s account of διὰ discussed above. However, I take the change in aim to correspond to a change in the ground of the koinōnia or philia.

43A koinōnia explains how individuals can be brought together in what Michael Thompson calls a “practical nexus” (2004, 335). I am thus doubtful of Cooper’s claim that koinōniai are at bottom actions because of the way in which they supply the contexts for action; see Cooper (2010, 230).
For Aristotle, the important dividing line is between those things which lack independent goods and those things which have independent goods in virtue of which they can come together in certain sorts of relationships.

This helps to explain why Aristotle would treat even self-interested relationships as important forms of philia. Interacting with a person—someone with an independent good who might fare well or badly—is a completely different form of interaction than interacting with a mere thing. There can be mutually beneficial relationships of philia with a person—whether self-interested or not—and these relationships are in a different category than the use of a thing. Thus we can reject Joachim’s characterization of the utility friend as “the man who exploits his friend,” while allowing that pleasure and utility philiai are self-interested: Utility friends treat each other as persons, wishing each other well, while at the same time aiming to promote their own good through their relationship—but not at the expense of their friend.44

5.3 The Hexis of Primary Philia

We can now bring this discussion of goodwill and koinōnia to bear on our main question concerning the argument that philia is a hexis in VIII.5: If philia involves prohairesis and prohairesis comes from a hexis, why conclude that philia is that hexis? I argued in Chapter 3 that the consensus interpretation misidentifies the prohairesis involved in this argument. It is not the prohairesis to reciprocate love that is at issue—I argued that it is difficult to even make sense of this as an object of prohairesis—but rather the prohairesesis which friends make regarding each other. I then argued in Chapter 4 that the sense in which prohairesis “comes from” a hexis is that prohairesis requires an end, a boulēsis, set by one’s hexis. This already provides the outline of an answer to our question: Philia is the hexis which makes possible prohairesis concerning one’s friend. But we can say more to explain why philia requires something like its own hexis and cannot depend purely upon the fuller hexis or characters of the friends.

44Joachim (1951, 248).
5.3.1 The structure of NE VIII.5

I have argued that primary philia requires goodwill, but pleasure and utility philiai do not. The account of the argument in VIII.5 which I will give depends upon this difference. My account thus attempts to make good on the claim that this argument specifically concerns primary philia, a claim that the consensus interpretation cannot accommodate (§1.1, problem 6). The context of this argument strongly suggests that it is meant to apply to primary philia. In order to see this, I will quickly trace the argument of the chapter, at the same time challenging the claim mentioned at the start of Chapter 2 that VIII.5 lacks structure and unity. The primary topic of this chapter is in fact the way in which philia is a hexis, and its two foci are the way in which all philiai can be viewed as hexeis of a sort and the special way in which primary philia is a hexis.

Aristotle begins the chapter with the claim that philiai can be considered both according to a hexis and according to activity (1157b5-7). His argument for this claim is that even though friends may be asleep or apart, their philia persists (1157b7-11). But if inactivity goes on for too long then the philia is forgotten (1157b11-13). This naturally prompts a question about the role of “spending time together” (συνημερεύειν), and Aristotle argues that nothing is more characteristic of philia than “living together” (συζῆν). This helps to explain the role of pleasure in philia (since people do not spend time with those whom they do not enjoy) and also why those who are older or harsh-tempered are not “friendly” (φιλικοὶ) (1157b13-24). These considerations apply roughly to all sorts of philia, and Aristotle’s initial argument shows that all philiai can be considered “according to a hexis.”

At 1157b25 Aristotle then explicitly pivots to “the philia of good people,” which is philia in the highest degree. Aristotle supports this claim with the point he has made before that the good are lovable and choiceworthy for each other both on account of goodness and pleasure (1157b26-28). Then Aristotle moves directly to the argument that (this kind of) philia is a hexis (1157b28-31). Both this argument and the following claim include finite plural verbs, ἀντιφιλοῦσι and βούλονται, and the subject of both is apparently “good people.” Aristotle’s distinction between wishing goods κατὰ πάθος and καλὴ ἔξω (1157b32-33) raises the issue of friends as the object of love. In a way, friends love what is good for them, because “the good
person becoming a friend becomes good to the one to whom he is a friend” (1157b33-1158a1). The friendship of the good is thus the focus of the remainder of the chapter, from 1157b25 to the end, and there is good reason to suppose that the argument that *philia* is a *hexis* here concerns primary *philia* in particular and is aimed at showing that just as primary *philia* is especially *philia*, so too it is especially a *hexis*.

### 5.3.2 Pleasure and utility *philiai* as incidental *philiai*

Considered as *koinōniai*, which aim at some good, pleasure and utility *philiai* aim at the pleasure or utility *for oneself* which is enabled by the *philia*. Aristotle himself describes these relationships as “for the sake of” (*ēvekα*) these things (*NE* IX.1, 1164a6-12). This is why pleasure and utility *philiai* cease whenever the friend stops being pleasant or useful. This is also why, as I have argued, it is plausible that these relationships, in their pure form, do not require goodwill. The controlling or structuring end on the basis of which one interacts with one’s friend is *one’s own* pleasure or utility. We can now see why pleasure and utility *philiai* would not be *hexeis* according to the argument in VIII.5. I have argued that the connection between *hexis* and *prohairesis* is that the end with reference to which a *prohairesis* is made is set by one’s *hexis* of character. If we apply this connection to pleasure and utility *philiai*, then the end supplied by one’s *hexis* of character is one’s own pleasure or utility, which need make no reference to the friend.

Aristotle’s own account of pleasure and utility *philiai* bears this out: To the extent that the *philia* will dissolve when it no longer promotes this end and to the extent that this end is thus more stable than the *philia*, it is one’s “relationship” with pleasure or utility that would deserve to be called a *hexis* rather than one’s relationship with one’s friend. And this is precisely why Aristotle describes these *philiai* as incidental: The friend herself is merely incidental to the aims served by the *philia*. These *philiai* are not *hexeis* proper because as Aristotle says of utility friends, they are “not friends of each other but of profit” (*NE* VIII.4, 1157a14-16; cf. IX.1, 1164a10-11). However, these *philiai* might still be viewed “according to a *hexis*,” as Aristotle says at the start of VIII.5, because they do possess some persistence as long as the friend is coincident with the aim.
5.3.3 Primary philia

It is extremely difficult to give an account of the good at which primary philia aims. As Aristotle says of self-love, it would require a “major investigation” (EE VII.6, 1240a8-9). Moreover, primary philia involves a variety of goods, given that the virtuous are good, pleasant, and useful to each other. Aristotle’s most detailed discussion of this topic comes in EE VII.12 and NE IX.9, where Aristotle addresses the question of whether the good person will have friends. These are especially challenging chapters, and there is disagreement about not just how to interpret the argument of these chapters but even, as in the case of NE IX.9, how many arguments there are. But we can bring out the contrast with pleasure and utility philiai by appealing to two claims granted by almost every account: First, at least part of the good at which primary philia aims depends upon Aristotle’s famous claim that one’s friend is “another self”; and second, being “another self” is something special about one’s friend—the virtuous person does not relate to every virtuous person as to “another self.”

In NE IX.9, on which I will focus here, Cooper detects two arguments for the claim that a virtuous person will need friends: one according to which friends are a needed aid to self-knowledge and another according to which friends are needed for shared activity which enhances one’s life. In both cases, gaining the benefit of one’s friend—the self-knowledge or shared activity—depends upon being as intimately related to one’s friend as to “another self.” It is only by being “another self” that one comes to view the actions of one’s friend as one’s own in such a way that one gains knowledge about oneself; and the kind of shared activity of the virtuous depends upon the level of intimacy and knowledge available only within primary philia. Whiting argues that Aristotle is less concerned in NE IX.9 with justifying the virtuous person’s need for friends than with explaining how virtuous friends are able to value each other for themselves. This explanation likewise runs through the claim that a friend is “another self.” It is by being related to one’s friend as to “another self” that one can take the kind of direct interest in one’s friend that one does in oneself (without

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45 In the translation of Inwood and Woolf.
46 Self-knowledge: Cooper (1977b, §I); shared activity: Cooper (1977b, §II).
47 Millgram (1987), who argues that we “make” other selves by contributing to their virtue, and Stern-Gillet (1995), who emphasizes self-realization, would also fit in here.
needing the further thought that the interests of one’s friend are thereby one’s own). Such friends are likewise able to take pleasure in each other’s activities directly.

Achieving the status of “another self” is the result of a long process. It involves coming to know the character of one’s friend, developing philēsis for her, and coming to value her for who she really is and having goodwill for her on that basis. The kind of time, intimacy, and effort required to achieve this status prevents one from having many primary friends. Although primary friend’s in some sense value the virtue of each other, Aristotle does not seem to allow that the virtuous thereby relate to all other virtuous people as to other selves.

These two facts help to explain why primary philia is itself a hexis. The good of primary philia depends upon coming to be related to someone in a special way, valuing that person for herself and wishing goods to her for her own sake. The good of primary philia thus does not depend upon one’s antecedent values in the same way that the good of pleasure and utility philiai do: A primary friend is not loved as contributing to ends which one already had. As I argued in Chapter 4, prohairesis requires a hexis because the end with reference to which a prohairesis is made must be had as a matter of one’s hexis. In primary philia one acts on the basis of prohairesis for the good of one’s friend herself. The prohairetic structure of primary philia thus requires that one have the good of one’s friend as a hexis. Primary philia can thus be identified with the hexis of valuing one’s friend herself in a way that is not possible in pleasure and utility philiai, in which the valuing of one’s friend is merely incidental. The way in which one loves one’s friend in primary philia is not merely as incidental to one’s prior ends.

The consensus interpretation argues that philia is a hexis because it requires reciprocation; and this reciprocation requires prohairesis, which (somehow) implies a hexis. The feature of friendship which the consensus interpretation seems to draw on is that philiai are responses to value—goodness, pleasure, or utility—supposing that one might decide to love someone on the basis of these values. I argued in Chapter 3 that philēsis and philia do not seem to be the proper objects of prohairesis, but we can now diagnose the error of the consensus interpretation in a different way (setting aside philēsis): To the extent that one can fully appreciate the value of one’s friend prior to actually being friends—and thus

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to the extent that one could decide to be friends—to that extent the value of the friend and the friendship is in relation to values and ends one already has. It is in this respect merely incidental and a deficient form of philia. A primary friend comes to have a kind of value in herself which was not accessible prior to actually being friends and coming to have the good of one’s friend as an end.

Certainly, primary philia begins with a glimpse of goodness in a person which provokes one’s interest in her. But this is only the beginning. In order to reach the point at which the value of one’s friend is fully intelligible (or as fully as possible), on the basis of which one loves her and has goodwill for her, she must become “another self.” And certainly, if a friend’s character degrades, there may come a point where one can no longer love her. But we should not take this to show that primary philia has similar limitations to pleasure and utility philia. For Aristotle, ceasing to be virtuous is like ceasing to be who one is; and thus the hexis of primary philia provides all the stability of loving and valuing someone that is humanly possible.

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50E.g., as Cooper (1977a, 636-8) does.
Bibliography


