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Care and Parenting in Aristotelian Ethics

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BIOGRAPHY

Sophia Connell is lecturer in ancient philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London. She did her MPhil and PhD at the University of Cambridge. She is a former Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge and taught philosophy in Cambridge for many years, receiving the Pilkington Prize for teaching excellence in 2016. Her main research interests are ancient Greek philosophy and the history of analytic philosophy. She has published *Aristotle on Female Animals: Study of the Generation of Animals* (Cambridge University Press) in 2016 and is working on a philosophical commentary of key portions of the same Aristotelian treatise. Her current research focuses on the relationship between Aristotle's natural and political sciences, in particular how our biology impacts on morality and ethics. She is also busy editing *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Biology* (2019) and the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Special Issue on 20th Century Women Philosophers.

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For Aristotle, in making the deliberate choice to incorporate the extensive requirements of the young into the aims of one's life, people realise their own good. In this paper I will argue that this is a promising way to think about the ethics of care and parenting. Modern theories, which focus on duty and obligation, direct our attention to conflicts of interests in our caring activities. Aristotle's explanation, in contrast, explains how nurturing others not only develops a core part of the self but can also lead to an appreciation of the value of one's own life.

'It looks as though nature herself desires to provide that there shall be a feeling of attention and care for the young offspring. In the inferior animals this feeling which she implants lasts only until the moment of birth; in others, until the offspring reaches its complete development; and in those that have more intelligence (*phronimôtera*), until its upbringing is completed (*ektrophên*). Those which are endowed with most intelligence show intimacy and affection (*philia*) towards their offspring even after they have reached their complete development (human beings and some of the quadrupeds are examples of this)' (Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* [*GA*] III.2.753a7-13).

"I'll tell you something I never see anyone admit. They are exhausting, frustrating and life-destabilizing. They are rarely fun. Sure, smiles are great, hugs are lovely, but it's HARD & not obviously a good choice in life." (Duncan Jones on Twitter, 2019)

I.

Introduction. For Aristotle, all perishable living beings must reproduce in order for their way of life to continue. Humans are no exception to this rule of nature. Bringing new human beings into the world is, however, a complicated and arduous process which only begins with birth. It is this part of the human condition upon which I will concentrate, giving a rationale derived from principles found in Aristotelian ethics, to explain how caring for those younger than ourselves is a good choice in life and that our lives cannot be fulfilled without it. Although my focus is mainly on parenting, the implications of what we can discover extends beyond biological parenthood, to the nurture and care of all those younger than ourselves and to the perpetuation of such practices in human communities.

Aristotelian ethics enriches our understanding of the value of parenting and caring; it can do so more effectively than more familiar frameworks. The most common way to make sense of parenting is to see it as a duty or obligation, fitting the ongoing activities involved into a deontological model (Brake, 2010, Brighouse and Swift, 2014, Richards 2010, Archard 2010). This outlook pits the wellbeing of the parent or carer against that of the child. This not only creates difficulties for motivating (unpaid) care but also misses out something that most people acknowledge, which is that being a carer comes with a sense of achievement, well-being or happiness. Brighouse and Swift's contention that 'our lives have been hugely enriched by our experience of parenting' (p. xv) cannot be accounted for by their own emphasis on deontology; Aristotle offers us a way to make sense of their sentiments.

Since parenting and caring for those younger than ourselves for Aristotle is part of intelligent virtue, chosen on the basis of sound reasoning, it constitutes an achievement in the sense of the production of something good, another human to flourish in the next generation. Achieving this end counts as part of the producer's well-lived life. One might worry that this would make parenting and caring selfish but as Jean Hampton (1993) so astutely pointed out, the completely self-sacrificing parent is neither virtuous nor a real help to others. Her example is of a mother who fails to care for herself adequately, and so puts her children's lives at risk. The Aristotelian model, which also employs examples of mothers, explains what has gone wrong in that case. Caring for and nurturing children and young people does not properly involve self-sacrifice but, rather, self-actualisation.

I begin with the Aristotelian biological basis of nurturing and caring relationships (II); I then explain how human lives must incorporate a uniquely human variety of practical intelligence, involving deliberate choice. It is in this setting that the care for the young finds its place. Section (III) will explain how the activities directed toward nurture, for Aristotle, constitute a certain sort of friendship, in which the younger person receives more love than she gives. The next section (IV) explains how nurturing is a kind of benefaction and production; the young person is a product, which the nurturer can take pride in as their own. In the conclusion (V) I will reflect on the implications for this vision of nurture and care.

II.

Aristotle on Parenting. As was evident in the first quotation from the *GA*, Aristotle is keen to note that humans share many characteristics with the more intelligent animals, such as viviparous blooded quadrupeds, birds

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and social insects. All these animals employ their intelligence in several vital activities: one prominent activity is nurturing the young of their kind (Labarrière 1990, pp. 423-5). This intelligence is not merely mechanical but involves responses to new situations which require adaptation of previously learned behaviours. So, for example, the doe has learned to give birth along the roadside in aiming to preserve her young. The road, she knows, indicates the presence of humans which keeps predators away (*HA* VII(IX) 5.611a15-23). There is a sense in which she knows the concept of road, human and predator, because she has memories and a form of experience (*A Po*. II.19).[1] Many animals also train their young as part of their parenting role. The doe teaches the young to shelter where it is safe (*HA* VIII.5, 611a20-21); the seal makes her young repeat the journey to the sea until they understand how to get there on their own (*HA* VI.12.567a5-7). Many birds protect and care for their young and train them (*HA* VIII(IX).7.612b26-32).[2] Indeed, birds are particularly skilled in their parenting, and may even be able to communicate with each other through meaningful signs (*HA* IV.536b8-18). All these actions are part of the practical intelligence of these animals. In non-human animals, who are incapable of self-reflection (*EE* VII.2.1236b5-7), practical intelligence (*phronêsis*) is always directed at achieving a way of living well for that type (*EN* VI.7.1141a22-33). So, for a cuckoo to live well is for her to place her offspring in another's nest, since she is aware that she cannot herself care for the young (*HA* VIII(IX).29.618a26-29). Non-human animal knowledge exists only as experience or knack (*empeiria*; *Metaph*. I.1.981a4) – doing the right thing in a way that has worked before, without knowledge of the causal basis of this success.[3] For humans, intellectual reasoning uniquely forms a part of their way of living well (*EN* I.7.1097b34-1098a17). Thus, does practical reasoning (*phronêsis*) take on a different or more complete form in the human kind.

Practical reasoning as manifested in human beings requires deliberative choice, involving a knowledge of what is best in each situation from a broader perspective (Russell 2014, p. 205). Human practical reasoning requires not only a good knowledge of the situation at hand and the particulars of it, in order to make the correct decisions, but also a view of what makes a life go well – an overall vision of the coordination of different commitments and concerns within one's life. For us, *phronêsis* is the ability 'to deliberate finely about…what promotes living well in

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1 See Gregorić and Grgić (2006) on the existence of rudimentary concepts in non-human animals (p. 13).

2 For more on the intelligence of birds see Labarrière 1990, pp. 425-6.

3 For a fuller account of the differences between human and non-human cognition see Gregorić and Grgić 2006.

general' (VI.5.1140a25-28). It also requires regularly surveying and checking that things are going to plan within a life, that is, self-reflection and constant re-evaluation.

Although non-human animals have certain 'natural' virtues, such as those that are directed toward care and nurture, humans alone can have full or proper (*kuria*) virtue, meaning virtue integrated with practical understanding of a specifically human sort.[4] Non-human animals cannot deliberate (*HA* i.1.448b24) or choose deliberately (*EN* III.2.1111b8-10; II.6.1106a36).[5] This means that their virtues are not always successful (*EN* VI.13.1144a8-10). A good example of this is the barren mare whose parental virtues are applied unsuccessfully to the foal of another horse; because it has no milk, and does not understand this, the attempt to care kills the young (*HA* VIII(IX).4.611a10).

The necessity of human intelligence, with its ability to understand causes and principles and survey the larger picture, transforms human's natural feelings, including those concerned with parenting and caring for the young. As Aristotle explains in his *Politics*, 'human beings do many things against habit and nature, if reason persuades them that they ought' (VI.12.1332b7-9). What distinguishes human practical intelligence (*phronêsis*) is an understanding of what is good and bad (*Pol*. I.1, 1253a16-17) and choosing to pursue activities and perform actions based on this understanding. Virtue also involves having the right feelings and emotions for Aristotle, but without the conscious choice (*prohairesis*) to endorse and deliberately choose, actions based on following feelings cannot count as fully virtuous.

Although there exists an unchosen, 'natural', desire to produce other humans and care for the young (*Pol*. I.1.1252a28-30; *GA* III.2.753a7-13; *EE* 1241b2-4; *EN* 1161b18-29), these starting points are not enough but must be transformed into 'full' (*kuria*) virtue by practical reasoning. This means that Aristotle's views are much closer to a contemporary voluntarist position than a naturalistic one (for example, Brake 2010). Human beings ought not to act on feelings without reason, according to Aristotle. For this to be part of a well lived human life, both the birth and the care for a child must be deliberately chosen. Thus, Aristotle does not fit one dominant pattern in modern ethics which downplays parenting (and mothering in particular) as a sort of unthinking instinct (Held 2006, p. 26). Aristotle would agree instead with Sara Ruddick that mothering (and any parenting for that matter) requires intelligence.

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4 *EN* VI.13.1144b16-17. For a fuller account of this integration see Lennox 1999.

5 Only humans are conscious of reasoned choices (*EE* 1236b3-6).

The necessary involvement of practical reasoning at the highest level transforms a natural feeling of care into a set of activities and commitments that form part of an intelligently lived life.[6] Even, and perhaps especially, nurturing very young children, given their vulnerability and the precision of their needs[7], requires a high degree of practical intelligence. And yet, the early efforts to feed and maintain the existence of a human infant are only a very small part of human nurture.[8] Intelligence is required also as the child grows and begins to try to make her own choices. The example I give you is set out by Ruddick: 'a child leans out of a high-rise window to drop a balloon full of water on a passer-by'. As Ruddick explains, the response to this child must respect three important fundamental goods. The life of the child must be protected (preservation) and so she must be pulled away from the window. At the same time, it must be explained to the child that she must not endanger innocent people as part of ongoing development of her virtue (training). And finally, in explaining how the child ought to act and why her actions were inappropriate, the parent must not undermine the child's self-respect and confidence (nurturance) (Ruddick 1989, p. 23). Aristotle recognises how slowly children develop and that they must be given continual guidance in order to become fully competent, or complete, as he would term it. Part of the training of the young involves making sure that they can thoughtfully engage in their own process of maturation into practical reasoners.[9] A fully complete human being must in the best circumstances result in a virtuous and *eudaimôn* individual.

For Aristotle, children and parents are related by friendship (*EN* 1155a17-21). Aristotle also refers to children as 'external goods' (*EN* I.8 1099a31-b6). This does not mean they are additions to the internal activities of virtue, but that they constitute the means by which those activities are actualised (*EN* I.8.1099a31-b6; VIII.12.1161b18-29; 1162a27-8; Scott 2000, pp. 212-3). Thus, rather than being a virtue, friendship involves one's virtuous activities. As such, it is something that can extend beyond one's own life, which is why what happens to children after the death of a parent is important.

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6 For Aristotle, living well in this manner is not a fleeting feeling or even a set of interests, instead it is a 'complete life' (I.10, 1101a16, X.7.1177b25) – a life that is woven together of the correct feelings and deliberate choices.

7 A conference on early brain development concluded that 'a critical period exists during which the synapses of the dendrites are most ready for appropriate stimulation, be it through words, music, love, touch, or caring. If these synapses are not so stimulated early, they may never fully develop' (Wynder 1999, p. 166).

8 The Greek term for nurture, *trophê*, encompasses not only nourishment but also education and upbringing (*EN* 1180a26). The connate *tropheus* is used of a foster father.

9 They have to 'develop…powers as independent reasoners', MacIntyre 1999, p. 71.

> '[A] dead person also, it seems, has good or evil when, for example, …his children, and descendants in general, do well or suffer misfortune' (*EN* I.10.1100a19-23).

In order to make better sense of how Aristotle thinks of the parent/child relationship and how it is connected to virtue and well-being, we will need first to investigate his account of friendship.

III.

Friendship and Love in Caring for the Young. As with natural virtue, choice and practical intelligence must be added to any 'natural' friendship to make it properly virtuous.[10] Human friendship is a state (*hexis*), rather than a feeling, involving deliberative choice (*prohairesis*) (*EN* VIII.1.1155a31; 5.1157b29-32).[11] Thus, it is not the feelings of affection or even the actions of caring that constitute the friendship, it is the choice to undertake parenting responsibilities as part of a vision of what has overall value. Children are external goods, insofar as caring for the young is crucial to achieving the internal goods of virtuous thought and action, which are needed for proper care. But, as we will see, they are also something more closely tied to our own being: a sort of manifestation and reflection of our best selves.

The specific type of friendship involved in parenting is unequal. At first in *EN* VIII 7 Aristotle remarks that unequal friendship will be evened out by the superior party being loved more than the inferior one:

> 'In all friendships implying inequality the love also should be proportional, i.e. the better should be more loved than he loves, and so should be more useful…for when the love is proportional to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is held to be characteristic of friendship' (trans. Irwin, *EN* VIII.7.1158b24).

This equalling out idea, modelled on justice, turns out not to be an appropriate way to characterise the activities of nurture. In nurturing friendships, the goodness comes from the activity of loving rather than

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10 Non-human animals have a 'natural friendship' with their offspring (*EN* VII.1.1155a17-21). Aristotle calls their non-aggressive and cooperative interactions with each other 'friendships' in his *Historia Animalium* (see especially VIII(IX).1.609b33, 2.610a36-610b2, 4.611a8). Some animals would seem to be able to have friendships with humans, for example, the tamed lion (IV.6.629b12). As with virtue, these natural varieties which lack deliberate choice are not to be regarded as proper friendships in the ethical context. For further reflection on whether humans and animals can be friends see Cagnoli-Fiecconi, forthcoming.

11 'No one chooses to live without friends', indicating that possessing friends is partly a function of choice (*EN* VIII.1.1155a3).

being passively loved. Aristotle uses parental love to illustrate this point:

> '[Friendship] seems to lie in loving rather than in being loved, as is indicated by the delight mothers take in loving; for some mothers hand over their children to be brought up, and so long as they know their fate they love them and do not seek to be loved in return. She would seem to be satisfied if she sees the child doing well, and she loves the child even if ignorance prevents them from according to her what befits a mother. Friendship, then, consists more in loving' (*EN* VIII.8.1159a27-34).

The seeming contradiction between unequal friendship requiring the inferior to love more and the fact that in the case of parents the superior love more can be mitigated in several ways. First, the justice model applies best to friendship that will always remain unequal, such as that between a ruler and someone ruled over (VIII.7.1158b13-14). In monarchy, the relationship between the king and his subjects is one of perpetual rule,[12] and so there is no need for the king to bestow nurturing love on his subjects in the attempt to bring them up to his level. In these cases, the equalising model is appropriate as there is no change in or development of their relation to one another. There is no point in the ruler putting in more effort and love since the ruled over will never advance but remain dependent on him. In the case of the unequal relationship between parent and child, they will eventually become equals when the child has fully matured.[13] Even if this does not occur until after the death of the parent, the presumption is that this is where the friendship is heading.

The second point is this: in the case of parent and child, the nature of the feelings of the 'superior' individual toward the inferior one is different from the nature of the feelings of the inferior for the superior – given this, the equalising model is inadequate to describe it. The parent has an active love for the child which seeks to cultivate her life; in the case of the child, she does not have an active role in aiding the adult, but rather displays respect and gratitude (1158b21).[14] Although both parties must wish each other well and have a degree of mutual affection, 'that on account of which' they have this affection differs. This unusual situation almost makes it seem to be two sorts of friendship stuck together – one of parent for child and the other of child for parent (Pakaluk 1998, p. 91). Another

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12 In fact, this would seem to be a rare situation according to Aristotle's political views. Only if there is a person of supreme and outstanding virtue would they be able to have absolute or perpetual rule (*Pol*. III.11.1288a15-29).

13 Aristotle is clear that the friendship between parent and children is not the same as the friendship between ruler and subject (1158a14-15), although he does not explicitly tell us why.

14 More properly, the child as a friendly feeling (*philesis*) which consists in an affection that is deserved (*axia*) by the parent (1158b25-28).

unusual feature is that the friendship seems to be able to exist when the child has no feelings whatsoever for the parent (1159a33). This, then, contravenes Aristotle's usual mutuality requirement (*EN* VIII.2.1156a1-5; *EE* VII.2.1236b2-3).

Let's return, then, to consider more closely the example of the mother given above. Recall that for humans, parenting activities are a sort of virtue, involving practical reasoning. Unlike the mare that could not understand the overall good and so damaged her charge (*HA* VIII(IX).4.611a10), this mother employs practical intelligence in deliberately choosing to send her child away. As with all practical reasoning, this person must understand the situation extremely well – both in terms of the social setting, the child's personality and her own life goals. Using reason, she thereby supersedes her own merely natural virtue of desiring to personally nurture her own child. In this case, it is not by caring directly for this infant that the goal of its proper nurture can be achieved.[15] In 'seeing the child do well', she is satisfied and thus we find this aspect of the Aristotelian view – the goal of this virtue is beyond one's own well-being; it is the well-being of another. Having a goal that one aims towards outside oneself must now be further explored in Aristotelian ethics, political philosophy and metaphysics.

IV.

Care as Benefaction and Production. What are we to make of the fact that the parent or older friend loves the benefited younger friend more in light of the fact that unequal friendship is supposed to be equalised by love? Although such friendships have unusual features, commentators often continue to have difficulty resolving this seeming contradiction.[16] The fuller answer to this worry is to consider the value of active nurturing. This is what Aristotle begins to explore when he first recognises the puzzle in his *Eudemian Ethics*.

> 'It is puzzling why those who produce benefit (*poiêsantes eu*) love those who have received it more than those who receive benefit from those who produce it, when the opposite seems to be just' (my translation, *EE* VII.8, 1241a35-38).

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15 Although Pakaluk 1998, notes that 'mothers are presumed to provide a standard of love' due to their 'choices', he then decides that the example at *EN* VIII.8.1159a27-34 cannot tell us anything general about friendship because the strength of the mother's love can only be due to its being 'co-natural' and irrational (p. 105).

16 Pakaluk 1998: 'the example is doubtfully consistent with his claim, in VIII.7, that the inferior should love more than he is loved…' (p. 103). Pakaluk labours to bring the two in line by shifting his focus to the son who shows gratitude to his father and thereby displays primitive virtue (pp. 104-5) but the latter example is markedly unlike the case of the mother, whose child does not show her any affection or respect whatsoever.

The preliminary answers he offers are that the feelings involved are somehow 'natural' (*phusikos*) (1241a40) because loving is active and being active is more choiceworthy (*hairetoteron*). This has to do with the 'inferior' friend that is benefited being the product (*ergon*) of the beneficiary.

> 'There is the same relation between the effect and the activity, the benefited being as it were an effect or production of the benefactor. Hence in animals their strong feelings for their offspring both in begetting them and in preserving them afterwards. And so fathers love the children – and still more mothers – more than they are loved by them…mothers love more than fathers because they think the children to be more their own production; for the amount of work is measured by the difficulty, and the mother suffers more in birth' (*EE* VII.8.1241b1-9, translation J. Solomon).

Aristotle spends more time on the case of benefactors and producers in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.7. The fact that benefactors love beneficiaries more than the other way is noted as something that seems 'unreasonable' (X.7.1167b17-18), presumably with respect to the same seeming clash noted in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Furthermore, perhaps with the mother case in mind, Aristotle notes that when the beneficiary has nothing positive to give to the benefactors this does not affect her feelings or the potential success of her active love: 'benefactors love and feel friendship for those who receive their benefactions even when the recipient are of no use now or may never be' (1167b30-33). Aristotle proceeds to explain what there is, then, that makes these activities worthwhile for the agent.

The gain to benefactor is best elucidated within the broader metaphysical structure of active production.[17] Within this framework, the activity of loving the beneficiary is about loving the product of one's work. But it is also about loving one's own existence. This is how Aristotle explains it:

> 'Existence (*to einai*) is choiceworthy and loveable for everything. We exist in so far as we are actualised, by living and acting. The product is, in a way, the actualisation of the producer. Hence the producer is fond of the product, because he is fond of his own being. And this is natural. For what he is potentially, the product indicates in its actualisation. At the same time the benefactor's action is fine for him so that he is pleased by that person' (my translation, *EN* IX.7.1168a5-10).

To make better sense of this rather puzzling passage, commentators look to Aristotle's other works for some clues about the broader metaphysics. What needs to be made sense of is (1) how loving a beneficiary is like

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17 As Pakaluk 1998 notes, one of the guiding questions of this chapter is 'to what more general phenomena should the relationship of benefactor to beneficiary be assimilated?' The answer is not creditor and debtor but producer and product (p. 105).

producing something outside ourselves. Once (1) is clear, we can then return to ethics to find out (2) how this is also about loving our own existence.

(1) In his *Metaphysics* and other works, Aristotle explains how the actualisation of a producer can exist outside her in a separate product, while also being a realisation of an internal capacity (*Metaph*. IX.8.1050a4-33). An active faculty can produce something internal to the agent (for example, sight) or something external to the agent (for example, a building which has been built by the agent or learning in the person that has been taught by her). Let's take the case of learning which is of the production of something external to the active capacity. Before a person has learned something, the teacher has the active capacity to teach and the student has the passive capacity to learn; the realisation of both active and passive capacities brings about one result: learning (1050a31-32).[18] Another example from Aristotle's biology is animal generation. Active and passive capacities in male and female are actualised in one product, the offspring.[19] On the model of production that we have been considering, the actuality of the internal capacity will only be complete when its product is.[20] Thus the completion of the building, the learning that takes place in the learner, and the new animal are all products that exist outside the producer. When they are complete or actualised, this is also the actualisation of the producer *qua* producer. For example, in the case of the builder, the building is how her capacity as builder is realised. If she runs out of building materials and the building is never completed, then her productive capacity has never been properly actualised.

(2) Aristotle insists that in loving beneficiaries, we are somehow affirming our own existence. Our beneficiaries are our products and it is natural (*phusikos*; *EN* IX.7.1168a9) that the producer loves her product[21] because this is a love for her own existence. This is not just because our internal capacities are being actualised but also because we value and

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18 *Ph*. III.3. The actualisation of active and passive potentials is 'one' (202b1-2); there is nothing strange about the actualisation of one thing existing in another, as in the case of the teacher (202b6-7). Her actualisation as teacher exists in the student when she has learnt. This is also explained in some detail by Scott 2000, who notes that in the cases under discussion the 'success of the agent depends on something located beyond the person' (p. 225).

19 See Connell 2016, pp. 170-2. There is a strong connection for Aristotle between being the cause of something and it being your own. This is because our own existence is activity and when we produce something which is difficult to make (*EN* IX.7.1168a19), this displays how active we are. 'A human being originates and generates their actions as they do their children' (*EN* III.5.1113b18-19).

20 '[T]he product manifests in actuality what the agent is in potentiality' (1168a19).

21 See also *EN* IV.1.1120b13-4.

continue to identify with our products. In the ethics, this idea is further expounded by use of the craft analogy (*technê*). Poets love their poems as if they were their children; and so, the same holds good for actual children and other beneficiaries (1168a1-6).

The core affection in humans is the result of responding correctly to their own efforts – giving birth to children is hard work (1168b26) but raising them is much harder. The effort is to produce something difficult to create and so is comparable to the intelligent choices of the carpenter. An individual chair is the product of a particular series of actions expressive of the carpenter's skill, which will make it unique. Similarly, one's child or younger friend is a special unique product of one's practical intelligence. This is best expressed in the *Politics*, where in arguing against Plato's idea that parents should not know their children, Aristotle notes that the reason for affection of the sort parents feel for children has to do with the unique relationship (*idion*) they have with them (*Pol*. II.1.1262b23). Parents make their children who they will become through their nurturing activities.[22]

Aristotle uses craft analogies to make clear the activity and effort that it takes to achieve the human good. For example, in the famous function argument, he compares the good human life to the achievements of artisans.[23] However, the craft cases are not similar in ways that matter to his account of benefaction. There are two key differences between artisan and human *qua* human. The first is that the artisan produces something inanimate, which doesn't really have a life of its own.[24] The human *qua* human, through her virtuous agency (in the case of nurturing benefaction), produces another virtuous human being, with an active life of its own. This means that her action does live on, especially in the sense that the younger human will emulate and mimic to a certain extent her own virtues, while making intelligent decisions for herself.[25] A closer parallel would be of a robot which can make another robot, part of whose activities would be to make another robot and so on. The second key difference is that any craft is only a small part of human excellence, and not even a requirement for it. The activity of being a good poet might in some ways make one's life go well, but the activity of being a good human is central to it.[26] Friendships,

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22 'A parent knows better what has come from them than the children know that they are from the parent; and the parent regards their children as their own more than the product regards the maker as its own' (*EN* VIII.11.1161b20-24).

23 Aristotle also uses crafts to describe how we acquire virtues through training (1106b15).

24 Aristotle asks us to imagine that a poem had come to life (1168a35).

25 I do not here explore the role of emulation in moral education. See Kristjánsson 2006.

26 Human virtue is 'better and more exact than craft' (1130a31).

particularly those that benefit others, must include being active toward the friend and this activity is what it is to be that good person. Just as a beautiful poem is in some sense a realisation of the poet, and thus a part of what he is as a poet, a good child is a realisation of the parent and part of what she is as a human being. Thus, we can see that the role of parenting or nurturing is not accidental. Not all humans are poets but, for Aristotle, all humans must be nurturers, or else the human condition disintegrates, and we cease to have humans in the future.

The model from the metaphysics (2) allows that the actualisation of an internal capacity relies on the completion of something external to it. A person as poet, builder or parent is not fully actualised as the producer of those effects, until these products are complete. This helps to make sense of the effect that children and friends doing badly can have after our death (Scott 2000).[27] This set of comparisons does not yet help us, however, to fully understand how our relationship to the product of our love is also love for our own existence. I propose that the fact that the product is alive, and human is crucial. This makes the production not only physical but also psychological. Nurture requires developing the character of one's charge and because the friend comes to be good in a way that is very similar to the way the agent is good, they have a character friendship. This is then part of the existence of the agent not just *qua* agent but *qua* close friend. To understand this better, we must return to the context of *EN* IX discussion.

The main purpose of noting the five marks of friendship in chapter 4 of *EN* IX is to explain how the attitudes and relations one has with a friend are similar to the attitudes and relations one has with oneself (1166a10-11). Benefaction is crucial: the first thing noted as a sign of friendship being 'to wish and promote by action the real or apparent good of another for their own sake'.[28] The second mark of friendship is to wish one's friend to exist and live, which Aristotle notes is particularly true of parents (here mothers 1166a6). To exist as a good human being is the activity of one's virtues. What we see here is how closely linked the desire to exist and flourish with relation to oneself is to the desire for one's friend to exist and flourish. There is also a sense in which the existence and flourishing of one's friend is a reflection of and even part of one's own existence and flourishing. As Aristotle explains, 'the good person is related to himself as he is related to his friend and thus his friend is like another himself' (IX.4.1166a32). Friends share their life, they share projects, make decisions together and so their choices are in a way intertwined – which

27 Scott 2000, suggests that in a way the self survives death, not the conscious or active self but the self as 'producer' (p. 228).

28 Cf. *EN* VIII.2.1155b31-2; VIII.3.1156a8-10.

is why the decisions of the one are in a way the decisions of the other. As Aristotle puts it: 'what our friends achieve is, in a way, achieved through our agency, since the origin is in us' (*EN* III.3.1112b28-9).

This pattern of interrelation is even more strongly evident in friendships between an older and younger people which aim at the completion and virtue of the younger party. Chapter 7's attempt to explain the reason why benefactors love even when they get nothing in return is that they benefit through their own active engagement in this activity and in appreciating the product of their efforts. With respect to ourselves, we desire and love our own existence (1168a6). As animals, we exist in activity or actuality; benefaction is active loving, rather than passive receipt of care (1168a18). Furthermore, being productive, it leaves a product behind after it is no longer active. What remains is fine or morally good (*kalon*). The beneficiary of nurture is another good human being, a fine one. Even when the nurture is complete, and the beneficiary fully human herself, the benefactor has an enrichment and source of happiness in her own life, in seeing the younger friend do well. Thus, as Aquinas (1964) puts it, 'the benefactor takes joy in his beneficiary, as a person in whom his good is attained' (p. 561). And this is part of her own worthy life because the good actions of a friend are in some way 'one's own' (*oikeias*) (1170a3-4). When Marianne Dashwood decides to marry Colonel Brandon, Elinor Dashwood can feel that she had some part in her younger sister's correct choice, through her long discussions with her about being sensible.

> 'The virtuous person is related to her friend in the same way she is related to herself, since her friend is another herself. Therefore, just as her own being (*einai*) is choiceworthy for her, her friend's being is choiceworthy for her in the same or a similar way' (my translation, 1170b7-9).[29]

Just as a person chooses to be virtuous, as this in itself is leading the best life, she chooses to benefit her friends so that they can live well too. Recognition or admiration is a paltry prize beside the actual realisation of the good of another. This is presumably why best friends wish for the other's good even if nobody will ever know about it (IX.7.1169b13).

v.

Nurturing: The individual and Society. This Aristotelian model of parenting explains why, no matter how unrewarding it feels, parenting is not a burden, duty or something that imposes 'opportunity costs', that have to be compensated for (Alstott 2004). On the contrary, nurturing those younger than ourselves is part of what it is to live a fulfilled human

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29 His and himself may be substituted for a male subject.

life. It might initially seem peculiar to think of our efforts to help young people to thrive as part of loving and wishing for our own existence (*EN* IX.7.1166a22, 1168a6). In Aristotle's broader view of things, it is natural for anything that lives to strive to sustain itself; this is a pattern into which humans fit well. It is good to exist and to exist as the active living beings we are.[30] Furthermore, it is quite right that one's life and existence is of value to oneself (1175a18). It is precisely the failure to appreciate this that leads to the difficulties faced by the mother in Jean Hampton's example. As Hampton explains, '"selfless" people such as Terry are in danger of losing the self they ought to be developing, and as a result, may be indirectly harming the very people for whom they care' (1993, p.143)

We can also note how helpful Aristotle's idea of deliberative choice is – rather than being at the mercy of biology or social pressure, nurturing the young is a human activity only when it is thoughtfully chosen. Although one may instantly feel affection for young people this is never enough to give them what they require. Any unrealistic expectations of instant joy must be replaced by reasoned choices which aim for the long-term well-being of the friend. This aim requires patience since people develop slowly. Aristotle himself thought that maturity came only in one's 30s.[31] Thus these relationships are likely to continue for one's whole life. Furthermore, from maturity onwards, all interactions with younger members of our kind are potentially enriching in the manner detailed. There is good reason, then, to encourage the mixing of different age groups in our communities, for the benefit of both older and younger people.[32] Contemporary projects that combine facilities for the elderly with those for young children have proven an enormous success. These report a blossoming in the children, with significant improvements in cognitive and speech development, as well as a renewed 'sense of purpose' in the elderly people involved (Goddard 2017). The real reason for this is that human lives need to be integrated into each other and overlap significantly. From the start of life until its middle, people are nurtured and form part of the lives of their carers; once mature, people begin to nurture those younger than themselves and so integrate these new people into their own lives.

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30 *GA* II.1.731b30-1: 'being is better than not being and living than not living'.

31 Aristotle notes often that the young are not virtuous, his descriptions correspond most to people in their late teens and 20s (*EN* 1179b12-16, 1080a33-4; 1095a3-8). For Aristotle, a son becomes independent from a father and begins to manage on his own when he sets up a household and begins to have children (*GA* II.4.740a7). Aristotle recommends that this is best done when a man is in their mid-30s (*Pol*. VII.14.1335a28).

32 'It is fitting that this organization be divided into age-groups, that some of the rulers spend time with younger people, and that the older men spend time with the rulers' (*Pol*. VII.12.1331a38-41).

Aristotle acknowledges that less personal efforts are also necessary to ensure human well-being, in particular, political involvement (*Pol.* I.2.1253a29-39). Politics is a productive science, aiming at the production of good people. Renewal of human communities requires some kind of structure which is why one has to teach the young not only to nurture others personally but also to be politicians (*Pol.* I.5.1260b20-21; Cf. *EN* X.9.1181a7-9). But the production of good humans can never be achieved solely from the top-down.[33] The only safeguard against the degeneration of morals within communities is the continual renewal of virtue through virtuous people producing and nurturing the young on a personal level.

As affection and friendship binds the city-state together (*EN* VIII.1.1155a22-27), the root of human political activity is in the care for the young one interacts with; the political cannot exist without its basis in personal choices to nurture younger friends.[34] The friendships that we have for those younger than ourselves in our communities are not only part of our own projects, for which we feel pride and a sense of achievement, but are also necessary for the continuation of the human way of life (*bios*) into the future. Public benefit is an extension of those personal actions which form part of a well lived human life.[35] From an external perspective, it may very difficult to tell whether a person has lived a fully good life. But one sure sign is to track the fate of their beneficiaries, who reflect that person's virtues.[36] Only those who are the best people produce the best people for the future – and those, who in turn, can produce the next generation's human success.[37]

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33 See Kontos 2018. As he so astutely puts it, for Aristotle 'human beings constitute an inexhaustible source of political redemption' (p. 96).

34 Here we might compare the early black feminist writer, Maria W. Stewart, who encouraged mothers to produce children that could change society: 'O, ye mothers …It is you that must create in the minds of your little girls and boys a thirst for knowledge, the love of virtue…Do not say you cannot make any thing of your children' (quoted in Hill Collins 2000, p. 4).

35 This can be contrasted with Plato who downplays personal nurture in favour of grand gestures – indeed poems: 'everyone….would look up to Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets with envy and admiration for the offspring they have left behind – offspring, which, because they are immortal themselves, provide their parents with immortal glory and remembrance' (*Symposium* 209d-e).

36 The fact that famous politicians, considered superficially by Anytus to be successful, could not really be virtuous, is evident in their inability to make their sons so (Plato, *Meno* 93A-94E). Anytus himself was held in bad repute (even after his death) because he failed to educate his own son, a useless alcoholic (Klein 1965, p. 65).

37 '[O]ur planet provides no examples of highly successful societies… who have ignored development in the early years' (WHO report on Early Child Development 2007).

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