Beyond “The Supply of Men’s Everyday Wants”:
Understanding Aristotle’s Account of
The Relationship of the Household to the State
I. Introduction

At the outset of his *Ethics*, Aristotle points out that one cannot expect an equal degree of precision in the treatment of all subjects. This is particularly true of those subjects that ethics and politics address:

Problems of what is noble and just, which politics examines, present so much variety and irregularity that some people believe that they exist only by convention and not by nature. The problem of the good, too, presents a similar kind of irregularity, because in many cases good things bring harmful results. There are instances of men ruined by wealth, and others by courage. Therefore, in a discussion of such subjects, which has to start from a basis of this kind, we must be satisfied to indicate the truth with a rough and general sketch: when the subject and the basis of a discussion consist of matters that hold good only as a general rule, but not always, the conclusions reached must be of the same order. The various points that are made must be received in the same spirit. For a well-schooled man is one who searches for that degree of precision in each kind of study which the nature of that subject at hand admits: it is obviously just as foolish to accept arguments of probability from a mathematician as to demand strict demonstrations from an orator.¹

Because the matters that Aristotle treats of in the *Ethics* and the *Politics* are inextricably tied up with particulars, there can be no scientific demonstrations about such matters, and it would be ridiculous to expect such a thing.

This is a highly satisfactory explanation of the obvious differences between Aristotle’s treatment of, say, justice and his treatment of logic in his Categories. But it sometimes seems as if Aristotle’s Ethics and Politics are not just “rough and general sketch[es]” in terms of the degree of precision which they admit of. The reader often is left to his own devices when it comes to synthesizing the concepts discussed—“bridging the gaps,” as it were.

A particularly good example of an issue that is only outlined (but about which there is no dearth of material to synthesize) is the relationship between the family and the state. Aristotle’s explicit treatment of the matter in the Politics is exceedingly spare, but what he says explicitly is remarkably consistent with not only his implicit references to the matter elsewhere (both in the Ethics and the Politics), but also with his general theories about human nature (e.g., moral and intellectual virtue, friendship, happiness and rule). It is perhaps the case, given this degree of consistency, that Aristotle felt that the “general sketch” that he provides gives the student everything he needs to formulate an answer to the question “What is the relationship of the household to the state, according to Aristotle’s account?”

This paper will attempt to make a beginning in answering that very question. It will argue that, though the primary end of the family is rightly said to be “the supply of men’s everyday wants,” the family is, in a secondary sense, also ordered towards the true state’s end of ensuring that its citizens “live well.” The household prepares its members for their life within the state by developing the virtues appropriate to each of them, a task which is integral to the health of the state. Further, the role which the household plays in the proper functioning of the state is a role which the household is peculiarly suited to, and which only it can play.

This paper will first briefly address Aristotle’s general definitions of the family and the state, as well as his explicit treatment of the relationship between the two. A more thorough investigation of the nature of the household will follow. For, as Aristotle says at the beginning of the Politics:

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2 Aristotle uses the Greek word polis, which more literally means “city-state.” Although this paper uses the word “state” (since English has no direct equivalent to polis), it is understood that the “state” we are discussing here (since we are examining Aristotle’s thought) is a community closer to the modern idea of the city than to the modern idea of the state or nation. (See Aristotle’s Politics, Book VII, Chapter 4.)


4 Ibid., 1,2, 1252b12

The complete household is made up of slaves and free persons. Since everything is to be sought first in its smallest elements, and the first and smallest parts of the household are master, slave, husband, wife, father, and children, three things must be investigated to determine what each is and what sort of thing it ought to be. These are expertise in mastery, in marital [rule] (there is no term for the union of man and woman), and thirdly in parental [rule] (this too has not been assigned a term of its own).  

Each of these three relationships, then, will be examined in detail. Having acquired a clearer picture of the relationships within the household, the peculiar degree of ‘other-self-ness’ and the having-of things-in-common within the household will be addressed, as well the particular ways in which the household develops the virtue of its various members. Finally, the necessity of the household will be addressed. (This last consideration is dependent on the peculiar other-self relationships and the having-of-things-in-common within the household, as well as on the household’s development of the virtue of its members).

II. Defining the Family, the State, and the Relationship Between the Two

A brief treatment of Aristotle’s definitions of the family, the state and their relationship will of course be a necessary preliminary to a closer examination of these three. These are defined in Aristotle’s Politics, which presupposes his Ethics. In the Ethics, Aristotle defines virtue as an activity, discusses the individual’s need for other men if he is to develop moral virtue, presupposes moral virtue to intellectual virtue (because it orders the parts of the soul), defines happiness as activity in conformity with the virtue of the highest part (the rational element), and, since happiness will lack nothing, notes that happiness will be marked by self-sufficiency. It is theoretical knowledge which is self-sufficient and loved for its own sake, and the perfection of the pursuit of theoretical knowledge will require other men, insofar as it requires intellectual discourse. Finally, in a transition to the Politics, Aristotle discusses the need for laws, if men are to continue in virtue.

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6 Ibid., I.3, 1253b4.
7 Aristotle, Ethics. IX.9, 1169b12; 1170a2; 1170a7; X.8, 1178b4.
8 Among others, Aristotle’s Ethics VI.13, 1145a6 suggests that intellectual virtue will presuppose moral virtue.
9 Ibid., X.7, 1177a12; 1177b27.
10 Ibid., X.6, 1176b5.
11 Ibid., X.7, 1177a27, 1177b.
12 Ibid., X.7, 1177a35.
their whole lives.\textsuperscript{13} And since laws are the “product of politics,”\textsuperscript{14} it would seem that there is a need for the state.

It is to “complete…our philosophy of human affairs,”\textsuperscript{15} then, that the project of the Politics is embarked upon. It is in Chapter 2 of his Politics that Aristotle treats of the origins of the family and the state:

In the first place there must be a union of those who cannot exist without each other; namely, of male and female, that the race may continue (and this is a union which is formed, not of deliberate purpose, but because, in common with other animals and with plants, mankind have a natural desire to leave behind them an image of themselves), and of natural ruler and subject, that both may be preserved.

Out of these two relationships between man and woman, master and slave, the first thing to arise is the family.... The family is the association established by nature for the supply of men’s everyday wants.... But when several families are united, and the association aims at something more than the supply of daily needs, the first society to be formed is the village....

When several villages are united in a single community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life.\textsuperscript{16} And therefore, if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end. For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and best.\textsuperscript{17}

Finally, as to the relationship of the family to the state, Aristotle has the following to say:

Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their working and power; and we ought not to say that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they have

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., X.9, 1180a14.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., X.9, 1181a25.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., X.9, 1181b15.
\textsuperscript{16} See also Aristotle, Politics, III.9, 1280a31. (Jowett)
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., I.2, 1252a26.
III. Relationships Within the Household: Husband and Wife

Before entering into a discussion of the relationship between husband and wife, it will be helpful to review Aristotle's discussion of friendship in his *Ethics* (which precedes his discussion of the various relationships within the household), since the ideal marriage would seem to be a sort of friendship.

At the beginning of Book VIII of the *Ethics*, having already considered diverse opinions about friendship, Aristotle concludes that "the object of affection" is the lovable. The lovable, he writes, is divided into three types: the good, the pleasant and the useful. Through a dialectical consideration of friendship, he arrives at some basic requirements for a relationship to be called a friendship:

...To be friends men must have good will for one another, must each wish for the good of the other on the basis of one of the three motives mentioned [the good, the pleasant and the useful], and must each be aware of one another's good will. \(^{19}\)

Thus, there are three kinds of friendship, corresponding to the different sorts of lovable things. \(^{20}\) But, Aristotle says of friendships of use and pleasure, "...These two kinds are friendship only incidentally, since the object of affection is not loved for being the kind of person he is, but for providing some good or pleasure." \(^{21}\) Having eliminated

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19 Aristotle, *Ethics*, VIII.2, 1156a3. (Brackets mine.)
these two kinds of friendship from the consideration of true friendship, he states that:

The perfect form of friendship is that between good men who are alike in excellence or virtue. For these friends wish alike for one another's good because they are good men, and they are good per se. Those who wish for their friends' good for their friends' sake are friends in the truest sense, since their attitude is determined by what their friends are and not by incidental considerations. Hence their friendship lasts as long as they are good, and goodness or virtue is a thing that lasts. In addition, each partner is both good in the unqualified sense and good for his friend.22

And then, just afterwards:

Now this kind of friendship [the friendship between virtuous equals] has all the requisite qualities we have mentioned and has them per se, that is, as an essential part of the characters of the friends. For in this kind of friendship the characters are like one another, and the other objects worthy of affection—the unqualified good and the unqualified pleasant—are also found in it, and these are the highest objects worthy of affection. It is, therefore, in the friendship of good men that feelings of affection and friendship exist in their highest and best form.23

It is important to note that, as Aristotle sees the matter, the relationship of the husband and wife does not meet the qualifications for the highest, most ideal friendship. This is because the husband and wife are not equals, according to Aristotle's schema. According to his account, the husband and the wife do not give each other the same things. (We will see shortly why it might be that Aristotle believes this to be the case.)

Suppose that the husband and wife are unable to give each other the same things: this is problematic because of the role that justice plays in Aristotle's conception of true friendship. He says that “It is natural that the element of justice increases with [the closeness of] the friendship, since friendship and what is just exist in the same relationship and are coextensive in range.”24 Now, the pure form of reciprocal justice (which is the sort of justice concerned with exchange) involves an equal exchange, and an unequal exchange constitutes an injustice.25 So it would seem that friendship is

22 Ibid., VIII.3, 1156b7.
23 Ibid., VIII.3, 1156b22.
24 Ibid., VIII.9, 1160a7.
25 “Now, the just in transactions is also something equal (and the unjust something unequal)….” (Aristotle, Ethics. V.4, 1131b32.)
impossible between two people who cannot make an “equal exchange.”

Nevertheless, Aristotle believes that the relationship between the husband and the wife is a friendship—but that it is a special case of friendship in which one of the partners is superior to the other. (Father-son and ruler-subject pairs are other kinds of friendships of inequality.) About these various kinds of relationships between unequals, Aristotle says:

> These kinds of friendship are different [not only from those which involve equality, but] also from one another.... For in each of these cases, the virtue or excellence and the function of each partner is different, and the cause of their affection, too, is different. Therefore, the affection and friendship they feel are correspondingly different. It is clear that the partners do not receive the same thing from one another and should not seek to receive it....

The question still remains, how can we consider these relationships to be friendships, when this inequality is believed to exist between the partners? It would seem to be a sort of injustice, or, at the very least, grossly unfitting, considering what we have already seen of Aristotle's notions about the role of equality in true friendship. There is, however, a way in which this difficulty can be seen to be resolved:

> In all friendships which involve the superiority of one of the partners, the affection, too, must be proportionate: the better and more useful partner should receive more affection than he gives, and similarly for the superior partner in each case. For when the affection is proportionate to the merit of each partner, there is in some sense equality between them. And equality, as we have seen, seems to be a part of friendship.

Now, because the relationship is one of a superior to an inferior, it will of necessity involve rule, as well as friendship—as will all other relationships between unequals. According to Aristotle’s account, the husband, as the superior partner, rules over his wife. But it is important to note that there are different kinds of rule. The husband does not rule over his wife in the same way that he rules over, say, his slaves.

> For that which can foresee by the exercise of the mind is by nature intended to be lord and master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave; hence master and slave have the same interest.

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26 Ibid., VIII.7, 1158b12.
27 Ibid., VIII.7, 1158b23.
Now nature has distinguished between the female and the slave. For she is not niggardly, like the smith who fashions the Delphian knife for many uses; she makes each thing for a single use, and every instrument is best made when intended for one and not for many uses. But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female....

So the wife does not blindly carry out her husband’s wishes, as the slave carries out the will of the master (because the slave’s rational principle is, in fact, external and present in the master). If, then, the wife has the capacity for reason (which would seem to be what distinguishes her from the slave), why does she need someone to rule over her? What is it that renders her inferior?

A bit later in the *Politics*, Aristotle addresses this very question:

...Almost all things rule and are ruled according to nature. But the kind of rule differs;—the freeman rules over the slave after another manner from that in which the male rules over the female, or the man over the child; although the parts of the soul are present in all of them, they are present in different degrees. For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature. So it must necessarily be supposed to be with the moral virtues also; all should partake of them, but only in such manner and degree as is required by each for the fulfillment of his duty. Hence the ruler ought to have moral virtue in perfection, for his function, taken absolutely, demands a master artificer, and rational principle is such an artificer; the subjects, on the other hand, require only that measure of virtue which is proper to each of them. Clearly, then, moral virtue belongs to all of them; but the temperance of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same.... And this holds of all other virtues....

Thus, the inequality between the husband and the wife, as Aristotle sees it, is not a matter of convention or "cultural conditioning." The male and the female are simply not capable of giving each other the same things—their virtues and abilities are not the same. Of course, they can pervert their activities so as to not follow from the character of their respective sexes, but this does not change the fact of what they are naturally capable of giving each other as man and as woman. At any rate, the fact that they do not give each other the same things turns out (as we shall see) to be for the good of the household.

28 Aristotle, *Politics*. I.2, 1252a32. (Jowett)
29 Ibid., I.13, 1260a7.
But how to understand the subtleties of the husband-wife relationship? Surely there is more to say about Aristotle's position on the matter than merely that he feels the husband is superior to his wife on the basis of the fact that he possesses the authority necessary for rule, and she does not.

Indeed, Aristotle does take pains to develop a clearer picture of the way the relationship between the husband and the wife works. In both the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, he compares the relationship between the husband and wife to forms of political rule. (He also compares the other relationships in the household to types of political rule, but we will wait until we discuss those relationships to discuss those analogies.)

The first comparison of the husband-wife relationship to a form of political rule is in Book VIII of the *Ethics*:

> Resemblances to these forms of government—models, as it were—can be found in the household... The association of husband and wife is evidently aristocratic. For the husband's rule depends on his worth or merit, and the sphere of his rule is that which is proper to a man. Whatever is more suited to a woman he turns over to his wife. But whenever the husband takes authority over all [household] matters into his hand, he transforms the association into an oligarchy, since in doing so he violates the principle of merit and does not rule by virtue of his superiority. Sometimes the wife rules because she is an heiress. But of course this kind of rule is not in terms of excellence or virtue, but is based on wealth and power, just as in oligarchies.30

Here, Aristotle has likened marriage to an aristocracy because both in marriage and in aristocracy, superiority on the basis of worth or merit determines who is to rule. One can also see here that Aristotle believes men and women to have "sphere[s]" of activity which are proper to them. Failure to recognize the distinction between these two spheres of activity (as when a husband insists on managing *everything*, even those things in which he should delegate his authority to his wife, or when the wife rules over her husband) constitutes a perversion of the natural order. (Just as the three good forms of the state are true states,31 and their corresponding perversions are not, so too are male-female relationships which pervert the natural order not true marriages.)

Soon after the passage cited above, Aristotle again compares the relationship between spouses to an aristocracy:

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31 Ibid., VIII.10, 1160a31.
The friendship between husband and wife is the same as that in an aristocracy. It is based on excellence or virtue: the superior partner gets a larger share of good, and each gets what is suited to him, and the same relationship holds for what is just.32

In an aristocracy, what the state has to offer is distributed according to the merit of the citizens.33 Thus, just as a true aristocracy (one based on genuine merit) is a just form of government, so is a true marriage a just exchange of the particular gifts and abilities men and women are given, respectively.

But, like all analogies, the comparison of marriage to an aristocracy falls short of fully illuminating its subject. It is perhaps to flesh out our understanding of the husband-wife relationship that Aristotle compares marriage to a second form of political rule in Book I of his Politics:

A husband and father, we saw, rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs, the rule over his children being a royal, over his wife a constitutional rule. For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature. But in most constitutional states the citizens rule and are ruled by turns, for the idea of a constitutional state implies that the natures of the citizens are equal, and do not differ at all. Nevertheless, when one rules and the other is ruled we endeavor to create a difference of outward forms and names and titles of respect, which may be illustrated by the saying of Amasis about his foot-pan. The relation of the male to the female is of this kind, but there the inequality is permanent.34

Here, Aristotle points out the fact that the wife and children are “both free,” and that the conception of a constitutional state implies that “the natures of the citizens are equal.” Later in the Politics, Aristotle defines constitutional rule as that "...which is exercised over freemen and equals by birth...."35 This comparison of the husband-wife relationship to a second type of rule illustrates the fact that, although the husband merits a certain position in the household (and is in that sense superior to his wife), both parties are nevertheless equal, under another consideration: they are both rational human

32 Ibid., VIII.11, 1161a22.
33 Ibid., VIII.10, 1160b12.
34 Aristotle, Politics. I.12, 1259a39. (Jowett)
beings, and as such are freemen. The wife is no less a human being than her husband is.\textsuperscript{36}

The story about Amasis and the foot-pan (which Aristotle references in the last paragraph cited above) may help to illustrate the fact that the husband and wife are equal in this respect. This story (which can be found in Herodotus\textsuperscript{37}) tells of an Egyptian king who, when his common birth was spoken of disparagingly, secretly had a golden foot-pan melted down and made into an idol. When his subjects began to worship the idol, he revealed its humble origins, saying that he himself was like that footbath. The husband and the wife are both human—just as the foot-pan and the idol were both gold—but the form which each takes (their respective sexes) determines the role each is to have. (Most literally, in generation, but also, as a result, in their common endeavors within the household.)

We have seen, then, that Aristotle believes that the husband merits rule over his wife by virtue of his having an authority that is uniquely male, and that this authority is permanent, but that they are nonetheless both equal in their dignity as freemen, on account of their rational nature. It was stated above that the wife does not blindly follow her husband’s orders as the slave does. It can now be said that since the wife has the “deliberative faculty,” she is free to deliberate as to the best means to achieving the ends her husband has chosen with authority. Because she has this deliberative element, she is a suitable partner and counsel for her husband, and can contribute to the decisions he makes concerning his family and property.

It is their ability to reason that distinguishes the husband and the wife (and, in potency, their children) from the slave, and characterizes them as freemen. Their rational capacities allow them to have an understanding of the end of the state in which they live, and this understanding enables them to knowingly direct their actions to that end, and so have a role in the life of their state.

Now that we have discussed the ways in which the husband and the wife are said to be both unequal and equal, we can examine more closely the ways in which these considerations bear upon their actions. It was pointed out above that virtue is not the same for the male and the female, and that they each have their own virtues and abilities. These differences between the husband and the wife would seem to flow from the respective roles they play in generation—not merely in the act of generation, but also the different roles they play with respect to the rearing of their children. (Remember that it is this common endeavor that is the reason for their union in the first place, and thus constitutes the essence of their lives together.) The characteristics of their respective sexes render them suited to distinct but complementary sets of activities.

\textsuperscript{36} Cf. "...Others suppose that if they are equal in a certain thing, such as freedom, they are equal generally." (Aristotle, \textit{Politics} III.9, 1280a23, Lord.)
\textsuperscript{37} Herodotus, II.172
But what are these complementary activities, and how do they follow from the respective sexes of the husband and the wife? The roles that both the man and the woman play in generation are fixed and determined by nature and so, to a certain extent, are the roles they play in the raising of their child once he is born. Before he is born, the child grows within and is nourished by the body of his mother. In his infancy, his mother continues to nourish him with her body. Both the child’s growth within his mother’s body before birth and his being nourished by that same body after birth contribute to their relationship having a specific character. The character of the mother-child relationship is distinct from the character of the father-child relationship—it is not insignificant that the father’s relationship with the child in a sense can be said to begin only after birth, and that, even then, the relationship is significantly more removed than that of the mother to her child. The differences between these two relationships could be said to contribute to the fact that the mother takes a different sort of interest in the child as an individual than his father does (and has a different and necessary sort of affection for him), and the relative distance between the father and the child contributes to his ability to fairly discipline the child—he is able to be more objective in his judgments. The roles of the parents in generation and child-rearing are certainly different, but they are undoubtedly complementary. The child needs both sorts of relationships to become a whole, well-ordered individual, and the parents’ distinct experiences of their child each inform the other.

The matter of the husband’s capacity for authority is a difficult one (and thus, we will not be able to fully address it within the confines of this paper), but it is fair to say that the husband’s unique possession of authority may ultimately be said to be for the good of the relationship. On the subject of rule, Aristotle says in Book I of the Politics:

> For whatever is constituted out of a number of things—whether continuous or discrete—and becomes a single common thing always displays a ruling and a ruled element; this is something that animate things derive from all of nature, for even in things that do not share in life there is a sort of rule, for example in a harmony.\(^{38}\)

Certainly, the husband and wife have, as a result of their common endeavor, joined together to form “a single common thing,” and as such, there is a necessity for one element to rule over the others. The fact that the wife has the deliberative element means that their endeavor is truly a common one, but ultimately, order is secured (and conflict is prevented) by the fact that, within a properly ordered household, only one party rules. So the fact that there is one—and

\(^{38}\) Aristotle, *Politics*. I.5, 1254a27. (Lord)
only one—element that is capable of ruling over the others within the household would seem to be both advantageous and ideal.

It is particularly difficult to see why it must be the husband who rules, and what he derives his authority from. Within the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, Aristotle seems to assume the husband's authority as a principle (and thus does not argue to it), but there is still some basis for conjecture about the subject. First, there is the consideration we made above about the husband's relative distance from the children—this allows him not only a sort of objectivity in the rearing of his children, but also the ability to have a life apart from them: not only with regard to the other elements of the household, but outside of the household and within the state. This life outside of the household gives him a better picture of not only what is best for his children, but for his household as a whole. Further, he is better able to see the relationship between his household and the state, and make decisions concerning his family that correspond to the way in which the state endeavors to order its citizens.

A second consideration that might contribute to Aristotle's claim about the superiority of the husband to the wife may be found in Book VII of the *Politics*, when Aristotle states that "spiritedness is a thing expert at ruling and indomitable." Unfortunately, he does not expand upon what he means by spiritedness, but it would seem that he means some sort of dominance peculiar to male animals. After all, he says in the first book of the *Politics* that "The relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled. The same must of necessity hold in the case of human beings generally."

True, natural marriage comes about when both partners realize their true and proper sphere of activity and the purpose of their union, and act as nature intended them to act. This alone makes harmonious partnership possible.

The friendship between man and wife seems to be inherent in us by nature. For man is by nature more inclined to live in couples than to live as a social and political being, inasmuch as the household is earlier and more indispensable than the state, and to the extent that procreation is a bond more universal to all living things (than living in a state). In the case of other animals, the association goes no further than this. But human beings live together not merely for procreation, but also to secure the needs of life. There is division of labor from the very beginning and different functions for man and wife. Thus they satisfy one another's needs by contributing each his own to the common store."

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39 Ibid., VII.7, 1328a5.
40 Ibid., I.5, 1254b12.
It seems clear, then, that in every marriage there will be a division of labor, that each will contribute "his own to the common store," and that their actions will follow from the different characters of their respective sexes. But it would also seem that, since there is an inequality, their actions would also have to do with "rectifying" that inequality. In what way do the actions of the husband and wife serve to rectify the inequality between them, so that friendship may occur?

In those friendships, too, in which one partner is superior to the other, disagreements occur. Each partner thinks that he is entitled to more than the other, and when he gets it the friendship ends. If one partner is better than the other, he thinks he has more than the other coming to him, since the larger share ought to be assigned to the good. The same thing happens when one of the partners is more useful than the other; people say that a useless man should not have as large a share [as a useful person]. A friendship becomes a public service if what the man gets out of his friendship is not what he deserves on the basis of his contribution. The usual view is that a friendship should be like a business partnership: those who contribute more should also take more of the proceeds. The inferior partner who stands in need takes the reverse position. It is the mark of a good friend, he argues, to come to the aid of the needy. What is the use of being a friend of a man of high moral standards or power, they ask, if you are to get nothing out of it?

Now it seems that both partners are right in their claims: each is entitled to get a larger share from the friendship, but not a larger share of the same thing. The superior partner ought to be given a larger share of honor and the needy partner a larger share of profit. For the reward of excellence and beneficence is honor, whereas profit is the [form taken by] assistance to one in need.42

How does the wife profit by the relationship? First of all, there is the obvious fact that she profits materially. Since she does not have an income, she is supported entirely by the work of her husband. But let us not forget about the issue of the husband's having the authority his wife lacks. This authority allows the husband to take the initiative that creates the marriage in the first place. Thus, though both parties need each other to realize their own ends, only the husband can create the union that makes possible the realization of those ends.43

42 Ibid., VIII.14, 1163a23.
43 Remember that, on Aristotle's account, any authority that the wife holds in the management of the household is received through her husband.
And what does it mean for the wife to "honor" her husband? The wife is entrusted with management of the household matters that her husband delegates to her, as well as with the upbringing of the children. Aristotle says in Book III of the *Politics* that "...Household management differs for a man and a woman as well, for it is the work of the man to acquire and the woman to guard."\(^44\) The wife is entrusted not only with her husband's material possessions, but also with the protection of his reputation. One of the ways in which she does this is by always acting in the way her husband would with regards to the duties that are delegated to her. Not only is she never to act in such a way that might cause his integrity to be doubted, but she is to strive to act in such a way that she (and by extension, her husband) is praised for her virtue.

It is important to note that though Aristotle thinks the inequality between the husband and wife results in their possessing distinct virtues, this does not preclude their having a friendship based upon those virtues. Indeed, because they satisfy each other’s needs by contributing to the common store,

...This kind of friendship brings both usefulness and pleasantness with it, and if the partners are good, it may even be based on virtue or excellence. For each partner has his own peculiar existence and they find joy in that fact.\(^45\)

Within a properly ordered marriage, the husband and wife realize that their actions are complementary, and they love each other on account of the good each possesses. This is the source of the affection that is a part of what they exchange,\(^46\) and that affection strengthens the relationship between the two. And this is no small thing, for the husband-wife relationship is one of the two relationships from which the household arises, and its strength is the strength of the household as a whole.

**IV. Relationships Within the Household: Parents and Children**

Now that we have addressed the first ruler-ruled pair within the household, we move on to that which naturally flows from it: the parent-child relationship. Now, it was mentioned above that the relationship between parents and children is also a relationship

\(^44\) Aristotle, *Politics*. III.4, 1277b23. (Lord)
\(^45\) Aristotle, *Ethics*. VIII.12, 1162a24.
\(^46\) *Ibid.*, VIII.7, 1158b12.
between unequals, but that it differs in kind from the other relationships between unequals.47

As with the relationship between husband and wife, Aristotle chooses to first illuminate the relationship between fathers and children by analogy to a form of political rule (in this case, kingship):

...The friendship of a king for those who live under his rule depends on his superior ability to do good. He confers benefits upon his subjects, since he is good and cares for them in order to promote their welfare, just as a shepherd cares for his sheep. Hence, Homer spoke of Agamemnon as “shepherd of the people.” The friendship of a father [for his children] is of the same kind, but it differs in the magnitude of benefits bestowed. For he is the author of their being, which is regarded as the greatest good, and he is responsible for maintaining and educating them....Furthermore, it is by nature that a father rules over his children, ancestors over their descendants, and a king over his subjects. These kinds of friendship depend on superiority, and that is why we [do not only love but] also honor our parents. Accordingly, in those relationships the same thing is not just for both partners, but what is just depends on worth or merit, and the same is true for friendship.48

So once again we are presented with a conundrum: we know that the relationship between parent and child is a relationship between unequals, and thus they cannot give each other the same things. But in order for there to be a friendship at all, there must be some exchange of what each is able to give, and what each owes to the other, in order to make right the inequality between them, to the extent that this is possible. So now we must investigate what it is that is given and exchanged, if we are to know anything further about the relationship between the two.

We have already seen that the father, as the author of the child’s being, gives him a good that is regarded by some as the greatest good, and one which is certainly impossible to repay. Further, he is responsible for the education and maintenance of his children. So what is it that the child can possibly give his parents in return? About this Aristotle says the following:

Friendship demands the possible; it does not demand what the giver deserves. In some cases, in fact, it is impossible to make the kind of return which the giver deserves, for instance, in the honors we pay to the gods and to our parents. Here no

47 “...The friendship which parents have for their children is not the same as that which a ruler has for his subjects, and even the friendship of a father for his son is different from that of the son for his father....” (Ibid., VIII.7, 1158b14.)
48 Ibid., VIII.11, 1161a11.
one could ever make a worthy return, and we regard a man as
good if he serves them to the best of his ability.49

Thus, what is expected of the child is that he honor his parents as
much as is possible (because honor is what he is capable of giving),
ever forgetting that they have given him his very being, without
which none of the other things which he enjoys would even be
possible.50

The parents’ responsibility for their child’s education refers
not just to his formal education, but also to his moral education. The
moral education of the child could even be said to be the parents’
primary duty towards their children. For indeed, the formal education
of the child begins comparatively late in his development—say, at age
seven or so. But the parents’ role in the moral education of their child
could be said to begin almost as soon as the child is born. Children
begin to absorb information quite early, even before they are really
capable of communicating. The family environment—the character
of which is determined entirely by the parents—has a tremendous
influence on the child’s later outlook on life.

The parents are responsible for the discipline of their
children, and this lays the foundation for the child’s moral life. During
the child’s journey towards full rationality, he relies on his
parents to direct his passions where he lacks the rationality to do so. The
parents’ punishment of the child (corporal or otherwise) helps
the child to develop the proper attitudes towards pleasure and pain,
which are integral to the development of the habit of virtue. And the
example of the child’s virtuous parents provides him with models for
his own development. A child who grows up within a strong,
properly ordered marriage and household, in which all of the adult
members aim at the good, has a significant advantage when it comes
time for him to devote himself to the art of household management.

It seems that for the parent who is himself virtuous, and thus
correctly understands that the end of man, the desire to “create
something in his own image”51 extends further than merely
producing offspring. Rather, he desires for his child to reach maturity
and realize his own end as a rational animal. A parent is grief-stricken
when his child dies before reaching maturity not merely because he
has lost his child, but also because that child died before he was able
to have children of his own and enjoy the rational perfection that is
attainable only in adulthood.

At any rate, while the virtuous parent cannot attain moral
perfection for his child, he will understand the importance of laying

49 Ibid., VIII.14, 1163b15.
50 The gift of one’s being is so great that the debt which the child owes to his
parents is even owed to the parent who neglects the child in other respects—say,
formal education. The parent who neglects his responsibility to his child has still
given the child his being, and thus deserves the respect of the child.
the proper foundation for the child’s later moral development. In short, he does as much to ensure his child’s mature happiness as he possibly can.

V. Relationships Within the Household: Master and Slave

At the very beginning of the Politics, Aristotle says that household arises out of two relationships: the relationship between man and woman and the relationship between master and slave. We have already examined the relationship between man and woman, and the parent-child relationship which stems from the marriage of man and woman. Now we turn to the master-slave relationship.

Just as man and woman cannot exist without each other, but must unite so that the human race may continue, so must there be a union of master and slave, “that both may be preserved.”

For that which can foresee by the exercise of the mind is by nature intended to be lord and master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave; hence master and slave have the same interest.

Hence, the slave is a “living instrument,” by which the will of the master is effected. This is not to the master’s advantage in such a way that is detrimental to the slave. It is according to nature, and thus, it is to the advantage of both. For “Ruling and being ruled belong not only among things necessary but also among things advantageous.”

In this particular case, it is clear that the advantage of the ruler lies in receiving the services of his slave. If the household exists to secure the necessary advantages of life, it would seem that the nuclear family will require more than slight assistance in doing so, and the employment of slave labor makes this possible. The advantage to the slave is more difficult to see. Aristotle puts it thus:

Accordingly, those who are as different [from other men] as the soul from the body or man from beast—and they are in this state if their work is the use of the body, and if this is the best that can come from them—are slaves by nature. For them it is better to be ruled in accordance with this sort of rule, if such is the case for the other things mentioned. For he is a slave by nature who is capable of belonging to another—which is also why he belongs to another—and who participates in reason

52 Ibid., I.2, 1252ab9.
53 Ibid., I.2, 1252a31.
54 Ibid., I.2, 1252a32.
55 Aristotle, Politics. I.5, 1254a21. (Lord)
only to the extent of perceiving it, but does not have it. (The other animals, not perceiving reason, obey their passions.)  

Without his master, the slave would be left in the thrall of his passions. He would neither see the proper ends nor the means for reaching those ends.

Now it is obvious that it will be better for a man to be enslaved only if his relationship to his master is according to nature, and the master desires to direct the slave towards his proper end. Further, the fact that Aristotle’s conception of natural slavery is of mutual advantage to both master and slave does not mean that he believes all slavery to be just. If one were to enslave someone perfectly capable of determining the proper ends and the means for reaching them, one would do a grave injustice.

We should not neglect to note here that, as with the other ruler-ruled relationships within the household, Aristotle compares the master-slave to a form of political rule: “The association of master and slave, too, is tyrannical, since it is the master’s advantage which is accomplished in it.” Despite the fact that Aristotle elsewhere condemns tyranny as an unjust form of rule, he says immediately after this last quote that the tyranny of masters over slaves is a “correct” form of tyranny—undoubtedly because, as we can see from what has been cited above, he believes that the slave does in fact exist for the sake of the master, almost as a part of part of his own body. This is as opposed to political tyranny, in which a free man perfectly capable of deliberation and choice is forced to live for the sake of another—a grave injustice, and contrary to nature, as was discussed above.

This is, perhaps, one of Aristotle’s most controversial doctrines, but it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss whether or not natural slaves actually exist. Rather, it has been sufficient for our purposes to merely outline what Aristotle says about natural slaves, so that we can develop a comprehensive idea of what Aristotle believes the household to consist of, and so that we may see that he believes the household to be able to incorporate and order all the members of society.

VI. Other Selves and Commonness Within the Household

Now that we have discussed the basic aspects of all of the ruler-ruled relationships within the household, we will turn our attention to how the household relates to the state. One of the primary ways in which the household prepares those within it for their life in the state is through friendship within the family. The household is peculiarly able

56 Ibid., 1.5, 1254b16.
57 Aristotle, Ethics. VIII.10, 1160b29.
to develop its members’ idea of friendship: not merely because it provides one’s first experience of companionship, but because the experience of “another self” within the household is had in a unique way and the experience of a common life is thorough-going. And it would seem that these two things are fundamental to friendship, and that a good understanding of them (which a well-ordered household can provide) will be essential to a full conception of the meaning of friendship outside the household.

Though the idea of the “other self” and the having of things in common are present to a greater or lesser extent in all of the relationships within the household, this paper will closely examine their role in only two relationships: the parent-child and fraternal friendships. Not only are the idea of the “other self” and commonness perhaps more apparent in these two relationships than in the others, but it would seem that it is in these two relationships that these elements play the most significant role in developing those involved. Because the parent sees his child as another self, he has a bond with the child that strengthens his ability to contribute to the child’s formation. Likewise, the child is more easily formed by his parent because he will eventually in turn see his parent as another self. Finally, the high degree of commonness within the household (especially between brothers) contributes to the proper development of the child’s understanding of what is essential to friendship—an understanding that will influence the formation of his mature friendships within the state.

First, we will address Aristotle’s idea that in the ideal friendship, each party will look upon the other as an “other self.” He says in the Ethics that: “The perfect form of friendship is that between good men who are alike in excellence or virtue.” So he establishes the idea of likeness, which is important because, as he reminds us:

[Friendship between virtuous equals], then, is perfect and complete friendship, both in terms of time and in all other respects, and each partner receives in all matters what he gives the other, in the same or in a similar form; that is what friends should be able to count on.

The idea of the other self is explicitly established in Book IX of the Ethics:

We count as a friend a person who wishes for and does what is good or what appears to him to be good for his friend’s

58 Of course, the strength of the relationship between the husband and the wife—which is also based on the idea of the “other self” and on commonness—is presupposed to the strength of the parent-child and fraternal relationships.
59 Aristotle, Ethics, VIII.3, 1156b7.
60 Ibid., VIII.4, 1156b33.
sake; or a person who wishes for the existence and life of his friend for his friend’s sake…. We regard as friend also a person who spends his time in our company and whose desires are the same as ours, or a person who shares sorrow and joy with his friend…. 

...A good man has every one of these sentiments towards himself...he has the same attitude toward his friend as he does toward himself, for his friend really is another self....

In Aristotle’s account of the matter, the other self in the friendship of the good man is not a clone, but an extension of one’s self. As such, the good of the other self is in some sense the good of the individual himself. And while the other selves found within the family are of necessity somewhat different from those found in the perfect friendship of virtuous equals, the other selves within the family make particularly manifest this idea of the extension of self, since the idea could be said to be less analogous within the family than elsewhere.

It would seem that since the child is from his parents, that the parent would see the child as another self. It would also seem that, given the child’s imperfect understanding of the world around him, it would take longer for the child to see the parent as another self, and even then, that it would be to a lesser degree. Aristotle discusses the parent-child relationship while discussing how all of the friendships between kinsmen seem to depend on parental friendship.

For parents love their children as something which belongs to them, while children love their parents because they owe their being to them. But parents know better that the offspring is theirs than children know that they are their parents’ offspring, and the bond which ties the begetter to the begotten is closer than that which ties the generated to its author. For that which has sprung from a thing belongs to its source, for example, a tooth, a hair, and so forth belongs to its source, but the source does not belong at all—or only to a lesser degree—to that which has sprung from it.

The parents’ role in the creation of the child, their awareness of themselves and their action as cause of the child’s being, and of his being as the particular individual that he is, with a specific material form, contributes to their seeing the child as an “other self.” He has his father’s eyes, his mother’s nose, sets his jaw like his father when angry, and has his mother’s love of animals. It is the parents who provide the matter which individuates the child and makes him the particular human being that he is. As such, he resembles them in

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61 Ibid., IX.4, 1166a3.
62 “For, as we have stated, all friendly feelings toward others are an extension of the friendly feelings a person has for himself.” (Ibid., IX.8, 1168b5.)
63 Ibid., VIII.12, 1161b18.
innumerable ways, but particularly in his appearance and temperament. Further, since they are the first people he knows, and it is within their home that he grows toward adulthood, he will resemble them in his speech (i.e., vocabulary and idiom) and mannerisms and opinions—the things that are learned.

The child springs from the union of his parents, but as soon as he is born he begins to make continuous progress towards the point at which he will be completely independent of them. It is always clear to the parent that the child is of their union, and belongs to them even in his very form, but the parents do not belong to the child in the same way.

Moreover, [there is also a difference between the love of parents and the love of children] in point of time: parents love their children as soon as they are born, but children love their parents only as, with the passage of time, they acquire understanding or perception. This also explains why affection felt by mothers is greater [than that of fathers].

As we discussed earlier, the child comes into existence within his mother’s body, during which time the child is continuous with her, and then, after she is delivered of the child, she nourishes him with her own body. There is never any question that the child is of herself. The father, not having the same physical connection with the child, will probably only begin to feel a strong attachment for the child as his own when the child is born, when he can begin to see that the child is like him and when he begins to form him after himself by teaching him what he knows.

The child, on the other hand, needs to acquire an understanding of his parents as a cause of himself, needs time to realize his particular connection to them, and to discover the various ways in which he resembles his parents. As this knowledge unfolds, he will begin to ask his parents questions about what they were like at the corresponding stages of their development, and see that they can give him better advice because of their similar experiences—not just as human beings, but as human beings with similar personalities. That is to say, he begins to recognize the fact that his parents have selves like his own.

Brothers, too, see each other as “other selves.”

...While brothers love one another because they were born of the same parents: the identical relation they have with their parents makes them identical with one another. This is the origin of expressions like “of the same blood,” “of the same stock,” and so forth. Brothers are, therefore, in a sense identical, though the identity resides in separate persons. Of great

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64 Ibid., VIII.12, 1161b30.
The sharing of parents means more than a common experience, more than merely being raised in the same household: everything that is meant by the child having a formal resemblance to the parent is also implied here. Brothers are similar in appearance and in tendencies—they share in a lineage and upbringing that shapes their identity and their experience of the world.

This emphasis on the role of the “other self” is not to imply, however, that the “having of things in common” (both materially and in terms of having a common experience) is of lesser importance to the relationships within the family. Aristotle addresses this specifically in the *Ethics*:

*Friendship is present to the extent that men share something in common, for that is also the extent to which they share a view of what is just. And the proverb “friends hold in common what they have” is correct, for friendship consists in community. Brothers and bosom companions hold everything in common, while all others only hold certain definite things in common—some more and others less, since some friends are more intense than others.*

The having of things in common takes place to the greatest extent within the family. Not only do the members of the family share in the “necessaries of life,” as well as a in common experience and a common end, but they have these things in common with people who are “other selves.” Further, because every family springs from the union of unique individuals, the character of every family is different, even amongst families that alike understand the proper aim of the family and are properly ordered. These differences between families create a unique environment and experience for those within the family.

Aristotle believes that, in fact, the relationships within the family are more pleasant and more useful because of the high degree of commonness.

*But [the friendship between children and parents] has also a higher degree of what is pleasant and useful than does friendship with persons outside the family, inasmuch as the partners have more of their life in common. Friendship between brothers has elements which are also found in friendship between bosom companions. It has them in a higher degree when the brothers are good men and, in general, when they are like on*

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65 Ibid., VIII.12, 1162a8.
66 Ibid., VIII.9, 1159b29.
another, inasmuch as they are more closely linked together and have been loving one another since birth, and inasmuch as children of the same parents, who have been brought up together and have received a similar education, are more alike in character. Also, there is the test of time to which brothers are subjected more thoroughly and reliably than anyone else.\textsuperscript{67}

It is only difference in age which causes inequality between brothers within the same family, and this inequality is only temporary—it will cease to exist when they reach maturity. Thus, the high degree of commonness between brothers likens their friendship to the friendship between equal bosom companions. Further, commonness develops a trust and familiarity between brothers which contributes to the strength of their unique bond. The “test of time” that Aristotle refers to at the end of the last quote brings to mind something he says earlier in the \textit{Ethics}, about the ideal friendship between virtuous men:

\begin{quote}
Such friendships \textquote*[r][5pt]{[between men alike in excellence or virtue]} are of course rare, since such men are few. Moreover, time and familiarity are required. For, as the proverb has it, people cannot know each other until they have eaten the specified salt together. One cannot extend friendship to or be a friend of another person until each partner has impressed the other that he is worthy of affection, and until each has won the other’s confidence.\textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

The closeness between family members, which has to do with both the idea of the “other self” and commonness, is especially important to the formation of the children. Firstly, it makes possible the bond between parents and children that both moves the parent to care for his child’s formation, and which disposes the child towards being formed by his parents. Secondly, it provides the child’s first experience of love and companionship, and as such is the standard by which all of his subsequent friendships outside of the family will be measured. It is important that the children have this standard because, as we have seen, it is the best and most ideal friendships, the friendships between virtuous equals, which (outside the household) place the greatest emphasis on “other-self-ness” and commonness, and which most resemble brotherhood. The more an individual desires these things in a friendship, and the more inclined he is to require them, and the more likely he is to form pure, lasting friendships in which both parties aim at the good, both for each other and universally. Just as the moral virtues properly order and dispose the soul to aim at the good (and so cultivate and perfect the

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., VIII.12, 1162a8.  
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., VIII.4, 1156b26.
intellectual virtues), so do healthy friendships within the family dispose one to seek the right things in extra-familial relationships.

It is these friendships between virtuous equals which are necessary both to the development of the moral virtues (for a man is said to be just in relation to his fellow men) and to the development of the intellectual virtues (by making discourse possible)—and which are, as a result, ultimately necessary to man’s complete happiness. Of course, these friendships are both impossible without the state and are integral to its aim, to its end of securing the happiness of its citizens. Now that we have seen what a key role properly ordered friendships within the family play in the health of mature, adult friendships within the state, we have a better idea of the importance of the health of the family to the effectiveness of the state in achieving its end.

VII. The Development of Moral Virtue Within the Household

We now turn to a consideration of the ways in which the household can be said to form its members with regard to moral virtue. We have already touched on the fact that the parents’ approach towards the raising of the children must be one which results in the children having the proper attitude towards pleasure and pain. (Remember that the moral virtues, for Aristotle, are of necessity concerned with pleasure and pain.) The parents’ discipline of the children, whether corporal or otherwise, should be such that the child is brought to take pleasure in his right actions, and find his wrong actions causative of pain. Since these attitudes towards pleasure and pain would seem to be more malleable during childhood than they are later in life, the parent must take especial care with the child's moral education.

But it is not only the children who have their moral formation within the household. Recall that Aristotle divides household mastery into three parts: expertise in mastery [over slaves], expertise in marital [rule], and expertise in parental rule. Having addressed each of these three kinds of rule in the Politics, he observes that:

69 Though it is true to say that the household can give the child a foundation for intellectual virtue—say, through the development of the child’s sense of wonder—the child’s formal education is, on Aristotle’s account, properly the province of the state. Further, intellectual perfection will be attained through the friendships one forms within the state.

It is important to remember that since moral virtue is presupposed to intellectual virtue, and since the household is ordered towards the perfection of all of its members, the household’s development of the moral virtue of its members is done with an eye towards the formation of intellectual virtue.

70 See (among others) Aristotle’s Ethics, 1104b2-1105a17, 1153b12, and 1153b25.
...It is clear that household management attends more to men than to the acquisition of inanimate things, and to human excellence more than the excellence of property which we call wealth....

Concluding that the excellence of all of the household’s members is of primary importance to its head, Aristotle asks whether slaves, women and children can be said to be virtuous. Ultimately, he concludes that they can in fact be said to be virtuous, but that each group has a peculiar virtue suited to its peculiar character. So, then, the head of the household is responsible for a moral formation of those whom he rules over. (We have already seen, of course, that in each of the relationships within the household it is the head of the household—the husband, father and master—who is the ruler, though the ruled and the character of the rule are different in each relationship.)

In ensuring that there is a proper relationship between ruler and ruled in each of these relationships, the ruler orders things correctly, according to the order of nature. It is a reflection of the social nature of human existence (to say nothing of Aristotle’s idea of virtue) that the members of the household do not achieve excellence independently of each other. Rather, the idea of each one’s excellence is inextricably linked to his relationship with the other members of the household.

But why is this excellence important to the health of the state? Why should it concern us in our inquiry into the relationship of the household to the city-state? Aristotle concludes the section of the Politics in which he discusses the particular virtues of women, children and slaves with this statement:

> For, inasmuch as every family is part of the state, and these relationships are parts of a family, and the virtue of the part must have regard to the virtue of the whole, women and children must be trained by education with an eye to the constitution, if the virtues of either of them are supposed to make any difference in the virtue of the state. And they must make a difference: for the children grow up to be citizens, and half the free persons in the state are women.

Simply put, then, the virtuousness of the state (which exists for the sake of its citizens living well) is dependent on the virtuousness of its individual members. And this is not merely the concern of the ruler and lawgiver, but also of those who are charged with household management, because it is clear that the ordering nature of rule has the ability to make the ruled excellent. (We

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71 Aristotle, Politics. I.11, 1259b17. (Jowett)
72 Ibid., I.13, 1260b12.
remember that moral virtue is itself a correct ordering of the parts of the soul.) Further, ruling well is itself an excellence. So the work of perfect virtue, though not necessarily completed within the home, can at least be said to be begun there.

The degree to which the perfection of an individual is effected within the household differs, depending on the individual’s role within the household. For the head of the household, who is a mature male, the fulfillment of his duties within the household forms only a part of his perfection. His excellence as husband, father and master is certainly necessary to his possessing the full complement of the moral virtues—to his being a just man. But he has obligations outside of the household, and friendships outside of the household, and so one could not say that all that is required of him lies within the confines of his estate. If he is truly to be just, he must also be excellent with regard to his relationships outside of the household.

The wife and mother can be said to be perfected within the household, as can the slave. This is because on Aristotle's view, neither of these can properly said to have duties outside of the household. The mother is concerned with her husband, her children and her husband’s property (which includes management of the slaves, through the authority delegated to her by her husband). Though the fact that she is rational (and therefore free) allows her to knowingly act for the good of the state (as in, say, the raising of her children), her work with regard to the state remains within the context of the household. And the slaves, as we have said, exist solely to carry out the will of their master with regards to the management of his household and property. As his instruments, they cannot have any legitimate concern with anything that is not their master’s.

Finally, the children can in no way become perfect within the household, since, as children, they are imperfect, and thus so must their virtue be imperfect. The male children will ultimately be perfected in adulthood, both through becoming heads of their own households and having a life within the state, outside of their own households. The female children will reach maturity and become wives and mothers, and thus be perfected inside of a household distinct from the one they were born into. Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done with the children, as we have addressed above. Besides their moral formation, their parents are to be concerned with cultivating their sense of wonder (so that they might have a foundation for the intellectual virtues), as well as with communicating to them a sense of the importance of civic virtue, with an eye towards their future as citizens of the state. In all of these things, the example of the parents is of equal importance to direct instruction and discipline.
VIII. Development of Civic Virtue Within the Family

The household can also be seen to contribute to the development of its members’ perfection in civic virtue—a particular sort of virtue with regard to one’s participation in the political life. One way in which the household can be seen to develop this particular virtue is with regard to the parents. If the end of the particular state that they live within is truly the good for man, they will of course desire to contribute to the perpetuation of that state, so that it may continue to accomplish its end. As such, they will bring forth offspring with an eye towards those children participating in the life of the state, and they will educate their children such that the children have a correct understanding of the regime and its aim.

The children are prepared for the life within the state not only by their parents’ instruction, but also by participating (both directly and through observation) in the types of political rule modeled in the relationships within the household. These help them not only to better understand the particular regime under which they live, but also political rule generally.

Finally, all of the freemen within the household (even those who are only properly freemen in potency, as are the children) are brought to a better understanding of the common life and end of the state by their experience of the common endeavor of the household. The household, as that which is better known to all of its members, provides a foundation for understanding the life of the freeman within the state, and as such, plays an ineffable role in the strength of the state as a whole.

IX. Necessity of the Household

Now that we have made a beginning in the investigation into Aristotle’s conception of the household and the ways in which it prepares and perfects its members for their life within the state, it is important to consider the fact that the family is a natural institution and, as such, a necessary one. Not only is the work of the family, when properly realized, complementary to the work of the state, but the role that the household plays in the perfection of its members is a role that only the household can play. To destroy the household is to destroy the state.

The first way in which this can be seen to be the case has to do with our earlier discussion of the peculiar nature of both the other-self relationship and commonness within the family. Man has a natural desire to perpetuate his species, a desire which corresponds to the animal aspect of his nature. Parents know their child as a thing which has sprung from them, and they see that child as another self, forming a bond between the parent and the child that could never
exist between that child and the state. The fact that the child is “another self” to his parents gives his parents a unique interest in his moral and personal formation—they desire that he realize his end. Further, the parent has a knowledge of his child that enables him to better form that child.\footnote{73}

Further, the commonness that occurs within the family contributes to the particular bond that family members have, a bond which, as we have seen, is integral to the moral formation of the members of the household. This particular bond cannot be reproduced outside the household, for the state can give children material things in common, and even a common upbringing and a common end, but it cannot give them the sort of commonness that arises from the knowledge of having sprung from one’s parents as from a common source, and from having had alike a personal, formative relationship with those same parents, and with others from the same source.

The second way in which the household plays a particular and irreplaceable role in the state has to do with the ordering nature of the ruler-ruled relationships within the household.\footnote{74} Here, it will be helpful to look at Aristotle’s general treatment of rule, at the beginning of Chapter 5 of the *Politics*.

\begin{quote}
Ruling and being ruled belong not only among things necessary but also among things advantageous. And immediately from birth certain things diverge, some toward being ruled, others towards ruling. There are many kinds both of ruling and ruled, and the better rule is always that over ruled that are better, for example over a human being rather than a beast; for the work performed by the better is better, and wherever something rules and something is ruled there is a certain work belonging to these together.\footnote{75}
\end{quote}

For Aristotle, then, the members of the household will properly be either ruling or ruled beings, by nature and from birth. Not only will they have this character, but if they neglect it, there will be disorder and unhappiness. For if ruling and being ruled are not only necessary, but advantageous, and there is a certain work that belongs to ruler and ruled together, then both will be at a disadvantage if that work is not taken up.

Of course, the members of the household may be rulers in some respects and ruled in others, as the head of the household may

\footnote{73}{The fact that nature imposes limits on the number of children a woman can give birth to contributes to the personal nature of the upbringing one receives within a family.}
\footnote{74}{Remember that that Aristotle says that expertise in household mastery has to do with the three kinds of rule: mastery, marital rule and parental rule. (Aristotle, *Politics*, I,5, 1253b8, Lord.)}
\footnote{75}{Ibid., I,5, 1254a21.}
rule all within, but may himself be subject to a monarch, when considered as citizen. Further, they may be suited to be ruled for a time—as children are—but at some point (say, as children do, upon reaching maturity) become themselves capable of rule. What is important to see here is that a given individual must be properly ordered in every area of his life in which there can be said to be a ruler-ruled relationship.

In order to better understand this, it will be helpful to see examples of the various ruler-ruled relationships which a given individual might be expected to order himself in relation to. Just after the general discussion of rule quoted above, Aristotle goes on to give specific examples of various ruler-ruled relationships.

For whatever is constituted out of a number of things—whether continuous or discrete—and becomes a single common thing always displays a ruling and a ruled element; this is something that animate things derive from all of nature.... But an animal is the first thing constituted of soul and body, of which the one thing is the ruling element by nature, the other the ruled....

It is then in an animal, as we were saying, that one can first discern both the sort of rule characteristic of a master and political rule. For the soul rules the body with the rule characteristic of a master, while intellect rules appetite with political and kingly rule; and this makes it evident that it is according to nature and advantageous for the body to be ruled by the soul, and the passionate part by intellect and the part having reason, while it is harmful to both if the relation is equal or reversed.... Further, the relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled. The same must of necessity hold in the case of human beings generally.

Here, Aristotle begins with what is most fundamental: the fact that the body is properly ruled by the soul. And the soul itself is divided into the rational and irrational parts, and according to nature, the rational is to rule the irrational. Finally, he gives an example of human beings ruling each other, saying that nature also dictates that the male rule the female.

So we can see that an individual man will have many ruler-ruled relationships that he must account for, both within himself and between himself and others. Since all of these exist according to nature, it is clear that the proper ordering of each of them is to his advantage. Further, if any one of them were to be neglected or perverted, the ordering of his entire being (necessary for moral and intellectual virtue, and thus, for the attainment of his highest end)

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76 Ibid., I.5, 1254a28.
would be adversely affected. Thus, the household is necessary to the complete ordering and perfection of the individual.

Finally, Aristotle can be seen to argue for the necessity of the family in Book II of the *Politics*, but from a different perspective: not from the nature of the family, but from the nature of the state. He does so in addressing the errors of Socrates’ view of the state:

> Further, with respect to the end which he asserts the city should have, it is, as has just been said, impossible; but how one should distinguish [a sense in which it is possible] is not discussed. I mean, that it is best for the city to be as far as possible entirely one; for this is the presupposition Socrates adopts. And yet it is evident that as it becomes increasingly one it will no longer be a city. For the city is in its nature a sort of multitude, and as it becomes more a unity it will be a household instead of a city, and a human being instead of a household; for we would surely say that the household is more of a unity than the city, and the individual than the household. So even if one were able to do this, one ought not to do it, as it would destroy the city. Now the city is made up not only of a number of human beings, but also of human beings differing in kind: a city does not arise from persons who are similar.  

Now, we have already established the benefits of the citizens of the state being alike in ideal virtue, and how this makes possible the sort of friendship necessary to their ultimate perfection. So it is clear that when Aristotle says that the city is not constituted of people who are similar, he wants to emphasize the fact that they must have complementary skills and intellectual abilities to offer each other. Indeed, he says soon afterward that:

> It is evident in another way as well that to seek to unify the city excessively is not good. For a household is more self-sufficient than one person, and a city than a household; and a city tends to come into being at a point when the partnership formed by a multitude is self-sufficient. If therefore, the more self-sufficient is more choiceworthy, what is less a unity is more choiceworthy than what is more a unity.

It is, then, the diversity of the contributions of its citizens that makes a polity self-sufficient. These diverse contributions are made possible primarily by the fact that the state consists of different classes of people, but also by the fact that the state is composed of a multitude of households, each of which will have a unique character (derived partly from the fact that it stems from the partnerships of

77 Ibid., II.2, 1261a13.
78 Ibid., II.2, 1261b10.
79 See Aristotle’s *Politics*, 1277a4 and 1289b27.
unique individuals) even within a given class, and which will produce
citizens with complementary perspectives and abilities. To eliminate
the household is to destroy an aspect of the plurality of the state, and
so also to destroy its self-sufficiency.

X. Conclusion

It is true to say that the end of the household is properly “the supply
of men’s everyday wants,” because this is what the family is able to
bring about completely. But we have also seen that, in various ways, the
household makes a beginning in the state’s project of perfecting its
citizens, and that it is the only institution which can play this most
necessary role. The fact that the household cannot complete the
process of perfection which it begins returns us to our earlier inquiry
into the nature of the state’s priority to the household. Only the state,
because it is self-sufficient and lacking in nothing, can secure man’s
perfection. Thus, though we are not able to make a comprehensive
inquiry into the state’s priority, we may ascribe priority to the state at
least on the basis of its self-sufficiency, for “…To be self-sufficing is
the end and best.”\textsuperscript{80} And this understanding of the priority of the
state to the household would seem to inform our primary discussion
of the ordering of the household to the state. For if the members of
the household are to find the perfection and happiness that they seek,
they must realize that only the state can perfect them.

\textsuperscript{80} Aristotle, \textit{Politics}. I.2, 1252b34. (Jowett)