

Article

Other Selves

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In order to explain the need for law and justice—concepts that regulate how an individual relates to other individuals and how a state relates to other states—philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau have invented various social contract theories in the 17th and 18th centuries. Remarkably, Aristotle had the same project in mind even in the infant stages of Western philosophy. In 1155a21-25 of Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he wrote:

“Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than justice; for unanimity seems something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality.¹

In this passage, one can see how Aristotle regarded highly the concept of friendship. For him, friendship—being one of the virtues just like truth, justice, courage, etc.—is something that affects not just human behavior but even the state’s as well. However, the English language has set a limit to its use and thus diminished its meaning. While the Greek for *friendship*, which is *φιλία* can be translated as *love*, when using the English language one cannot say that as A and B are *friends*, it must be that A and B are *lovers*. But for the Greeks, A and B are friends, if and only if, A and B are lovers. In fact, *φιλία* is where half of the word *philosophy* comes from. Why is it that even when tracing the etymology of philosophy, one uses “love of wisdom” instead of “friend of wisdom?” This is not the case for Aristotle. Aside from just regarding highly *friendship* by considering it as affecting the individual and the collective’s behavior toward others, Aristotle goes further by claiming that friendship is a necessary ingredient, not just to have an orderly life and state, but in order to have a *eudaimon* life, i.e., a happy life. Thus, for Aristotle, without friendship, a person cannot be happy.

¹ Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Vol. II*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). For my future citations of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I will use the abbreviation *NE*, followed by the Bekker number.

In this paper, I will be comparing two arguments forwarded by Aristotle in Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that dealt with *friendship*. I believe that, by analyzing side by side the two arguments, we shall have a general understanding how Aristotle's idea of *φιλία*² works with *εὐδαιμονία*. By taking into consideration Aristotle's premises in both arguments, which contain the notion of a friend as *other self*, this paper hopes to answer the question whether friendship is egoistical or altruistic.

The conclusions of the two arguments are as follows:

(I) Δεῖ ἄρα τῷ εὐδαίμονι φίλων.³

A happy person needs friends.

(II) Δεήσει ἄρα τῷ εὐδαιμονήσοντι φίλων σπουδαίων.⁴

A person who is to be happy needs good friends.

While the first conclusion points out that the person who is in need of friends has achieved already a life that is happy, which I believe is better captured by the word *successful* or *prosperous* and therefore abundant in internal and external goods, the second conclusion points to a person who is still about to be successful, which is contained in the Greek word *εὐδαιμονήσοντι* (*εὐδαιμονέω*) which means "to be happy, or to be prosperous."⁵ However, it seems that while the person who is already successful needs an inclusive kind of friendship, a person who is about to be one is rather more selective by limiting her need to virtuous friends, which captures the original *σπουδαίων*, which literally means "good or excellent."⁶ Such is the reason why as the first argument shows how a person who is already prosperous still needs friendship from people who are in adverse situations, thus focusing on the mutual utility that exists between them; the second argument focuses on the essential role that virtuous friends play in order for someone's life to be successful. Although I believe that there is a much deeper reason why Aristotle placed the two arguments one after another, my objective in presenting side by side the arguments is to show only how in both cases Aristotle used the concept of a *happy life* with that of a friend as *other self*.

² All Greek texts are from Ingram Bywater, ed., *Aristotelis' Ethica Nicomachea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), unless noted otherwise.

³ *NE*, 1169b22.

⁴ *Ibid.* 1170b18-19.

⁵ George Liddel and Robert Scott, *Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1889).

⁶ *Ibid.*

Aristotle's Dilemma

The First Argument

Aristotle argued in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1169b1 - 22 that a *happy person needs friends* because:

1. If it is external goods that make a person self-sufficient, then we should consider friends as necessary because they are supposed to be the greatest of all external goods.⁷
2. A friend is another self who furnishes what one cannot get for himself.⁸
3. It is better to do good to friends than strangers. This is why people who lack in means need prosperous friends in times of adversity, and prosperous people need friends who lack in means in times of prosperity.⁹
4. A person is a political creature and it is his nature to live with others for he has the things that are by nature good.¹⁰
5. It is better to spend his remaining days with friends than with strangers.¹¹

For Aristotle, every person's aim should be to attain happiness. By happiness, Aristotle does not mean an emotion of cheerfulness or good feeling. For him, happiness can either be a life characterized by full of pleasant activities or a life which have reached its full potential. This is the reason why I believe that to have a happy life is to have a prosperous life. A person who is prosperous necessarily carries with it a certain notion of abundance and independence. As such, for Aristotle, a happy person is necessarily a self-sufficient person. However, there is a problem with this notion of self-sufficiency. Aristotle even pointed out a seeming paradox in the first argument that if self-sufficiency means not lacking in all internal or external goods, then how can a life that is deemed complete be in need of friendship?

Aristotle argues that by having attained the self-sufficient state, a person who has *all the goods of life* will do things that are pleasant and good

⁷ *NE*, 1169b1-10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1169b6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1169b10-16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1169b17-18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1169b10-16.

because they are beneficial, either to herself or to her friends. As such, things done for the benefit of friends are always pleasant. In this section, Aristotle is emphasizing the usefulness of having a self-sufficient person as a friend because she possesses the goods that can help out friends in their time of difficulty. Aristotle pointed out that a person who is prosperous or abundant in external goods is in a better position to help people who are in need. Necessarily virtuous, this person is always desirous of helping out friends in times of their adversity. By friends here, I believe he refers to friends in a much broader sense, inclusive of people who are not equal in stature, like a son, a wife, a neighbor, or probably a junior colleague but also friends who have achieved similarly a life of self-sufficiency. Aristotle believes that a self-sufficient person is very much in demand in times of distress because it the time that she is mostly beneficial.

The Second Argument

In passages 1170a15—b18, Aristotle shifts from portraying friendship as a relationship between someone who is useful to a relationship between someone who desires and someone who is to be desired. By pointing out that life is an activity comprised of perceiving and thinking, a person is able to perceive and think of what is pleasant and good. In fact, life or existence itself is pleasant and good because of these powers to think and perceive. This is why Aristotle argues that any virtuous person will recognize that *existence* or *living* is the most valuable thing for a person to have. However this is not true for people who are so corrupted or *wicked* that they have a low regard for human life; similarly to people who are in pain and would want life to be over. As such a virtuous person is desirable as a friend because she would value her life and the life of her friend, *being an extension of one*. For Aristotle, because *living* is naturally desirable, a friend who values life is also naturally desirable. This is the reason why if someone who is on her way to success will not be able to acquire what is naturally desirable, then it would be a life that is incomplete. Ergo, it is a life that will never be happy. This is the reason for Aristotle concluding that *someone who is to be happy needs virtuous friends*.

I have enumerated the premises of the second argument as follows:

1. Life which is essentially perceiving and thinking is good and pleasant in itself.¹²
2. A virtuous person desires to live a life that is pleasant and good for him unlike for someone who is corrupt and in pain.¹³

¹² *Ibid.*, 1170a15-20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1170a20-30.

3. If life is good for oneself, then surely the life of a friend is pleasant for that one also because a friend is another self.¹⁴
4. Because life is constant perceiving, a person necessarily perceives one's existence and the existence of friends by living together and sharing in discussion and thought.¹⁵
5. If life for a good man is naturally desirable and perceiving that a friend's life is similarly good, then a friend also is naturally desirable.¹⁶
6. What a person desires he must have or he will be lacking in whatever he does not have.¹⁷

These two arguments that I have mentioned include remarkably the concept of a friend as *another self*. I believe that this concept captures the very nature of why we like or have *φιλία* in the first place. However, the problem with this concept of *other self* is that it makes Aristotle's idea of friendship egoistical or selfish in motivation. So before I move on and analyze the two arguments which contain the concept of *other self*, I will discuss a rather different emphasis in defining friendship; one that is based on the idea of *well-wishing for the sake of the other*.

In his article *Aristotle and the Forms of Friendship*, after giving the three forms of friendship, which are pleasure friendship, advantage friendship, and character friendship, John Cooper argued that *well-wishing for a friend's sake* is found in all three forms. He argued that instead of *well-wishing* to be something to be hoped for a friend in the future, *well-wishing* is done in retrospect of a character of a friend or the properties of friendship. He used *διὰ τὸ χρησιμὸν*, which is found in 1156a4: "To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other..." He pointed out that Aristotle used *διὰ* in order to show an antecedent causal condition. He wrote:

Understanding the *because* in this causal way makes it at least as much retrospective as prospective; the well-wishing and well-doing are responses to what the person is and has done rather than merely the expression of a hope as to what he will be and may do in the future.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1170b1-8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1170b9-13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1170b14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1170b15-19.

¹⁸ John Cooper, "Aristotle and the Forms of Friendship," in *The Review of Metaphysics*, 30:4 (June, 1977), 633.

Cooper believed that *well-wishing for the sake of the other* can be found in all three forms of friendship. As such, friendship based on mutual use, and advantage, just like friendship based on character or the virtues are all based on *well-wishing*. However, he qualified that *well-wishing* in the much temporal kind of friendship, which is based on pleasure and advantage, is different from an essential kind, which is based on character. He pointed out that because friendship that is based on what is pleasant and advantageous only exists because of the pleasure and advantage mutually gained from it, a friend will not *wish well* a friend to the point that pleasure and advantage gets lost in the process. For him, friendship based on instrumentality can only *wish-well* for what is best for the other to the point of still retaining common pleasure and advantage. To this effect, he stated:

In short, in wishing someone well, for his own sake, because he is pleasant and advantageous, one's first commitment is to his retention of the property of pleasantness and advantageousness, and any good one wishes him to have, for his own sake, must be compatible with the retention of that special property under which, as his friend, one wishes him well in the first place.¹⁹

However, there is another friendship that is based on something lasting and not limited to the retention of what is pleasant and advantageous. Cooper pointed out that there is a well-wishing that is based on the character of a person. For him, a person's character is essentially who that person is. Thus, when one wishes for what is good for a character friend, it is a wish for what is the best for that friend. Cooper argued that this is the only kind of *well-wishing* that is truly disinterested. Unlike the two kinds that limits one's *wishing-well* to the retention of pleasure and advantage, the kind that is based on character becomes limited only to what is best for that person. However, as we will see later, this is similar to the concept of *other self*. The friend as *other self* also ceases when pleasure and advantage also cease, and in the case of friendship based on character, the idea of a friend as *other self* will only cease when the life of the person ceases.

John Cooper believed that for Aristotle, based on the relationship between the three kinds of friendship and one's wishing-well for the sake of the other, friendship is not motivated only by self-interest. He quoted 1156a3-5, which states in the original: *δει ἄρα εὐνοεῖν ἀλλήλοις καὶ βούλεσθαι τὰγαθὰ μὴ λανθάνοντας δι' ἐν τι τῶν εἰρημένων.* For him, all kinds of friendship have "εὐνοια for one another."²⁰ And this is where the entire thesis of John Cooper is hinged upon.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 636-637.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 644.

My problem with this interpretation is that it focused too much on the concept of the supposed distinguishing characteristic of friendship that is *wishing-well for the sake of the other*. I do agree that this definition is consistent with how Aristotle described friendship. Aristotle consistently argues that a good or virtuous friend will always wish for what is best for the other. This is the reason why for Aristotle a friend who is virtuous is the only one capable of being a true friend, which as John Cooper pointed out as *character friendship*. Although, friendships based on pleasure and advantage also wish well, to some degree it has its limitations. This, on the other hand, is the difference between incidental friendships and *character friendships*. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle wrote: “We may describe friendly feeling towards anyone as wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about.”²¹ If someone who is to be happy desires virtuous friends because these virtuous friends are capable of wishing what is good for a friend even without retaining pleasure and advantage, doesn’t the person who is to be happy treating them as also as means to achieve an end, because by acquiring them one can achieve happiness? This is the other side of the coin that John Cooper did not discuss in his paper, thus presenting a rather not self-motivated view of friendship. I believe that the concept of *well-wishing for the sake of the other* should be tempered by the concept of *a friend as another self*. In a way, both approaches will arrive at the same thing, and yet the illusion that there is no selfish-motivation in friendship is avoided. What my theory holds is that friendship is foremost based on love of self, but by introducing the concept of *other self* and the act of *wishing well*, Aristotle becomes egoistical and yet altruistic at the same time. This is the reason why a true friend will always think of what is best for the sake of the other, i.e., to make a friend’s existence pleasant and good. Not only because it is beneficial to do so but because to harm a friend is the same as harming oneself.

Aristotle’s Solution

A happy person needs friends

It is also disputed whether the happy person will need friends or not. It is said that those who are supremely happy and self-sufficient have no need of friends; for they have the things that are good, and therefore being self-sufficient they need nothing further, while a friend, being another self, furnished what a person cannot provide by her own effort; whence the saying, ‘When fortune is kind, what need of friends?’ But it seems strange, when one assign all good things to a happy person, not to assign

²¹ NE, 1380b36.

friends, who are thought the greatest of external goods.²²

The first argument differs from the second, in that while the second emphasizes the need for virtuous friends for a person who is about to be successful, the first focuses on the usefulness of a person, who is self-sufficient, to her friends. But what is remarkable in the first argument is that it captures why friends are considered as the greatest of the external goods, because people can be used in order to achieve a goal or purpose. By being an instrument, friends can be used to do things that one has a hard time doing. However, the question that comes to mind is who is using whom? In the case of the happy person and her friends, who would benefit the most? Although Aristotle wrote that “it is better to do good to friends than strangers,” it is easier for a person to accept that one is being used by a stranger than a friend. In this case, there may be a difference between being used and doing something beneficial. By being used as a means to an end, this may mean not necessarily involving awareness both in the one using and the one being used. However, in the case of doing what is beneficial to a person, there is an assumed involvement of intentionality. Although this does not discount that it is also good to do pleasant things to strangers, to do pleasant things to people one knows is better. Furthermore, it is in this argument that Aristotle asserted that we need friends the most, in times of adversity. As such, the passage is not only about a happy person who is in need of friends, the matter about prosperity or adversity shows that one’s need of friends pertains to the basic need of people to have successful friends in times of need. This is why a person in an adverse situation needs friends who are self-sufficient. However, there is the usual other side of the coin: for Aristotle people of means, especially in times of prosperity, also need people who are in need of friends. Thus if we would premise that one needs friends in times of adversity, we should accept also that one needs friends also in times of prosperity.

This is the reason why, I think that Aristotle asked the question, “Why would a self-sufficient person be in need of friends?” If he asserts that a person who is happy does not need anything, then that person has no need even for friends. If he asserts that in order for a person to be happy, friends are necessary, then it does not only show that a person is not only in need of something but most of all *unhappy* because of the presence of such a need. I believe that this problem stems from the idea that we equate self-sufficiency for not desiring anything else. This is the reason that Aristotle pointed out that of all the external goods to be desired human beings are the greatest of all. If we are to fill our lives with goods in order to be self-sufficient, we should fill our lives firstly with friends. Another possible solution is for Aristotle to either show that a person can be successful even without the help of other people or he can assert that friends are just the product or the result of being accomplished. Well, what if that person who achieved the *eudaimonia* will not have any friends? In order to be consistent with the concept of *success that is*

²² *Ibid.*, 1169b1-5.

achievable even without the aid of friends, one can say that a person should still remain in that state of happiness in spite of a solitary condition. For Aristotle, this is simply untenable.

Surely it is strange, too, to make the supremely happy person a solitary; for no one could choose the whole world on condition of being alone, since person is a political creature and one whose nature is to live with others. Therefore even the happy person lives with others; for he has the things that are by nature good. And plainly it is better to spend her days with friends and good men than with strangers or any chance persons. Therefore the happy person needs friends.²³

By pointing out that because a person is “a political creature whose nature is to live with others,” Aristotle points out that it is by nature that a successful person will not give up being with other people in exchange for all the external goods of life. Despite being self-sufficient, a happy person will even allow herself to be friends with people who are not equally in her league. Furthermore, because she is in a position to help out a needy friend in times of adversity, she would be willing to share her material resources in exchange of being actively involved in the lives of other people. This is consistent with the definition of *eudaimonia* as an activity, not an object to be acquired. In 1170a1 Aristotle wrote: “For we have set at the outset that happiness is an activity; and activity plainly comes into being and is not present at the start like a piece of property.” This is the reason why, a man who is already flourished will still need friends, i.e., to continue *flourishing*. As the happy man benefits from friendship by making her flourish *more*, the friend, by providing company, also benefits from her riches in times of need. The happy person and the person benefitting from such friendship, as such become instrumental goods to each other.

Aristotle mentioned two kinds of external goods: instrumental and intrinsic goods. He wrote: “Of the remaining goods, some are necessary and others are naturally co-operative and useful as instruments.”²⁴ For Aristotle, friends can be either instrumentally or intrinsically good. As such some would describe Aristotle’s striving for happiness and use of friends as self-centered. This is the usual portrayal of a person seeking *eudaimonia* in Aristotle’s works, i.e., someone who is egoistical and seeking only what can be acquired in order to achieve a happy life. Well, this is understandable because ultimately, it is the self who is responsible for one’s happiness. However, although selfishness seems to be unavoidable in order to be happy, real life will tell us that seldom a person would like to be used, unless maybe if there is mutual utility. As such Aristotle wrote: “In many actions we use friends and riches and political power

²³ *Ibid.*, 1169b15-20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1099b25.

as instruments.”²⁵ However, this is not the emphasis of the first argument. In the passages 1169b1–20, the one who is the instrumental good is the happy person for he is the one who is in the position to help out her friends who are in need. Aristotle wrote in Book VIII: “For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods; even rich men and those in possession of office and of dominating power are thought to need friends most of all; for what is the use of such prosperity without the opportunity of beneficence, which is exercised chiefly and in its laudable form towards friends?”²⁶ In this case, it is the happy person who is allowing herself to be used in order to be of benefit to her friends. However, does the self-sufficient person *really* believe that she is just being used? Aristotle by providing the statement “a friend is an extension of the self;” the self-sufficient friend, as a true friend, will not even think that she is being used because in principle the person that she is helping is a part of her. Granted that there is mutual utility, what the happy person gets is that she is able to satisfy her nature as a political creature and enjoy the company of her friends.

A person who is to be happy needs virtuous friends

But how can having virtuous friends lead a person to have a happy life? Aristotle in the *NE* mentioned three kinds of friends. In 1155b15—1156b5, Aristotle mentioned friends who are useful, pleasant, and excellent. The first two kinds of friends for Aristotle do not last. These friendships exist as long as there is mutual pleasure and utility. Once pleasure and utility are gone, so does friendship. Aristotle wrote: “...these friendships are incidental; for it is not as being the person he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good and pleasure. Such friendships then are easily dissolved, if the parties do not remain like themselves; for if the one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him.”²⁷ On the other hand there is a kind of friendship that is based on the virtue of excellence. This kind of friendship, instead of thinking of a person’s use or pleasure, thinks of what is good for the sake of the other. For Aristotle, this is the kind of friendship that lasts. According to Aristotle: “Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this on reason of their own nature and not incidentally, therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good—and excellence is an enduring thing.”²⁸

However, Aristotle recognized that although this kind of friendship is not based on utility or pleasure, such friendship is still pleasurable and useful. If friendship that is based in excellence can be a means of pleasure and utility then the conclusion for passages 1170a10—b 15 captures more accurately the role that the virtues play in friendship, i.e., people who possess them make the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1099b1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1154a5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1165a15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1156b10.

best kind of friends. Aristotle argues that, for someone who spends life thinking and perceiving, this is hard to miss. Thus, a person who values her own existence would necessarily notice the excellence that virtuous people possess. As such, this would lead someone to desire virtuous persons as friends, because their friendship is based on excellence; and most of the time we see this property of excellence easily in other people than ourselves. As such, given an option whether to choose someone who is virtuous or someone who is corrupt, Aristotle is saying that a person will always choose what is good and pleasant. The Greeks also have in mind that the men with virtues are the only ones capable of friendship, which can be seen echoed in Plato's *Gorgias*, 507d-508a:

...a person who wants to be happy must evidently pursue and practice self-control... He should not allow her appetites to be undisciplined or undertake to fill them up—that's interminably bad—and live the life of a marauder. Such a person could not be dear to another person or to a god, for he cannot be a partner, and when there is no partnership there's no friendship.²⁹

For the Greeks, one pursues the virtues first and then has real friends as consequence. Aristotle has this view that virtue is not some exemplary character trait that is bestowed by the gods but is developed through practice and time by a person until it becomes a matter of habit. An example of this is a person starting from childhood learns how to be fair while playing games with friends, and later on as he matures learn how to be fair in her business deals, etc. As such, virtuous people are capable of true friendship because they have proven themselves how to be *good* friends, which they develop through time, thus the passage: "such friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says, 'men cannot know each other till they have eaten salt together; nor they can admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each.'" ³⁰ This is the reason why a true friend is pleasant and good in itself, because it is rare. Furthermore, Aristotle said "If we look deeper into the nature of things a virtuous friend seems to be naturally desirable for a virtuous person." ³¹ Also, by choosing the virtuous person as a friend, someone is assured that one's choice is *mutually* desirable because a virtuous person will always consider what is also good and pleasant to a friend. Why? This is where Aristotle's idea that "a friend is another self" comes in. As other self, the person will always choose what is pleasant and good for her own extended self—unlike for someone who is corrupt or in pain. Aristotle puts forward that if one cannot satisfy this desire, a person can

²⁹ John Cooper, ed., *The Complete Works of Plato* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994).

³⁰ *NE*, 1157b30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1170a15.

never be self-sufficient because that person will always be lacking. This is the reason why a person who is to be happy should be able to fulfill this need.

I believe that the task of the second argument is to present a kind of friendship that much different from those that are based on utility and pleasure. Aristotle pointed out that there is a kind of friendship whose basis is the *liking* of a person's character, and eventually the person itself. John Cooper calls this *character-friendship*. This is what Aristotle calls friendship based on excellence. However, even if the idea of liking a person because of character is not that hard to see, the second argument has, for John Cooper, a major flaw. He wrote:

But until we are given some independent reason for thinking that the good man will need or want to form friendships in the first place, we are not entitled to assume that he will have the sort of attitude toward any other person which will enable him to get this pleasure and, in consequence, desire this close association. But there is not the slightest hint in this argument, so interpreted, of any reason for thinking this.³²

For him, there was no reason given in the argument to even suggest why a person should be liked as a friend. He argued that the premise *a friend is another self* does not seal the deal. The argument that a person will be liked as a friend because similarity in character is perceived and judged on the basis of one's own character, for him, is not as convincing as arguing from beneficence or utility. I believe that this difficulty stems from John Cooper fusing the first argument and the second argument together. Such a conflation will result in looking at both arguments as superficially only different in variation and style, which is evident in his article "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle." For me, the conclusion provides the reason for the argument. *To be happy, a person needs virtuous friends*. This means that in order to be successful in life, not just friends of utility and pleasure are needed; virtuous friends are necessary. Surely, if a person would consider her own character to be excellent, then this is the very criterion she will use to measure the character also of other people. Of course, she will not get this by merely *looking* at a person. Starting from mere acquaintance into a much deeper friendship based on mutual utility or pleasure, any relationship can develop into a friendship based on *liking* the person itself. And Aristotle believed that without this kind of relationship, people cannot be happy. As such the argument of John Cooper seems understandable because he has the thesis that friendship is not based on selfish motivation. For him to admit that the second argument says that virtuous friends are needed in order for a person to be successful is to give up the non-selfish motivation thesis.

³² John Cooper, "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle," in *The Philosophical Review*, 86:3 (July 1977), 294.

A friend is another self

Aristotle believes that a good person always desires what is good for her own self, thus to regard another person as *another self*³³ would mean still thinking of what is good for oneself, thus rendering the concept to be self-centered. I believe that the difficulty lies in interpreting what does the phrase *other self*³⁴ mean? Considering that the idea of *self* is already difficult to manage due to Freudian influences, to introduce the concept of *other self* seems to be a daunting task. I have a tendency to view this concept either just an extension of a personal entity or to look at it through the concept of people having similarity in character, commitments, and life's purposes or ends and therefore seen as a unit.³⁵ Although I am willing to incorporate into the concept of other self *similarity of thought*, I believe that as an *extension* or *being a part of a collective* is already sufficient for my overall purpose. This will incorporate also what Aristotle said in Book VIII of the *NE*:

Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than justice; for unanimity seems something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality.³⁶

I believe that Aristotle introduced this concept of *other self* in order to account for how friendship becomes possible in the first place. In a way, by introducing the concept, he is showing how someone who is not related by blood, heritage, or sometimes even totally different people, is willing to sacrifice and lose everything for the sake of another. Because what is certain is that a good person loves her own existence then maybe, through friendship, the other person becomes *part* of the self. Aristotle wrote: "Therefore, since each of these characteristics belongs to the good man in relation to himself, and he is related to his friend as to himself (for his friend is another self), friendship too is one of these attributes, and those who have these attributes to be friends."³⁷

³³ ετερον αυτον (another/second self), translation mine.

³⁴ αλλος αυτος (other self), translation mine.

³⁵ Aristotle made use of the analogy of a mother's sacrifice for her child and a friend's heroism in times of war. He wrote: "For men think a friend is one who wishes and does what is good, or seems so, for the sake of his friend, or one who wishes his friend to exist and live, for his sake; which mothers do to their children, and friends do who have come into conflict. And others think a friend is one who lives with and has the same tastes as another, or one who grieves and rejoices with his friend; and this too is found in mothers most of all. It is by some one of these characteristics that friendship too is defined" (1166a 3).

³⁶ *NE*, 1115a21-25.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1166a30.

It is interesting that both passages contain the idea of a friend being the other self. If friendship is just using and being used then the idea of “other self” is not necessary. I believe that by providing the concept of a friend as an extension of the self, Aristotle is able to answer the problem that Plato posed in the *Lysis* about the very nature of *φιλία*. In the dialogue, Socrates asked: “So tell me: when someone loves someone else, which of the two becomes a friend of the other, the one who loves or the one who is loved?”³⁸ In Book VIII of the NE, Aristotle, in a similar manner, asked whether the word *friendship* can be used to show *love* for a lifeless object. Aristotle argues that it is ridiculous to consider the relationship between a man and wine as friendship because the wine cannot reciprocate the affection that a man gives. Thus we can see that for Aristotle, without reciprocity, there can be no mutual love. When we say that a friend is an extension of the self, we overlook that there are at least two parties involved in friendship. If a friend becomes an extension of the other then surely the relationship goes both ways. What this means is that this shows that Aristotle’s view of friendship, although it is self-centered, is not selfish after all. True friendship can only work if both parties will consider first what is beneficial for the other. Although friends in a way use each other, this is only so because both are to be considered as the greatest of all external goods. This means that for Aristotle, it is in our nature to be used. This is the reason why, by being *another self*, a friend can do things that we cannot do ourselves. They become our *proxy* in situations we are absent and look for our interest as if we are there ourselves. And this goes both ways. As such by considering what is good and pleasant for our friend, we benefit from it also because our friend is also considering what is beneficial to us. By becoming extensions of each other, both become instruments for what is good and pleasant. And both desire this “mutual utility” because both understand that they need each other, not just because of the value they give to each other’s company and friendship, but more so because everyone needs friends because friends look out for each others’ happiness, i.e., *eudaimonia*. Regarding the question of altruism, is true friendship only concerned about what is best for the other or is it self-centered as popularly believed? I believe that to have the idea of friendship that is purely altruistic is impossible. Even John Cooper recognized that *well wishing* in the incidental kinds of friendships is limited to the retention of pleasure and advantage. By making use of the idea of the *other self*, friendship is both altruistic and also self-centered. Without self-love how can a person love a friend who is an extension of that same person? I agree with David Ross who holds the view that Aristotle, by introducing the concept of *other selves*, “was trying to break down the antithesis between egoism and altruism by showing that the egoism of a good man has just the same characteristics as altruism.”³⁹

For John Cooper, there is a problem with this view of friendship. For him, he does not see how the concept of *other self* answer the question how can one call the actions of a friend one’s own? He wrote: “...the purely verbal

³⁸ John Cooper, ed., *The Complete Works of Plato*, Stephanus 212b.

³⁹ David Ross, *Aristotle*, 6th Ed., (New York: Routledge, 1995), 237.

point that, on the ‘other self’ thesis, one can call the actions of a friend ‘one’s own’ does not seem to me to add anything to whatever psychological plausibility the process as described without it might seem to have.”⁴⁰ For him, granted that this psychological process is limited only to self-awareness, how can one by mirroring himself see one’s faults and shortcomings when all one can see is nothing but oneself? This is the reason why I do not regard this concept of *other self* as psychological in nature, somewhat like an *alter ego*. For me, the Greek word *ετερον αυτον* is just a figure of speech, or a means of representing a friend as an *extension* that can do things for one in *proxy* or in one’s stead, as I have previously mentioned. If we consider the number of experiences that were shared together between friends, a friend as an *extension* is treated exactly just like a member of one’s own family. This is why Aristotle in many instances would use the word *στεργω* to illustrate the feeling between friends just like that of a mother to a child. The point is that the *other self* concept should not be taken literally or to be interpreted beyond the purpose of the analogy. I believe that if used beyond this purpose it becomes apparent why John Cooper would doubt the *other self* thesis, which, for him, if affirmed it is to accept the view that friendship is self-centered. As such, he even questioned the concept of *self-awareness* by pointing out that if the reckoning point is the self, and the friend is the other self, then how can there be an objective view of oneself?⁴¹

Aside from mutual utility and beneficence, Aristotle also showed what is common between friends. He called this the *shared life*. He used the analogy of cattle, which just eat, drink, and sleep together but not really share existence. He said: “He needs, therefore, to be conscious of the existence of his friend as well, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought; for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of man, and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place.”⁴² This means that for Aristotle, just doing a common activity is not really *sharing* in that activity. We might see two people doing one kind of work—together—and yet not really be friends. Although doing the same things repeatedly together may be a start of something good. But what is interesting in this analogy is that Aristotle is saying that a person can participate in another person’s conscious existence. Again, I am not referring to anything psychological here *a la* Freud. For me, being conscious of another person’s existence is attainable through having similar ideas brought about by conversation and by doing things together. Although in some works Aristotle would use the concept of *sameness of mind*, to the point of saying that a friend has the capability of *feeling* the pain of another friend, I still do not interpret this literally. By being conscious of each other’s existence, for me, means that merely talking with each other and doing things together are not enough, although they are necessary in order to have a *life together*. Elizabeth Tefler pointed this out in her article. She stated:

⁴⁰ John Cooper, “Friendship and the Good in Aristotle,” 295.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁴² *NE*, 1170b10.

The 'shared activity' condition, however, is not a sufficient condition for friendship. This becomes clear if we imagine a case where the condition is fulfilled. Consider, for example, the situation where two neighbors, each living alone, perform services for each other, go to the pictures together, and drop in on each other to chat in the evenings. Would we be able to say that the pair was friends, simply on the strength of this situation? ⁴³

I agree with Tefler that while common activity is not a sufficient condition for friendship, it is a necessary condition. Nancy Sherman affirms this view.⁴⁴ According to her, Aristotle in the *Eudaimian Ethics*, by using the technical term *προαιρεσις*, which means “a reasoned choice that is expressive of a character and the overall ends of that character,” a man chooses another person as a friend depending on similar sense of commitments and ends.⁴⁵

But if active loving is a mutual choice with pleasure in each other's acquaintance, it is clear that in general the primary friendship is a reciprocal choice of the absolutely good and pleasant because it is good and pleasant; and this friendship is the habit from which such choice springs.⁴⁶

For Sherman, we choose our friends based on similarity of values and objectives. If we happen to choose friends having different goals and purposes sooner or later someone has to give and adapt and conform until similarity in views and purposes is established. I find Sherman's view more *realistic* in the sense that in real life we really establish friends from the same school, organization, club, etc., where people have common experiences. As such, doing similar activities is very important for friendship. Talking with friends is essential, however to say right away that the person I am talking to is a friend is absurd. But if talking to this person becomes a habit and further develops into a need then it is a different matter because what do friends do? Don't friends talk for hours and share things with each other. If a person is a friend then to do common things becomes a necessary condition. Of course, not all friendship is like this. Sometimes we might not see a childhood friend for so many years and yet when we see them, the feeling still remains as if nothing has passed. But what connects both of you as friends are the common activities that you did. Most of the time people become friends without formalizing that they are friends. They just know. Why? Because of shared consciousness or

⁴³ Elizabeth Tefler, “XIII – Friendship,” in *Proceedings from the Aristotelian Society* (1970-1971), 224.

⁴⁴ For Sherman, we choose our friends based on similar commitments and ends. This is contrary to the view that we choose friends first and then their interests and pursuits in life follow after the fact. I find Sherman's view more *realistic* in the sense that in real life we really establish friends from the same school, organization, club, etc., where people have common experiences.

⁴⁵ Nancy Sherman, “On Aristotle and the Shared Life,” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1987), 197.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Barnes ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Bekker No. 1236a30.

awareness that both need each other because of the common things that they do or have done together. This is the reason why for Aristotle, the best kind of friendship is that of between men who have reached self-sufficiency and have been successful in whatever they do, because they have a lot of things in common. He wrote: “Love and friendship therefore are found most and in their best form between such men.”⁴⁷ Considering the Greek’s patriarchal culture where women were regarded as not equal to men, for Aristotle, there is no kind of life better than men to live together and spend the rest of days with friends.

To sum up this section, I believe that everything starts from mere acquaintance. It is impossible to *see* someone like oneself and then just go up to that person and call her a friend. It just does not work that way. Although, one can be a colleague right away because of work, it will take a lot more for each other to be called friends. Once that mutual utility or pleasure is established then a shared consciousness and recognition of the fact are necessary ingredients for friendship, even only of the incidental kind. However, the relationship does not stop there, unless for some unavoidable reasons. Experience tells us that temporary friendships can flourish into a much deeper kind. Although, in all instances, there is mutual *well-wishing* and considering a friend as *another self*, the friendship that lasts is the one having the *shared* kind of life.

Synthesis and Conclusion

John Cooper by emphasizing *well-wishing for the sake of the other* highlighted the idea that friendship is primarily about being concerned for the other. However, Aristotle did not leave it at that. He introduced also the concept of a friend as the *other self*, which I emphasized in my paper as *another self*: pursuing a limited interpretation of a friend as *an extension of the self*, I believe that John Cooper’s *well-wishing* will be balanced by the *other self* thesis. Although I *wish well* a friend, being my *other self*, I am also benefitting from my wish. Friendship is not a one way street; it is and should be reciprocated, as such as I wish well a friend, she also wishes me well. However, to be consistent with Aristotle’s *virtuous friends* even when not reciprocated for any reason, a true friend is still a friend because what is being liked is the person itself and not her actions or inactions. Of course, *well-wishing for the sake of the other* captures this but I believe *loving a friend as one loves oneself* captures it better.

In conclusion, by analyzing side by side the two arguments used by Aristotle in 1169b20—1170b15 of Book IX of the *NE*, I would have hopefully shown that friendship, whether instrumental or intrinsic, is based on mutual reciprocity. Aristotle by making use of the concept of the *other self* makes friendship *doing what is best for the other*. But what is good about this formula is that it shows that whatever it is you do to your friend you also do to yourself, not only because your friend is your extension but also you are an extension to

⁴⁷ *NE*, 1158b30.

your friend. This is the reason why in the first argument, Aristotle points out that instrumentality goes both ways. Because of this the self-sufficient friend that is able to help out a needy friend, gains something also by being able to satisfy her nature as a political person. In other words, because a friend is an *allos autos*, friends would allow themselves to be *used* by each other. In the second argument, Aristotle goes further. By pointing out that because life is desirable itself, a virtuous friend as an extension of oneself is *naturally* desirable. This means that because of the concept of *other self*, *A* knows that *B* is desirable because of the value *A* gives to *B*'s own existence. But what is not that evident in the formula of the *other self* is that *B*, as another self, is desirable because as *A* values *B* to the point of wishing what is well for the sake of the other, *B* also values the same way *A*. As such *B*'s existence is desirable, if and only if *A*'s is desirable as well. **If friendship is based on similarity of character, then one is guaranteed reciprocation of well-wishing.**⁴⁸ This is best captured in the 1236a10 of the *Eudaimian Ethics*, where Aristotle wrote: "So a man becomes a friend when he is loved and returns that love, and this is recognized by the two men in question." And for Aristotle, this is necessary for a happy life.

In conclusion, Aristotle, by using the notion of a friend as *other self* in both arguments, makes friendship neither egoistical nor altruistic. As such, friendship because of mutual instrumentality, mutual desirability, and mutual reciprocity is a necessary condition in order to have a life that is virtuous and happy.

To explain this concept of synthesizing *well-wishing* and a friend as *the other self*, I will use two examples commonly used in game theory: There are two farmers, *A* and *B*. Both *A* and *B* have the same size of plantation and harvest season is upon them. In order to maximize their profit, they have to cooperate and harvest together both of their crops. The problem is *B*, after harvest, is moving to another country. If both of them would first harvest *A*'s crops, then it is natural that *B*'s should follow. What if they would harvest *B*'s first, what would guarantee that *B* would stay and help *A* harvest her plantation?

Another example is the classical *prisoner's dilemma* where two suspects were arrested by the police. The police, in order to have sufficient evidence, needs confessions from both. In order to get the optimal result in investigative work, both suspects were separated and offered a deal, with the guarantee that neither of them will know what the other will confess: If any one testifies and betrays the other, who will in turn just remain silent, the betrayer goes free and the silent other will get the full ten-year sentence. If both remain silent, both will receive six-month jail sentences. If both betray each other, both will get a five-year sentence.

Both examples illustrate what usually happens not only in game theory but also in real life. Both parties in the given example can only maximize their

⁴⁸ I highlighted this because I believe that this is the solution to the problem of altruism and egoism.

productivity or minimize punishment only if they cooperate with each other, which unfortunately they will not do. I believe that in both cases any person will choose what is *natural* for any person to do, i.e., not to trust the other. In the case of farmers A and B, for B to push through with any agreement with A is not a move consistent with game theory, given that there is nothing to compel her to fulfill their agreement. This is similar to the prisoner's dilemma. Although both will only get six-month jail time only if they cooperate and remain silent, both will *naturally* think that the other person is ratting on the other. So, in this example, both suspects will rat on each other and both will get five years.

I believe that in both examples, while it is self-interest that would determine the most optimal outcome, it is also self-interest that would cause non-cooperation. This is the reason why I believe that Aristotle's concept of *other self* is neither self-centered nor altruistic. The *other self* when applied to the first example, both A and B will have the resolve to push through with the harvest of both plantations because if both will be *wishing for what is best for the other* then both will be thinking of what is beneficial for both. In fact, if both A and B are true friends, which means both have knowledge of each other's character, it will not matter which plantation is harvested first, because no matter what, the harvest of both is guaranteed. In the case of the prisoner's dilemma, if both suspects are genuine friends, in the Aristotelian sense, then they will not rat on each other. Because of the concept of *other self*, there is always the question "how can a person rat on a friend if a friend is part of one self?" Some may think that a suspect because of true friendship might just even confess and admit committing the crime alone and thus exonerate the other. While this is consistent with Aristotle's concept of martyrdom in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, this self-incrimination goes against all modern day game theory which is concerned only about maximizing utility. Accordingly in the prisoner's dilemma, if A and B are true friends, then both will confess committing alone the crime. Both friends, by incriminating their own selves, exonerate the other, and by so-doing exonerate their own selves also in the process—in the Aristotelian sense, of course.

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