Why is Friendship an End In Itself?

Examining Aristotle's Account of Friendship in the Happy Life

I. Introduction: Friendship as an End in Itself

In *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.9 and *Eudemian Ethics* VII.12, Aristotle asks whether the happy person needs friends, or whether, on the contrary, happiness and the need of friends stand in an inverse proportion, so that "the man who lives the best life must have the fewest friends, and they must always be becoming fewer" and "the happiest man will least need a friend, and only as far as it is impossible for him to be independent" (*EE* VII.12 1244b10-13).

Aristotle motivates the latter possibility through the following thought: "For one might doubt whether, if a man be in all respects independent, he will have a friend, if one seeks a friend from want and the good man is perfectly independent" (*EE* VII.12 1244b2-4). This concern is a clear reference to arguments which Plato makes concerning love and friendship, both in the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*.

In both dialogues, Socrates begins his argument with a seemingly unimpeachable line of thought — namely, that one cannot love what one does not desire, and one cannot desire what one does not lack but already possesses. If we say that we desire something we possess, what we really mean is that we desire it not now (since we already have it), but for the future as well.[1]

But this simple and intuitive line of thought has, for Plato, two direct and startling consequences. The first and more general implication is that love and friendship cannot be based on what the lover has in common with the beloved (i.e. on likeness). For then one would love a friend in virtue of some good which one already possesses. But this has the direct consequence that one who *is* good cannot, qua good, have a friend. For, Socrates argues to Lysis:

> [S]: But again, will not the good, in so far as he is good, be in that measure sufficient for himself? [L]: Yes. [S:] And the sufficient has no need of anything, by virtue of his sufficiency. [L]: Of course; [S]:And if a man has no need of anything he will not cherish [ἀγαπῴη] anything. [Lysis]: Presumably not. [S]: And that which does not cherish will not love [φιλοῖ.]. [L]: I should think not. [S]:And one who loves not is no friend. (215a-b)

The apparent consequence of this line of thought is that only one who is bad could love what is good. But this, Socrates thinks, is itself an absurdity. In both the *Lysis* and the *Symposium*, Socrates offers a sort of middle way — namely, that we are capable of loving anything good only insofar as we are neither wholly bad nor good, but rather in an intermediate state. In other words, we can love what is good only insofar as we are incompletely good and stand to improve our condition by possessing the

[1] Cf. *Symposium* 200a-201c. Below (in section II), I will discuss the logical error in Socrates' line of thought, and why the conclusion does not follow from two true premises.

object of our love. Socrates illustrates the point through the example of the patient's needing a doctor, in virtue of the fact that the body — being neither wholly healthy nor wholly corrupt — stands to improve through the doctor when it is in a contingent state of partial corruption (cf. *Lysis* 217a-e).[2]

Both the premises and conclusions of Plato's argument seem to be quite plausible. The fact that it has, as its consequence, that the completely good person should need no friends may not immediately appear to be a problem for the lot of us imperfect beings. But Aristotle takes a strong stance against this line of thinking. His opening move, in fact, is to turn Socrates' modus ponens argument into a modus tollens argument against its central premise — namely, that "one seeks a friend from want." He writes:

> But surely this makes it all the clearer that the friend is not for use or help, but that the friend through excellence is the only friend. For when we need nothing, then we all seek others to share our enjoyment, those whom we may benefit rather than those who will benefit us (*EE* VII.12 1244b15-16).

In other words, by Aristotle's lights, the problem with Socrates' argument is not simply that it implies the friendlessness of the most perfect human being. The problem is that the whole line of thought treats *all* friendship as though it were what is in fact the lowest kind of friendship — friendship for mere utility or gain. In *NE* IX.9 Aristotle explicitly says that the idea that the happy person will not need friends is primarily based on the assumption that friendship is for mere utility, and he grants that "of such friends indeed the blessed man will have no need, since he already has the things that are good." But, he writes, "because he does not need *such* friends, he is thought not to need friends. But that is surely not true" (1169b23-29).

The critique seems to be correct. For, above all, a central and implicit presupposition of Socrates' argument is that any good derived from friendship is something which is entirely separable from the beloved. That is, it presupposes that the good of the beloved friend is *in general* something which I can acquire from the beloved in such a way that, having acquired it, I should no longer require the original source of my acquisition. In this way, even the best and most beloved person should stand in a similar relation to me as the most exquisite and abundant meal, which, however good it may be in itself, becomes less and less desirable to me the more I have actually eaten it. In like manner, friends who, over the course of a shared life, became both better people and more alike should, just for that reason, become less and less desirable to one another, eventually to the point of complete distaste. But, of course, what we find is precisely the opposite.

Now, to be sure, there *are* many goods which we can acquire through friendship and which, once acquired, no longer require the presence of the friend for their possession. These are not restricted to merely external or material goods, but also to knowledge and virtue. We learn and improve very much through our friends, our teachers, our parents. But the personal *qualities* which we acquire — if they are of a stable kind like knowledge and virtue — no longer require their original external source once

[2] In the *Lysis*, Socrates eventually claims that this account of friendship is not satisfying, but in the *Symposium*, this line of thought remains the basis of Socrates' speech about *eros*.

we possess them. A learned person does not become ignorant when her former teacher dies, and those who were well-raised do not become bad when their parents die.[3]

Accordingly, if the *only* or *primary* good of a friend were for the sake of our personal improvement (including intellectual and moral improvement), then Socrates' argument would hold good. For such goods are indeed separable from the friends through whose help we may have originally acquired them. Indeed, *internal goods* (such as knowledge and virtue) are the *most* separable of such goods, for they are more than anything the kinds of goods which we do not lose through changes in external circumstances, including the loss of our original pedagogues.[4]

But there is, of course, one good which cannot be so separated from the friend — namely, the friend herself, and specifically, actually living and acting together with the friend. Accordingly, implicit in Socrates' argument is that the only possible good of a friendship is something *separable* from the friend in the manner described above (not, of course, in the sense that, like money, I gain in virtue by removing that virtue from the friend, but in the sense that I gain knowledge through a teacher). But a relationship which is purely for the sake of such separable goods (no matter how good they may be in themselves) is, just for that reason, a purely *instrumental* relationship — one in which I do not love the friend herself but only something which I can get from her. Accordingly, while it is certainly true that friends and even true friends *do* benefit us and improve our characters, nonetheless if the *only* good even of such mutually beneficial friendships were *mere* personal improvement, then the friend and the friendship should not be ends in themselves — ultimate goods — but only means toward some other end.[5]

Aristotle, in arguing that even the best of people will still desire friends, says that, for such friends "neither teaching nor learning is possible ; for if one learns, he is not as he should be, and if he teaches, his friend is not; and likeness is friendship)" (*EE* VII.12 1245a17-18). Such friends may seem to be too good to be true, and such friendship may therefore seem to be irrelevant to the rest of us. But, in arguing that *even* such people will still be friends (and indeed the best of friends), Aristotle is simply showing that the basis of true friendship is *not* merely or primarily some personal improvement which I derive through it — some *hexis* or possession which I acquire. The essential point in his argument that even the most perfect of people should need friends is simply this: *friendship is an end in itself*. In other words, friendship is not merely a means to a complete life, but it is included in the ultimate ends of life.[6] It is, in other words, a part of the *being* of a complete life, not merely its a condition of its *becoming*.

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[3] Note about JM recent *OSAP* article: episteme does require the preservation of the *object* of knowledge, but not the teacher.

[4] I therefore agree with Kim (2021, 508) that "This acquisition of virtue is the purpose not of friendship but of moral education."

[5] For this reason, I think we cannot accept Schroeder's view (1992, 203) that the ultimate value of friends in Aristotle is to make us better.

[6] Cooper (1977, 337), makes a similar point about Aristotle's account of friendship for the happy person.

The central question of this paper is: *why*? More precisely, my aim is to further examine and evaluate Aristotle's explanation of this point. In order to do so, the following essay will be guided by two central questions: (1) What must the ultimate good of friendship be in order for it to be included in the ultimate ends of human life? And (2) what ultimate good, if any, requires friendship *specifically*, in such a way that friendship is not merely incidentally included among the ultimate goods but *essentially counted among them*? For if the ultimate good of friendship is something which we could just as much enjoy without friends, then friends would seem to be at best an optional or luxurious good, not an essential one. Indeed, even if we follow Aristotle in claiming that true friendship is not based upon a lack, it seems that, in order to say that a happy person *needs* friends, we must claim that friendship fills at least one lack — namely, the lack of friendship itself. But *what is it that we lack in lacking friendship*, such that one who possessed all other goods, internal and external, should nonetheless feel a profound lack and incompleteness without it?

In the following section (II), I will argue that Aristotle's account is able to answer this kind of question by making use of the distinction between *possession* (or *hexis*) and *use* — or, more generally, between potentiality and actuality. The essential role of friendship, qua end in itself, is not the acquisition or improvement of some possession, but rather the shared exercise of capacities which both friends possess. It will be in these terms that Aristotle explains the role of friends in the happy life in *NE* IX.9 and *EE* VII.12.

In section III, I will examine Aristotle's arguments for the happy person's need of friends in terms of their role in the exercise of virtues which the happy person already possesses. I will argue, however, that Aristotle's arguments are not fully satisfactory. His account hinges upon two kinds of activities in relation to another which, in effect, correspond respectively to the exercise of practical and theoretical virtues. The one pertains to the happy person's need for others to *benefit*, the other pertains to the role of others in shared knowledge and perception. The problem, I will argue, is that neither of those activities requires friends *per se.* The former (benefaction) only requires *another* in general, the latter (perception, knowledge, thinking) does not even require anyone else *per se,* even though it may involve them.

Indeed, Aristotle argues at length in *NE* X.8 that, while the practical life requires others *per se*, the contemplative life does not. Accordingly, we should expect that, if friends are *needed* in the happy and complete life, this need should pertain above all the the human life insofar as it involves practical action. But the need to exercise my practical virtue by *benefiting* others cannot be an adequate account of the need for *friends* in the practical life, for benefaction is an essentially one-sided, agent-patient relation. It is not a properly shared activity. In fact, I think Aristotle's focussing on the relation of benefaction in the happy person's need of friends (or 'friends') is the product of Aristotle's exaggerated attempt to view the love toward a friend as a kind of *extension* and even overflow of the individual's self-love, rather than viewing the *reception* of love from a friend as itself a *necessary* condition of one's own active self-love.

In sections IV-VI, I will argue that we can, however, construct an alternative account of the need for friends in the human life *qua* practical, by focusing on the specific nature of friendship itself in terms of its characteristic reciprocity and equality. Specifically, I will argue that the ultimate need for friends should be accounted for in terms of friendship's ability to overcome a deep problem concerning the very intelligibility of happiness in the practical life. The problem concerns a tension between three elements: (1) that "happiness is activity in conformity with virtue" (*NE* X.7 1177a12); (2) that happiness is *in* the agent of this activity (*Met.* **Θ**.8 1050a35); and (3) that the realization of *practical virtue* — precisely because, unlike purely theoretical virtues, it involves realizing external effects — is, at least in part, *in* another (the patient). The latter point will require some argumentation, which I give. Aristotle, I will argue, is not entirely consistent on this point, though I think it he cannot consistently avoid that view (nor should he).[7] Specifically, I will argue that friendship (and not merely others in general) *uniquely* enables happiness in the practical life, precisely because, due to its characteristic reciprocity and equality, it enables the external ultimate actuality of practical virtue to remain (in a particular way) *in* the agent, even while action essentially involves realizing effects in another.

Such an account, I will argue, depends upon the essential role of *receiving* love in a happy life (not merely loving). Aristotle, I think, frequently tends toward one-sided relations of benefaction in the happy person's exercise of virtue, because he regards being-loved as primarily a form of passivity. This, I will argue, is a mistake which undermines the true nature of friendship as shared possession and activity. By diagnosing and correcting this mistake, I will argue that we can preserve Aristotle's essential and deep insights into friendship as an ultimate end in itself, but only by making some significant corrections and amendments to Aristotle's own account.

II. Friendship without Desire? Desire without Lack?

As I discussed in the introduction, Aristotle strongly disagrees with Socrates' argument in the *Lysis* that friendship is based on want. As I noted there, Socrates' argument for that view is supposed to follow from a line of thought which, taken in and for itself, appears quite attractive — namely, that we cannot love what we do not desire, and we cannot desire what we do not lack. Now, however much Aristotle may deny that friendship is based on want, it seems impossible to *completely* deny the line of thought just stated while also claiming that we need friends in any sense. For, how could we *need* or even *love* our friends if we did not feel *some* lack without them and desire them when they are absent? Otherwise put, it seems that friends must fill *some* lack — nominally, the lack of the friends themselves. The question is, how can admit such a view without generating the kind of instrumentalist concept of friendship which, I've argued, Aristotle takes as a direct consequence of a purely lack-based concept of friendship?

[7] This claim may appear to conflate *praxis* with *poiesis*, but, I will argue, (1) it does not, and (2) that treating the realization of practical virtue as merely being *in* the agent in fact is the product of conflating the nature of practical action with that of purely intellectual exercises which *do not* aim at or produce any effect outside the agent.

I think we can understand Aristotle's answer to this problem by noting that, in his 'friendship-from-lack' argument in the *Lysis*, Socrates either does not possess or does not make use of an essential distinction — namely, the very distinction between possession (*hexis*) and use (*chresis*), or, more generally, between potentiality and actuality.[8] For the dialectical problems which arise in Socrates' accounts of love and friendship emerge from distinguishing between a good which one lacks and a good which one *possesses*. One could not, on this view, desire something which one already possesses or love what one does not desire. Accordingly, on that view, like could not love like *qua* like nor could the good *qua* good love anything good. In addition to the other problems with this view, it entails the absurdity that even if one loved a friend for no other reason than enjoying the friend's company, then one could still only love this friend in her *absence*. For as soon as the friend were actually present, we should no longer lack her company, and, not lacking it, we should no longer desire it and (therefore) no longer love it.

Aristotle, for his part, claims that friendship itself is a *hexis* (a stable possession or quality), but that it is nonetheless primarily to be understood as an *energeia* or activity (i.e. *of* that *hexis*; cf. *NE* VIII.5). Accordingly, for whatever reason we might need friends, what we need in needing friends is primarily the shared activity of friendship, so that if one had all good possessions (including the possession of friends), one should still desire the shared *activity* of friendship. Accordingly, we may admit that without the company of friends we do lack *something,* but the essential thing we lack is not *any* possession but the use of something we possess, or the activity corresponding to a capacity. In fact, this kind of 'activity-lack' (by contrast to 'possession-lack') is precisely the kind of 'lack' that we often express when we speak of *missing* someone or something (in French, the term for 'missing' in that sense is just the same as the term for lacking in general, *manquer*). So, for instance, if I say that I miss my friend (who now lives far away), I am not saying that either my friend or the friendship is dead. We may still, in an important sense, be very close friends. What I miss is the actual enjoyment of that friendship — i.e. shared life and activity with that friend. Likewise, one who used to live the life of a classical musician may say that she misses the violin — not because she no longer possesses either the violin or the ability to play it, but because she misses playing it. We fill the lack of a missed friend by actually spending time with her (doing things with her), and in general we fill the lack of a missed activity by *doing* it (e.g. actually playing the violin).

The logical error in Socrates argument that we love only what we lack is, therefore, the following. While it is true that one loves and desires the same things, love and desire are not themselves the same. For we love something both when it is absent and when it is present, but we desire what is in some way absent — either in the sense of possession or in the sense of *use* or *activity*. Otherwise put, we desire something in its absence *because* we love it in its presence, not the other way around. In fact, we *actively* love something only when it is present, and to love something in its absence is simply the standing

[8] Stephen Menn argues (I think convincingly) that Aristotle's own concept of the relation between *dunamis* and *energeia/entelecheia* ultimately derives from the Plato's own use of the distinction between *possession* (*hexis*) and *use* in *Euthydemus* and *Theaetetus*, and particularly the aviary model of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* — namely, the distinction between having knowledge and using it (Menn, 1994, 81, 84).

disposition for such active love. The correct version of Socrates' argument would be this: we love something only if, *when we lack it*, we desire it — not that we love something *only when we lack it and desire it*.

Of course, the mere distinction between two kinds of lack — *hexis-lack* and *energeia*-lack — does not, on its own, answer the question of what it is that we lack if we lack nothing but a friend's company. It only enables us to establish the *sense* in which we can desire and miss a friend even while possessing everything, *including* the friend. But this likewise enables us, more broadly, to reconcile the thoughts that we lack *something* in missing a friend, without deriving Socrates' consequence that love is based on the lack of some internal or external possession, and that it is for the sake of *acquiring* something from a friend. For again, on that view, we should not even love a friend as soon as we have a friend.

In other words, the love or need of a friend will be based on the need not for some *hexis* but for some *activity* of that *hexis*. Viewed in this way, it is clear that the possibility of a shared *activity* depends precisely on the *likeness* of the partners in that activity — namely, that both are capable of performing it. Playing baseball together requires that both are alike in their capacity, and one who is most capable of playing baseball will be able to exercise that capacity most fully with others who are similarly capable. Considered in terms of shared *activity*, likeness of capacity and of character will not, as it would from Socrates' argument, be an obstacle to friendship but an essential enabling condition.

Indeed, it is precisely in these terms that Aristotle explains friendship which is not based on need or lack (in the sense of *hexis* lack) — namely, in terms of acting and actively living together. But why is living and acting *together with friends* required in a happy and complete life — even for those who lack no good *possessions* whatsoever, whether internal or external? This question, I have argued, is simply the question of why friendship is an ultimate end in itself, and not merely good for the sake of *becoming* better or *acquiring* some capacity or virtue or anything else which one otherwise lacks. And this is the question which Aristotle's account of the happy and already virtuous person's need for friends is meant to answer. But what is his answer to this question, and is it satisfactory? This is the question for the following section.

III. Why does the Happy Person Need Friends? Examining Aristotle's Account

If true friendship is an end in itself (and not a mere means to something else), then it should be both possible and necessary even in the happiest life and between the best and most similar people. As I've argued above, the intelligibility both of the necessity and even the possibility of such friendship depends upon viewing the ultimate good of friendship not primarily in terms of the acquisition or improvement of some possession (whether external or internal), but in the use or exercise of possessions and capacities which the friends already have.

In the introduction, I proposed two framing questions through which we should investigate the concept of friendship as an ultimate end in itself and a part of the complete life. They were: (1) What must the ultimate good of friendship be in order for it to be included in the ultimate ends of human

life? And (2) what ultimate good, if any, requires friendship *specifically*, in such a way that friendship is not merely incidentally included among the ultimate goods but *essentially* counted among them?

In general terms, Aristotle's way of answering the first of these questions is not difficult to see. For happiness, as the ultimate end of life, is, he claims, "activity in accordance with virtue" (*NE X.7* 1177a13; I.7 1098a16). In order to be included among the ultimate goods of life, the ultimate good of friendship must, then, clearly be a kind of shared activity in accordance with virtue, and this is clearly how Aristotle himself understands the true friendship between virtuous people.

The second, question, however, seems to be the more difficult and pressing one. For if happiness consists in the exercise of virtues of the soul, then, it seems, we can distinguish between two kinds of virtues: (1) those whose exercise (or whose most *complete* exercise) *requires* a friend; (2) those whose exercise *may* include a friend, but *need not* do so. For, if there were no virtues which fit the first description, then it would seem to be an exaggeration to claim that the happy and complete life *requires* friends, rather than claiming that friends are a kind of superabundant luxury good, without which, however, one could still live a complete life.

This distinction, of course, appears to quite clearly correspond to the distinction between practical virtues and purely theoretical virtues (such as *episteme* and *sophia*). For, as I noted above, Aristotle insists that the contemplate life *as such* does not strictly require any others, while the practical life (the life of practical virtue) *does* require others *per se*. For, at the very least, "the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly" (1177a30). In other words, while friends may still be desirable in a contemplative life, they will not, strictly speaking, be needed. Accordingly, we should expect the primary need for friends to be in our lives *insofar* as our lives involve external action and do not consist purely in contemplation. But, of course, the need for *other people* in the practical life does not of itself imply the need for friends (or 'other selves' in particular), and, even in the practical domain, we may ask why the exercise of practical virtues should require friends specifically, rather than others in general.

In both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle provides two main arguments for the happy person's need for friends. These, in fact, correspond essentially to practical action and theoretical activity (perceiving and knowing), respectively. But, interestingly, Aristotle's primary and longer argument is expressed in terms of the shared life of friends considered in respect of the exercise of essentially theoretical capacities. Let me now consider both of these arguments and examine whether either of them is able to satisfactorily answer the question of whether there is any activity of the happy person which *essentially* (and not merely incidentally) requires friends.

III.1 The Need for Others To Benefit

Again, Aristotle's first, short argument for the happy person's need for friends pertains essentially to the exercise of practical virtue. Perhaps the brevity of this argument is the product of the fact that,

when viewed under the right light, it appears so obvious. For, nearly all of the practical virtues (with the possible exception of temperance) require *someone else* for their exercise. But why should they require friends?

The short argument is presented in *NE* IX.9 as follows:

> And if it is more characteristic of a friend to do well by another than to be well done by, and to confer benefits is characteristic of the good man and of excellence, and it is nobler to do well by friends than by strangers, the good man will need people to do well by. (1139b10-13)

Now, as an explanation of the need for *friends*, there is something, I think, quite obviously unsatisfying about this kind of argument. For benefaction, to be sure, require another. But the role of the other here is, in effect, to merely be the *patient* or *recipient* of one's virtuous activity. Indeed, in his longer accounts of the benefactor-beneficiary relationship, Aristotle explicitly describes it in terms of an asymmetric agent-patient relationship (1168a10-13). But, for just that reason, activities of pure benefaction do not seem to inherently require *friends* -- or fellow participants in *shared* activity.

In the passage just quoted, Aristotle claims that "it is nobler to do well by friends than by strangers," but it is not clear why this is should be the case. Just below, he clarifies that "plainly it is better [for the blessed man] to spend his days with friends and good men than with strangers or chance persons" (1169b19-22). But benefiting another and spending one's days with another are not the same. This is perhaps clearest in Aristotle's discussion of the friendship between father and son, which he regards as a paradigmatic example of a benefactor-beneficiary relationship. He writes, "fathers wish the existence of their sons, but prefer to live with others" (*EE* VII.6 1240a29-30).

The reason for this is not hard to see. For the relationship of father to son and of benefactor to beneficiary in general is a relationship based upon inequality (cf. *EE* VII.3 1238b2124-26). But in friendship, *arithmetic* or strict equality is primary -- even while in justice (which also aims at equality and reciprocity), proportional justice is primary. Accordingly, (arithmetically) unequal friendship is only friendship in a secondary way. "This," Aristotle explains, "becomes clear if there is a great interval in respect of excellence or vice or wealth or anything else between the two parties; for they are no longer friends, and do not even expect to be so" (*NE* VIII.7 1158b29-35). In the *Eudemian Ethics*, he goes as far as to say that "it would be absurd for a man to be a friend of a child, yet certainly he loves and is loved by him" (*EE* VII.4 1239a5). For, the relation of benefaction is based upon inequality and depends on it. But friendship, in the primary sense, is among equals, for these are the ones we wish to live with. Indeed, even an unequal friendship between father and son or superior and inferior in general is not a friendship *merely* on account of this relation of benefaction, but it is only any kind of friendship at all insofar as the beneficiary returns something (love and honor) in proportion to the benefit.

A mere relation of benefaction, then, is not really a friendship at all, and Aristotle even insists that the beneficiary *as such* naturally harbors a kind of resentment toward the benefactor, because of the inferiority and passivity of his position (cf. *NE* IX.7 1168a9-13). Accordingly, the happy and virtuous person's need to *benefit* others clearly is not an adequate explanation of his need for *friends*, for beneficiaries as such are hardly friends, and if they are friends it is because of something other than this mere relation of benefaction.

But, as I noted above, Aristotle's longer and more substantial argument for the happy person's need for friends does not focus on the need to benefit others, but rather, precisely on the relation of *living* together, which is, by contrast, the primary mark of true friendship between equals. Let me now turn to that account.

III.2 Aristotle's longer argument: shared knowledge and perception

In both the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle's longer and more 'scientific' argument for the happy person's need for friends is based on considerations about a certain kind of active self-knowledge and self-love. This account, Aristotle claims in *Eudemian Ethics*, is the result of ascertaining "what life is in its active sense and as end." "Clearly," he writes, "it is perception and knowledge, and therefore life in society is perception and knowledge in common. And self-perception and self-knowledge is most desirable to every one, and hence the desire of living is congenital in all; for living must be regarded as a kind of knowledge" (*EE* VII.12 1244a23-29).

The argument that follows (and its parallel argument in *NE* IX.9) is not, in the first instance, about one's relationship to one's friends, but is primarily devoted to an account of a certain kind of self-relation. But Aristotle claims (with very little argument) that this very self-relation extends to one's relation to one's friend, insofar as a friend is 'another self.'

Specifically, Aristotle gives an extremely interesting account of the close relation between knowledge, self-knowledge, and self-love. The argument turns on a central principle which is more fully thematized in the *De Anima* — namely, that perception and *nous*, when *actual*, are the same as their objects (cf. *DA* III.2 425a27 and *DA* III.8 431b24-30). Accordingly, there is a certain kind of coincidence between knowing and self-knowing, since, in actual knowing, one is, in a sense, *one* with the object of knowledge. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, he writes that "the perceiver becomes perceived in that way and in that respect in which he first perceives, and according to the way in which and the object which he perceives; and the knower becomes known in the same way — therefore it is for this reason that one always desires to live, because one desires to know; and this is because he himself wishes to be the object known" (1245a7-10). In effect, Aristotle is identifying knowledge of the good with self-knowledge and with self-love. One *is*, in a sense, good in knowing what is good, and one therefore is most lovable to oneself precisely in knowing what is good.

In *De Anima* III.4, Aristotle makes a further distinction between two ways or senses in which, in actually thinking an object, *nous* is one with the object. This, he thinks, is generally the case, but there

is an even stronger sense in which thought thinks itself in thinking an object — namely, when the actual knowledge is the exercise of an already possessed capacity (i.e. the possession of a science). He writes:

> When thought has become each thing in the way in which a man who actually knows is said to do so (this happens when he is now able to exercise the power on his own initiative), its condition is still one of potentiality, but in a different sense from the potentiality which preceded the acquisition of knowledge by learning or discovery; and thought is then able to think of itself [*autos de auton tote dunatai noein*]" (429b6-9)

In other words, the paradigm and primary case of thought thinking itself (at least for us humans) is not that in which one first acquires geometry by doing geometry. Rather, the paradigm case is one in which one already *possesses* the science of geometry and exercises that capacity. This is the exercise of what the Aristotelians call a 'second potentiality.' Such a second potentiality is a quality of oneself in, it seems, a stronger sense than a mere 'first potentiality,' in just the same way that the exercise of virtue already possessed is a virtuous action and one's own action in a stronger sense than a virtuous act performed by one who does not yet possess a virtuous character.

I think we can best appreciate the argument of *Eudemian Ethics* by supplementing it with the aforementioned distinction in *De Anima*. For here the kind of 'self-love' that comes with actually thinking and knowing an object pertains, above all, to the love of one's own existence in *actuality* — not merely the exercise of innate capacities, but the exercise of one's developed capacities, which is really the actualization of one's determinate character.

Moreover, what is striking about this argument, and its connection to the aforementioned claim in *De Anima*, is that, on this account, this kind of knowledge-*cum*-self-knowledge is in a quite literal sense a participation in the divine life of thought thinking itself (cf. *Met*. **Λ**.7). Indeed, this conception of knowing the most knowable and perfect object as the highest form of self-love stands in a close connection to Aristotle's remark in *Metaphysics* A.2, that "as the man is free, we say, who exists for himself and not for another, so we pursue this [first philosophy] as the only free science, for it alone exists for itself" (982b26).

In a word, the main part of Aristotle's argument, both in *Eudemian Ethics* VII.12 and *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.9 is, in its own right, a fascinating argument for Aristotle's claim that the life of scientific knowledge and contemplation is the most desirable life, the most self-sufficient, and the happiest life — indeed, it is the highest form of self-love. But what does this have to do with friendship?

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, the move from this kind of self-relation to one's relation to one's friend is quite short. He writes:

> if as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self):—then as his own existence is desirable for each man, so, or almost so, is that of his friend. Now his existence was

> seen to be desirable because he perceived his own goodness, and such perception is pleasant in itself. 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. (1270b13).

Aristotle's argument says very little about the specific nature of the relationship in virtue of which perceiving one's friend's goodness is essentially like perceiving one's own goodness. He merely gives an account of the latter and adds that the friend is 'another self.' There is little explanation of *how* or *why* the friend is 'another self,' so that one's relation to oneself is, in effect, the very same as one's relation to one's friend (or nearly so). But what seems to connect the relevant self-love and self-knowledge in this context to the love and knowledge of one's friend is a certain kind of transitivity in Aristotle's conception of the identity between the activities of the soul and their actual objects. In a word, in shared discussion and thought, one's own thought and one's friend's thought are *both* one with their common object. In this way, one is also one with one's friend and knows one's friend, just as one knows oneself, in knowing the object.

Now, whatever one makes of this argument, it seems to be a strange *kind* of argument in defense of the happy person's *need* for friends. For, the kind of shared activity which this sort of friendship is based on — knowledge, perception, thinking — is one which Aristotle does not think *requires* a friend. In the case of contemplation, Aristotle is quite explicit about this. For, indeed, to return to an example discussed above, one who possesses the science of geometry is *ipso facto* capable of exercising that capacity at will, and does not (like one who is still learning) require another in order to exercise that capacity. In other words, the activity of shared knowledge and perception appears to be precisely an example of the second kind of ultimate goods I mentioned above — namely, of a kind of virtue or capacity whose exercise *may* involve another but need not.

Some authors have made quite a bit out of Aristotle's claim that "one perceives the actions of a friend better [*mallon*] than one's own" (NE 1169b32). Kim (2021, 500), in fact, argues that we should read '*mallon*' here as 'rather' (not 'better') -- taking Aristotle to claim that we cannot perceive our own actions (at least apart from the mirror of our friends). But it is not clear why this should be so, and Aristotle's argument appears to clearly contradict the idea that one *requires* another in order to perceive one's own activities, for he writes:

> he who sees perceives that he sees, and he who hears that he hears, and he who walks that he walks, and in the case of all other activities similarly there is something which perceives that we are active, so that if we perceive, we perceive that we perceive, and if we think, that we think (1170a30-33).[9]

[9] Kosman (2004) argues against the view that we need friends to know ourselves insofar as they are reflections or a kind of mirror for our character. Rather, he claims that, in *NE* IX.9 Aristotle understands the friend not as an *object* for our activity but a co-subject. I think this is right as a reading of Aristotle's long argument, though, at the end of this essay, I will give an argument for a distinct sense in which the friend as both fellow object and subject does provide a sort of reflection of our lives.

Indeed, it would be strange to say, for instance, that a geometer — who can prove Pythagoras's theorem — even knows *better* that a friend is actually demonstrating or has successfully demonstrated the theorem than he knows that he himself has done so when he performs the demonstration himself.

In short, even if Aristotle's argument works, it does not seem to prove that the happy person needs a friend. Rather, it seems to prove only the thesis with which Aristotle begins his argument in that section of *NE* IX.9, that "a virtuous friend seems to be naturally desirable for a virtuous man" (1170a13). For his argument is that a virtuous friend is desirable to the virtuous person for precisely the same reason that his own existence is desirable for himself. His move from desirability to need is a very weak one — namely, that "that which is desirable for him he must have, or he will be deficient in this respect. The man who is to be happy will therefore need virtuous friends" (1170b17-19). But here, the good of a friend appears only to be a kind of quantitative multiplication of the good of the virtuous man's own existence. Friendship, in this way, is not a special *kind* of good, but only a doubling of a good which one can fully have and make use of even in the absence of a friend. But, by that logic, the good of one hour of contemplation with a friend would appear to be the same as the good of *two* hours (or nearly two hours) contemplating with oneself. The enjoyment of doing the activity with others does not seem, on this account alone, to be different in kind than that of doing it alone but only more of the same.

In other words, this account of the need for friends is unsatisfying for two primary reasons (1) *because*, on this view, one loves a friend's activity *for precisely the same reason* that one love's own activity; and (2) the shared activity is one which one does not require a friend. In this way, the good of a friend only becomes a quantitative increase in the good of one's own solitary activity. Indeed, in this activity, the *otherness* of 'another self' seems to become purely incidental, and the two behave like a single individual. And here Aristotle's account appears to be subject to the very same criticism that he makes in *Politics* II against the communitarianism of Plato's *Republic* -- specifically, against Socrates' premise that "that the greater the unity of the state, the better" (Pol. II.2 1261a2). There, Aristotle writes:

> Unity there should be, both of the family and of the state, but in some respects only. For there is a point at which a state may attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state, or at which, without actually ceasing to exist, it will become an inferior state, like harmony passing into unison, or rhythm which has been reduced to a single foot." (II.5 1264b14-17)

But his account of friendship seems precisely to be one of "harmony passing into unison," or a mere doubling of one and the same tone.

To summarize my critique, Aristotle's short, benefaction-based argument and his long, shared-knowledge-based account appear to miss the mark of the nature of friendship by tending toward one or another extreme. For the friend, he claims, is 'another self.' But what is needed in benefaction is only *another*, and the beneficiary's being 'another self' is completely incidental to that

particular relationship. By contrast, the activity of knowing and self-knowing really only requires *oneself*, and insofar as one *may* perform such an activity with 'another self,' the otherness of the other appears to be purely incidental.

Expressed in this way, however, there seems to be an obvious candidate for the kind of activity whose most complete form requires 'another self' *per se*, namely, *justice* — not in the broad sense of virtue in relation to others (for this includes one-sided benefaction), but in the strict sense of reciprocal activity which achieves equality. For justice, like friendship, essentially requires both *otherness* and a kind of *equality*, and Aristotle regards friendship as a kind of justice (even a kind of perfect justice). If friendship is needed in the complete and happy life, then we should expect an account of why this specific *kind* of activity — i.e. activity which essentially involves reciprocity, equality *and* otherness — is necessary in the happy life. But Aristotle's arguments for why *exactly* the happy person needs friends has little to do with the specific nature of the kind of reciprocal activity which essentially involves another.

Indeed, despite his official view that friendship, like justice, cannot properly speaking be exercised toward oneself, his arguments at the end of Book IX of *Nicomachean Ethics* tend more and more toward taking the individual's relation to himself to be the paradigm of friendship (this is explicit in his argument of *NE* IX.4). It is not surprising that, viewed in this way, the good of *another* self in particular should come to appear superfluous — a mere quantitative multiplication of the individual's relation to himself.

In fact, I think that the central source of error in Aristotle's account lies in a certain one-sidedness in Aristotle's view that "it is more characteristic of a friend to do well by another than to be well done by," and in his related claims that "Love is like activity, being loved like passivity" (*NE* IX.7 1168a19) and that "friendship seems to lie in loving rather than in being loved" (*NE* VIII.8 1159a27). As evidence for the latter claim, he cites the example of mothers who are even willing to give up their children for the good of the children. But whatever kind of love such a mother shows, such a relationship could hardly be characterized as paradigmatic of *friendship*, for the child does not even know the mother. And such one-sided love could hardly be considered to be a part of a happy life, for no one could call such a woman a happy mother unless, to quote Aristotle, "he were maintaining a thesis at all costs" (*NE* I.6 1096a2).

Indeed, neither friendship nor (it seems) happiness can consist primarily in *loving* alone, but in both loving and being loved equally. This may seem to import an essential element of passivity into happiness (which one may or may not object to). But, I think, it is a wrong and superficial view to regard the love received from one's friends as mere passivity. On the contrary, as I will argue in what follows, we should instead regard being-loved by one's friends as, in a sense, the complete fulfillment of practical virtue.

The central question of this paper is: *what*, if any, of the ultimate goods of life requires friendship *specifically*? I've argued above that Aristotle's one-sided conception of the individual's agency in the happy life prevents him from being able to provide a satisfactory answer to this question, despite Aristotle's many deep insights into the nature of friendship. In what follows, I will argue that we can preserve these insights only through a correction to that conception — namely, by showing how and why the reciprocal relation of loving and being loved belongs essentially and necessarily to the complete human life — and, specifically, the complete exercise and enjoyment of practical virtue. Indeed, I will argue that *in order* to preserve an agency-centric conception of happiness, we must see precisely *why* love reciprocated by another *is* essentially a fulfillment of one's own practical agency (though not *only* one's own agency).

My argument in what follows will, in short, consist in an attempt to show how an activity-centered conception of happiness can not only be reconciled with but can even *explain* what I think is a rather obvious fact — namely, that the mother who gives up her child for the child's benefit is not a happy mother. At the very least, she is far less happy than she would be if she were able to keep and raise her child and be loved by the child in return (even in adulthood). Specifically, I will argue that *only* by showing the role of agency in *receiving* love from one's friends can we reconcile three propositions: (1) that "happiness is activity in conformity with virtue" (*NE* X.7 1177a12); (2) that happiness is *in* the agent of this activity (*Met.* **Θ**.8 1050a35); and (3) that the realization of *practical virtue* — precisely because, unlike purely theoretical virtues, it involves realizing external effects — is, at least in part, *in* another (the patient). I will argue that these three propositions can be reconciled only *because* of the uniquely reciprocal relationship of friendship. Without friendship, the second and third of these propositions would stand in direct tension with one another -- as is illustrated in the case of the self-sacrificing mother described above. But the third of these propositions, as I noted in the introduction, is somewhat contentious, and the following section will be devoted to defending this claim.

IV. The Essential Role of Another in the Exercise of Practical Virtue

As I've noted several times, Aristotle claims that the exercise of practical virtue requires others *per se*, while the exercise of purely theoretical virtues (above all, contemplation), does not. The reason for this seems to be clear enough: practical action aims at realizing some good external effect. For it is the result of deliberation and choice, whose objects are "things that are in our power and can be done" (*NE* III.3 1112a31). Deliberation is a kind of reasoning backward from some end to the most immediate means which it is in my (efficient causal) power to do. This last step is the immediate object of choice, from which the action itself follows. For action is not simply deliberating and choosing, but choosing is only the *origin* of action ("the origin of action—its efficient, not its final cause—is choice" (*NE* VI.2 1139a32)). Action, therefore, involves the realization of my efficient causal power in the external world in accordance with choice. And this exercise of my efficient causality requires some kind of patient — i.e. another (or myself qua other). This is why the exercise of practical virtue requires another *per se*, for, at a minimum, as Aristotle writes, "the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly" (*NE* x 1177a30).

Insofar as action involves the realization of my efficient causal power to move *another* (or oneself qua other), it immediately follows that its realization is (at least in part) *in the patient*, the other which I affect. Now, such a conclusion seems to directly contradict Aristotle's claims in *Metaphysics* **Θ**.6-8 to the contrary. For, first, Aristotle writes that, unlike production, "that in which the end is present is an action," (1048b24), and again in *NE* VI.5 that "while making has an end other than itself, action cannot, for good action is itself an end" (1140b1). (Although, earlier in the text, Aristotle says the exact opposite: "deliberation is about the things to be done by the agent himself, and actions are for the sake of things other than themselves" (1112b31-3)). But, in **Θ**.8, Aristotle contrasts productions from actions in which the end is present in terms of the question of *in what* (or in whom) they are realized, writing the following:

> Where, then, the result is something apart from the exercise, the actuality is in the thing that is being made, e.g. the act of building is in the thing that is being built and that of weaving in the thing that is being woven, and similarly in the other cases, and in general the movement is in the thing that is being moved; but when there is no product apart front he actuality, the actuality is in the agent, e.g. the act of seeing is in the subject and that of theorizing in the theorizing subject. (**Θ**.8 1050a30-35; cf. also *Physics* III.3)

On such a view, then, it would seem that, insofar as good actions are done for their own sakes, they should be realized simply *in* the agent, not the patient. But what is notable about the *Metaphysics* **Θ**.6-8 account of action (and of *energeia* in the strict sense, distinguished from *kinesis*)[10] is that all of his concrete examples of this involved theoretical activities, by contrast to external actions. His examples of activities realized in the agent above are seeing and contemplating (or 'theorizing'), and his examples in **Θ**.6 of 'actions' by contrast to productions and movements are seeing, understanding, and thinking (1048b21-23). He contrasts these even with *walking*.[11]

Now, even while Aristotle is quite clear that action is not mere production, what it shares with production (and what distinguishes it from mere contemplation) is that it *does* aim at and produce an external effect. If it did not, then there would be no point of deliberating backwards to that which is in my power to do. How, then, can practical action be realized simply *in the agent*? Aquinas, for his part, claims that action *is* simply realized in the agent. He writes:

> Moreover, reason does some things by making them, by action that extends to external matter, and this belongs strictly to skills called mechanical (e.g., those of craftsmen, shipbuilders, and the

[10] As Stephen Menn rightly notes, kineseis *are*, for Aristotle, a subclass of *energeiai*, so that his distinction is really between a primary sense of energeia which is not a kind of kinesis and a secondary sense which is kinesis (1994, 106n43).

[11] He also gives 'living' and 'well-being' as examples of activities in the agent. Now, insofar as living and existing (for us) is understood primarily as perceiving and knowing, this follows directly from the claim that the latter activities are in the agent. But, insofar as existing for us is also *acting* (in the practical sense) -- as in *NE* IX.71168a6 -- this internality of existence as actuality is not as obvious. I will discuss this point further just below.

> like). And reason does other things by action that remains in the one acting (e.g., deliberating, choosing, willing, and the like), and such things belong to moral science. Therefore, it is evident that political science, which considers the direction of human beings, is included in the sciences about human action (i.e., moral sciences) and not in the sciences about making things (i.e., mechanical skills).[12]

What is notable about Aquinas's claim is that he seems to primarily *identify* action with deliberation and choosing, and these may rightly be said to occur in the soul of the one deliberating and choosing. But Aristotle himself makes no such identification. For again, he claims that "the origin of action—its efficient, not its final cause—is choice." In *De Anima*, he writes that "that which is last in the process of thinking is the beginning of action" (III.10 433a18), where by 'thinking' he is referring here specifically to practical thought, or thought "which calculates means to an end" (433a14). Again, in *NE* VI.9, Aristotle says approvingly that "men deliberate a long time, and they say that one should carry out [*prattein*] quickly the conclusions of one's deliberation, but one should deliberate slowly" (*NE* VI. 1142b3-5). Finally, in *Politics* I.4, Aristotle writes that "life is action and not production, and therefore a slave is the minister of action [sc. not merely production]" (1254a7). But clearly Aristotle does not think that a slave is an instrument of *deliberation*, but only an instrument for the execution of the master's choice, i.e. the action.

In fact, the role of the other as the medium of realization of practical virtues is made most explicit in Aristotle's explanation of why benefactors in fact love beneficiaries more than the other way around (which one might expect). Here he explicitly draws the connection to production and specifically child-production. His explanation is this:

> The cause of this is that existence is to all men a thing to be chosen and loved, and that we exist by virtue of activity (i.e. by living and acting [*prattein*]), and that the handiwork *is* in a sense, the producer in activity; he loves his handiwork, therefore, because he loves existence. And this is rooted in the nature of things; for what he is in potentiality, his handiwork manifests in activity (1168a5-9).[13]

Here Aristotle explicitly describes the benefactor-beneficiary relationship as an agent-patient relationship (1168a10-13), and in *Eudemian Ethics*, making essentially the same argument, he

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[12] *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* Prologue (p. 2).

[13] Note, the meaning of this passage in Aristotle is controversial. For, Aristotle is quite clear that the *energeia* of a capacity to move another is not the finished product (i.e. the complete house), but the still-being-finished product (i.e. the house-being-built) Cf. especially *Metaphysics* K 1066a24, and also *Physics* III.1 201b7-15. Of course, that stricture would have absurd implications for the account above, particularly insofar as it pertains to the mother's love of the child, for then she should love above all the child-being-born because she loves the activity of giving birth. For my own purposes, all that matters at present is that benefaction — as an *action* and not merely a production — is, like production, at least in part realized *in the one benefited* (i.e. in another). For more discussion of this point cf. Smith Pangle (2003, 160) and especially Menn (1994, 113n.).

writes that "there is the same relation between the effect and the activity, the benefited being as it were an effect or creation of the benefactor" (1242b1).

Now, in view of these considerations, I think we should not distinguish *praxis* from *poiesis* by claiming that the former, unlike the latter, produces no outer effect and therefore simply occurs within the agent. For in that case, practical action would be no different from theoretical activity. Rather, the sense in which practical action, unlike poiesis, is done for its own sake and contains its end within itself should, I think, be understood in this way: that the effect it aims at and brings about is something which is good (or perceived to be good) in its own right, and not merely as a means. Müller (2018) distinguishes *praxis* from *poiesis* by claiming that, in the former, unlike the latter, the result of the activity is itself the motivating end of the activity for the agent. I think this is right, and I think it essentially coincides with the claim that *praxis* aims at an effect which is perceived to be good in itself (and not merely as a means). So, for instance, parenting, for Aristotle, is a paradigmatic relation of benefaction. But parenting aims, above all, at the virtue of the child, and its work is, in a sense, fully complete when the child actually exercises virtue. So, as Aristotle writes in *Metaphysics* **Θ**.8, "teachers think they have achieved their end when they have exhibited the pupil at work [ἐνεργοῦντα]" (1050a18-19). Or, again, insofar as, for Aristotle, the state exists "for the sake of noble actions," (*Pol.* III.9 1281a2), this also entails that education is part of the actions of the state, for it aims at the noble actions of those educated.

In view of this, I think we can likewise begin to understand why practical virtues are not merely directed toward *another* in general (including another thing) but other *persons*, even while mere *poieseis* can be directed simply toward other *things* (wood, bricks, etc.). For effects which are ultimate ends cannot be realized in another thing, but only in other subjects.

Now, as I have stated quite emphatically, true friendship cannot be a mere benefactor-beneficiary relationship. For even unequal friendships between benefactor and beneficiary (e.g. between parents and children) are not friendship at all *merely* in virtue of the one benefiting and the other being benefited but only insofar as there is at least a proportional reciprocity and a return of love and honor from beneficiary to benefactor. But the point of the foregoing argument has only been to make clear why the exercise of practical virtue requires another in general and other persons in particular. This, I think, is why we look primarily for the need for friends and other people in general in the ultimate ends of life *insofar* as that life involves something practical -- or, at the very least, insofar as it involves a kind of interaction with others. For even mutual discussion clearly involves *some* kind of interaction with another (it is not like simply viewing a play side-by-side in silence).

But, if practical virtue is, at least in part, realized *in* another, then, as I noted above, this appears to stand in tension with Aristotle's views that (a) happiness *is* an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue and that (b) happiness is realized in the agent. At least it stands in tension with these claims insofar as Aristotle thinks that not *only* the life of contemplation but also the life of practical virtue is a happy life. For the activities of practical virtue are not merely in the agent but essentially, it seems,

involve a patient. I think that this tension is not merely a conceptual one (which we might try to resolve in a general way), but rather a real-life problem which points to the *essential* need of friendship in the happy life, insofar as that life does not merely consist in inner contemplation but involves action in the external world. For, even granting that the solitary activities of contemplation may be quite enjoyable even without a friend, it seems quite clear that a life of external action (however virtuous it may be) would not be a happy life without friends. For we may concede that even if (as in benefaction) the realization of the end is in the beneficiary, the perception of that achievement as the benefactor's own good action is nonetheless *in the benefactor*. In that way, the self-sacrificing mother will likewise perceive her own goodness in knowing the child is benefited through other parents. But it would be strange to say that the primary end of that action is the mother's perception of her goodness (rather than the benefit conferred upon and ultimately enjoyed by the child). And, indeed, if the primary good *for the agent* of practical action were in such perception of one's own goodness, then such a mother should be a perfectly good example of happiness in the practical life. But clearly this is not the case, and whatever good she obtains for herself through this action alone naturally appears incomplete by comparison to the good she would enjoy in keeping, raising, and being known and loved by her child. What I will argue in what follows is, in fact, that it is only *through* friendship that the ultimate realization of practical virtue can be *in* the agent -- namely, it is in the agent only *qua* member and enjoyer of a friendship and only to the extend that it is also in the other friend. To this end, I will begin (in the following section) by arguing that the *receiving* of love from one's friends should not be viewed, as Aristotle claims, as a passivity but essentially as the product and enjoyment of one's own agency.

V. Agency and Patiency in Reciprocal Justice and Friendship

Now, as I noted above, the most obvious model for understanding a relation to 'another self' is to be found in relations of reciprocal justice (and friendship, Aristotle thinks, *is* a form of reciprocal justice). For such relationships depend both upon equality and otherness essentially, and these are, of course, the defining factors of 'another self.' What I think is especially unique to such a relation (and why it, above all, exhibits the form of a relation to 'another self') is that, while, like all practical action, it does involve another and (in a sense) acting 'on' another, the nature of its reciprocity means that neither party to the relationship is ever *merely* a patient, even in receiving something from the other.

As a most basic (though ultimately imperfect) illustration of this, consider a relationship of simple commercial exchange. Suppose I acquire a loaf of bread by paying for it with cash. Is the acquisition of bread my own *act* or is it a kind of passivity, so that my agency consists only in paying money (in which the baker is the patient), while the baker, in giving me bread in exchange, is the agent of my receiving it? In this case, it seems quite absurd to say that I am the mere *patient* of coming into possession of the bread. For here I realize an end through the appropriate means (paying cash to the baker), just as, in acquiring food from nature and eating, I am likewise the agent (cf. DA II.4). But am I not, then, *also* the agent of the baker's acquiring cash? For it was I who knowingly handed it to him. And, insofar as the baker is a *means* for my end, he is a kind of instrument, and an instrument is itself a kind of intermediate patient. But, if the baker is a mere patient in receiving my cash, then, for just the same

reason, I would be a mere patient in acquiring my bread. My own acquisition would not be my doing but only something being done *to* me. Here I should not be like a normal duck when it feeds, but like the sorry force-fed duck in a foie gras farm.

In a sense, the case of such an exchange appears to show the limitations of conceptualizing all external activity simply in terms of an agent acting on a patient. For, it seems that both I and the baker are, in a sense, both agent and patient with respect to both halves of the relationship — i.e. I am both agent and patient in receiving bread just as the baker is both agent and patient in receiving cash.[14] Put more simply, exchange is quite clearly and essentially an act of *two*, rather than two acts of one. The whole reciprocal act (of exchange), then, is prior in account to its parts, which cannot be understood in isolation from it, as though they were complete acts in their own right.

In view of these considerations, I think we should regard as mistaken Aristotle's claim that "Love is like activity, being loved like passivity" (*NE* IX.7 1168a19). For, if receiving bread for cash is to be considered not merely something passive but primarily a product of my activity (together with the other's), then receiving love in a friendship ought to be considered all the more a product of my own activity and agency. The appearance that the former is my own act but the latter is not is a false appearance.

It *appears* to be the case because, unlike in commercial exchange, there is not a direct and immediate connection between love given and love received like there is with commercial exchanges. Or, again, unlike commercial exchanges, one does not instrumentalize the other and receive one's own part of the reciprocal activity through a clear means-end calculation. Love given to me, far more than goods given in exchange for cash, must be the result of the free *choice* of the one who shows me love. I cannot demand love in the manner that I can demand the goods I've paid for, and if I got it only by so demanding it, what I would receive would be false love, like a fruit which would become a plastic fruit if I acquired it through payment.

But in a true and happy friendship, we *do* want, expect and receive love in exchange for love. We are right to feel betrayed and to regard as a false friend one who, for instance, gladly receives our comfort in times of distress but is absent when we ourselves our in distress or even if we simply need the friend's company. But, more importantly, friendship is a *hexis* — a stable state — which, like other acquired *hexeis* (such as virtue and craft) is the product of repeated acts of friendship. Friendship based upon virtue is the product of repeated virtuous and friendly acts toward one another. The product of such acts is a stable, friendly disposition in both toward one another, and the fruits of such a disposition are further friendly and loving acts toward one another. In this way, if receiving goods in exchange for cash is to be regarded not as mere patiency but as (in part) my own activity, then receiving love from a friend

[14] Note, even in an animal's feeding upon nature, the animal is, for Aristotle, in a sense both agent and patient, but not in the same respect. The animal's soul is the ultimate agent and its body is both the instrument and the ultimate patient (cf *DA* II.4). Here, however, I am saying that, in acquiring the bread, both my own soul and the baker's soul are *agents* in the relationship.

ought to be regarded *far more* as (at least in part) a product of my own activity. For paying cash is simple and is done once, whereas making and enjoying a friend through virtue is the result of far more and greater acts than this.

Indeed, a friendship is, in this way, itself a common possession and a product of two agents together. But when, for instance, two friends plant a garden together — when they put in equal work and receive equal parts of the harvest — neither would ever think to make a distinction between who gets to eat which particular fruit, based upon who planted which particular seed. In like manner and in general, equal friends make no significant distinction between particular acts of giving and receiving love, for these are the fruits of a common friendship which is built and enjoyed together.[15]

The shared agency and reciprocal justice of friendship is that which distinguishes it above all from any other relationship. The kind of shared agency and reciprocal justice which occurs between friends is, it seems, the most complete form of this, in relation to which commercial exchange is the most paltry and deficient example. And it is, I think, in terms of this kind of relationship that we can best understand what it means for a friend to be 'another self.' For a friend is not another self simply by individually possessing the same or similar qualities and virtues which I possesses (for this is the case with many people whom I do not even know). Nor is a true friend another self in the sense in which a child is another self to the parent or a mere beneficiary another self to a benefactor. For those relationships are essentially asymmetrical, and the 'other-selfhood' of true friendship is an essentially symmetrical relationship. Nor, again, is a friend 'another self' simply in the episodic manner of sharing in this or that exercise of a shared virtue — for this I can do with a like-minded stranger whom I meet casually. Such activities may be friendly acts and the beginning of friendship, but they are not the acts of a friendship and of friends in the proper sense.

The best friends *will* share similar individual qualities and virtues, and they will share activities together. But what friends share in a manner which cannot occur in any other kind of relationship is *the friendship itself*. For friendship is an essentially common possession — not in the sense that each can individually possess the same thing (like other virtues and capacities), but in the sense that if it is not possessed by both at once, then it is not possessed by either. This common possession is the *product* and *basis* of a shared life, and the shared activities of friends are the exercises or uses of this common product. Considered on the whole, and not analyzed into particular parts (like giving money, considered apart from acquiring bread in exchange), the activities which belong to and occur *within* this common life are essentially the activities of both. Insofar as the best and most valuable activities of

[15] Carreras (2012, 329) takes the basis of friendship to be the mutual shaping of the friends themselves. I think such mutual shaping is an important part of friendship, but on my account it is not the primary good. Rather, I think that the more important feature is the mutual creation of the *friendship itself*, not the friends themselves -- about which more in section VI.

my life belong, as parts, to this shared life, then it is in this sense, primarily, that the friend is another self — in such a way that both *otherness* and *equality* are inseparably parts of the relationship.[16]

VI. Friendship as the Necessary Condition of Happiness in the Practical Life

The overarching question of this paper has been: what ultimate goods, if any, specifically require friendship and why? My argument, in this section, is that friendship is the complete fulfillment of a practical life and that it is the enabling condition of happiness in a practical life. The reason, in short, is that while all practical life essentially involves the bringing about of good external effects and products, *friendship* (and, indeed, community in general) is (1) the best and ultimate *product* of practical virtue; and (2) the only form of *external activity* which (similar to the internal life of contemplation) involves the form of self-containment and self-sufficiency which characterizes happiness as such. My argument is the following.

First, friends and friendship are something which one *makes*. But making a friend and a friendship is a very unique kind of *making*. For, one does not primarily make a friend in the sense that a mother makes a child or a benefactor a beneficiary. Indeed, what is unique to making a friend is that such an activity neither requires *generating* the other herself nor even altering any of the individual qualities or virtues of the other. Two good people can become friends with one another without needing to make the other different in any way. The only change which one inherently brings about in another by making a friend is the development of the other's disposition or *hexis* of friendship toward oneself. The other qualities of another *can* remain the same, even though they *may* change, and, indeed, good friends, by performing good acts together, will *also* become better individually.

Nonetheless, a friendship *is* something which one (or rather, two) create and which takes time — although, unlike other productions (and like the development of other virtues), it is not a *finite* activity, so that the activities whereby it is created would cease once the friendship itself is formed (cf. *Met.* **Θ**.6). It is true that one is not always *still making* a friend, but one eventually has a friend. But there is no clear transition between the completed 'making' and its use, for like virtue in general, the same acts by which it is produced are those which it in turn produces and by which it is preserved.

Secondly, *the way* one makes a friendship based on virtue is through the repeated, continual, and recognized exercises of virtue. In this way, a friendship (and, a community in general) is the more complete and lasting product of complete and lasting virtue than any other outward product of practical virtue. To create such a friendship requires full virtue and all the virtues, and it requires it continually, without some particular limit. It is not like, for instance, some particular exercise of liberality in funding public games or paying another's debt or any other limited activity — including,

[16] Both Millgram (1987) and Carreras (2012) take the formative relationship (i.e. forming a friend) as the basis of a friend's being another self, basing this primarily on the account of benefaction in *NE* IX.7. I am claiming that the basis of another's being another self is not the formation of the other or the mutual formation of friends, but rather their shared formation of the *friendship itself*, which need not inherently alter either of the friends as individual people (though, incidentally, it will also do this).

for instance, helping to win a war through courage and practical wisdom. The outward exercise of virtue always realizes some effect, but many of these are limited and perishable, whereas friendship is unlimited and enduring.[17] And it is enduring *precisely because* it is not dependent upon bringing about any change in either of the friends (apart from the disposition of friendship itself). For if it were based on such a change, then it would be like mere friendship for use (either for one party or both), and as soon as the usefulness expired — i.e. as soon as the change had been brought about — the friendship would have no purpose and would come to an end. A parental relationship *as such* has an end (the mature life of the child), and if the relationship is to continue it must be based on a kind of achieved equality. And a relation of benefaction must come to an end, for it achieves its end only when the beneficiary no longer needs the benefactor. Such a relationship can only continue if the beneficiary, having become more equal to the benefactor, can maintain a relationship based on equality and reciprocity and not mere benefaction. The same is the case with any relationship based on education. Only friendship based on equality can last, precisely because it does not depend upon bringing about any change in the friends.

Thirdly, in all action which aims at some coming-to-be or some acquisition, the use or exercise is better than the coming-to-be, and it is that for the sake of which we acquire something in the first place. But here is what distinguishes friendship from all other exercises of practical virtue: its product *can only* be used by the producer — or, rather, producers. That is to say, when two form a friendship, that friendship cannot be used or practiced by any but the friends themselves. This is not the case with designing better city roads, creating a better tax system, or even rearing and educating another in knowledge and virtue. For the ultimate ends of those activities are their use, but that use need not involve *me* even if I have created the thing. A friendship is the sole product of my virtuous activity whose ultimate use cannot be enjoyed without me. In this respect, it is like my own virtue, but again, my own practical virtue will require action with some outer effect which, therefore, exists outside of me. The exercise of friendship (shared activity) , by contrast, is *internal* to the friendship, even while it inherently involves external activity (for that activity remains *within* the relationship itself). Indeed, a friend — not qua virtuous person but *qua* friend — is the external product of my own activity which is *mine* in a far stronger sense than anything else. My *life* — insofar as it is not merely perceiving and knowing, but also involves doing and is therefore in part realized in external effects — is, in many respects, outside of me, and once I have done my work it exists independently of me. A friend qua friend is that alone which is both my own outer work and product (again, not qua person but qua friend) but which is in the greatest degree *mine* and a part of my active life, insofar as that life is a shared life.[18]

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[17] Excepting, of course, the death or moral degradation of another friend. This, of course, distinguishes the community that is the state from that of friendship -- for the state is not inherently mortal in the way that friends are.

[18] I therefore agree with Sherman (1987, 594-5) that the intrinsic worth of friendship is "a much more pervasive sort providing the very form and mode of life within which an agent can best realize her virtue and achieve happiness. To have intimate friends and family is to have interwoven in one's life, in an ubiquitous way, persons toward whom and with whom one can most fully and continuously express one's goodness."

The point, I think, can be made even clearer by attending not merely to the acquisition and possession of friends but to the activities of friends, for this is, of course, what the possession is for. For so far I have spoken in quite abstract terms about how, considered as a whole, a friendship — because of its characteristic equality and reciprocity — is the product of an activity which, nonetheless, essentially remains *internal* to the life of the agent (or, rather, the agents). But why is the *activity* and *actual company* of friends so uniquely desirable that without it our lives would be painfully incomplete? Why do we want to act and live with friends above all?

The basis of the answer to this question is, I think, clear to anyone: our friends *know* us and understand us more than anyone else, and we desire above all to spend time and interact with those who know us best. But why should this make a difference? The answer to this question, I think, essentially pertains to the manner in which the *reciprocated* love and activity of our friends is the *completion* of our own external activities.

In the foregoing discussion, I have emphasized the manner in which the exercise of practical virtues cannot be understood without consideration of external effects. But, on the other hand, as Aristotle rightly emphasizes, we cannot simply *identify* that exercise with this or that particular external effect. For, in the first instance, a just person may — on rare occasion — perform an unjust act, and in general, true acts of justice and of virtue as a whole are only those which are the expressions of a stable and enduring character, whereas anyone can perform a just act (at least, in its external features) without possessing such a character and without choosing it for its own sake (cf. *NE* V.8). In this way, however, there is a kind of disparity between the essence of the act and the particular act, just as carpentry is more expansive than any of the individual works through which it is realized. And, in general, the outer realization of practical virtues will be like this — each taken individually does not contain the whole nature of its ultimate cause, the virtue itself, but only expresses it in one particular way. Considered merely in its external effects, it makes little difference whether a spear thrown is thrown by a courageous person and as an act of courage or from a small-minded mercenary — what matters is only where and how it lands.

But precisely the opposite is the case in acts for and with a friend. The reason friends must spend time with one another in order to become friends is that this is needed in order to know one another's character, without which they cannot truly trust and love one another. And because no individual act adequately reveals one's character, one must know a person for some time in order not only to know her character but even to understand her acts *as* products issuing from her specific character. But the friend who knows my character is, for this reason, the one who above all understands my actions in their essence and for what they are — distinguishing outer appearances and outer effects from the inner character from which they emerge.

But this means that the very same outward acts and words not only have different effects on a friend than on any another person but a different *kind* of effect. Namely, the inner nature of the action *qua* inner nature has an effect and outer realization. What I mean is perhaps best illustrated by, for instance,

simple acts of love which friends can perform for one another. A thoughtful gift from a friend *moves* us far more deeply than the very same object would if we bought it or found it on the street, and a favor done for us by a friend affects us far more deeply than the mere material benefit which it might bring. For its effect on us as a gift is shaped precisely by the fact that we know it to *be* an expression of love — the fruit of our friendship with another — and that is why we value it. The *hexis* from which it emerges (the enduring friendship) is, in a sense, not merely the cause of some external thing but it is also itself the external thing. It is embodied in this particular gift in a manner akin to that in which, for Catholics, the substance of the host is Christ himself. Otherwise put, the inner intention and character from which particular actions emerge can *itself* only be externalized (and not merely have some other, material effect) only in and for the one who understands it, and this is above all a friend.

All outer actions are attempts to exercise and outwardly realize one's inner character and virtue, but insofar as their external existence is of a different kind than the inner character from which they emerge, none of them can adequately realize this attempt. Only in the understanding and appreciation of a friend who knows us does the external realization of action have the same character as the internal quality of which it is an external realization.

But — and this is perhaps the most crucial thing — the understanding and appreciation of a friend is itself expressed in reciprocated activity. Even when one gives a philosophical account of a beloved topic of contemplation, one's own understanding is only properly externalized insofar as another understands it, and only one who possesses a similar capacity to oneself and knows what one knows can properly do this. But the expression of the friend's understanding is shown by the friend's appropriate response. Herein, I think, lies a problem with Aristotle's claim that the exercise *even* of contemplation is, properly speaking, in one's own soul. For we exercise knowledge and understanding in giving an account, in speaking and writing. This *can* be done in us insofar as we can speak silently to ourselves, just like we can both write on and read from the very same page. But we rightly think we have succeeded in expressing our understanding when we have given an account, and we think we have adequately done so when one who is capable of understanding does understand it. And the full realization of the other's understanding is likewise expressed in the other's given and accepted response.

In short, the reciprocated love and activity of our friends toward us is that through which, above all, we know and experience the success and fulfillment of our own outer activities *as* expressions of our inner character and virtues. In fact, the reciprocated activity of our friends *is* the proper manner in which their receptivity of our own acts toward them is fulfilled. It is in the reciprocal love and activity of friends that we therefore internally experience and know the fulfillment of our outer lives and the external exercises of our virtues.

Friendship, it is true, consists primarily in loving. But the success of our loving is shown above all in the free and undemanded reciprocation of love from our friends toward us. It is in receiving such love that the external effects of our good actions and characters are capable of being likewise returned and realized in us. In the absence of this, the practically virtuous person should be like the tragic mother

who must express her love by giving away her child and being unknown and unloved by that child. Nothing would make such a woman happier than if at some point — perhaps in adulthood — her child learned of this action and expressed his love and gratitude toward her for it. For reciprocal friendship, I am claiming, is that through which alone the complete exercise of practical virtue is able to have a realization *in us*. But if happiness is in us, and if happiness consists in the exercise of virtues of the soul, then friendship alone will enable happiness in a life which essentially involves external action.

VII. Conclusion

To briefly conclude, I began this essay by asking why friendship specifically should be included in the ultimate ends of a good life. I argued that Aristotle is quite right in claiming that the reason for this lies in the nature of the friends' shared *exercise* of virtues already possessed — rather than merely in the acquisition or improvement of individual virtues through friends. But, I argued, Aristotle's own explanation of the shared activities of friends fails to satisfactorily explain the need for friendship *specifically*. The reason, I argued, is that Aristotle — in overemphasizing the individual agency of the virtuous person — fails to adequately show the necessity of *receiving* the reciprocated activity of our friends toward us. For, I argued, he mistakenly views such reciprocated love and activity toward us as a mere passivity. On the contrary, we should instead regard such freely reciprocated activity as the fulfillment of our own activity of loving a friend. For a friendship itself (and a community in general) is the most complete, lasting, and self-sufficient product of our outward activity and the exercise of practical virtue. The freely reciprocated love of our friends toward us is the ripe fruit of our own lives, insofar as that life involves external actions and aims. Far from a mere passivity, it is the product of the most demanding and persisting activity.

In effect, my claim is essentially the same as that which Aristotle makes in *Nicomachean Ethics* IX,9 — that we know and perceive our own lives in and through the knowledge and perception of our shared lives with a friend, who is another self. But, I am claiming, we can only adequately explain why friends are *needed* for such self-knowledge by attending to the unique nature of reciprocal external action and reciprocated love in particular. We cannot explain this merely by understanding life in terms of perception and knowledge, but only in view of the role of *external* action in human life. It is precisely insofar as our lives our realized to a large extent in external action and therefore, in part, in another, that we need friends in order to be happy. For, I have argued, it is only in friendship that the external goods we realize through action are able to properly be our own goods. This, I propose, is why, for those of us whose lives do not consist purely in inner contemplation, a self-sufficient life is not merely "that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is sociable by nature" (*NE* I.7 1097 b7).

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