

ARISTOTLE

NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

BK. EIGHT

1

After what we have said, a discussion of friendship would naturally follow, since it is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living. 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 most laudable form towards friends? Or how can prosperity be guarded and preserved without friends? The greater it is, the more exposed is it to risk. And in poverty and in other misfortunes men think friends are the only refuge. It helps the young, too, to keep from error; it aids older people by ministering to their needs and supplementing the activities that are failing from weakness; those in the prime of life it stimulates to noble actions-'two going together'-for with friends men are more able both to think and to act. Again, parent seems by nature to feel it for offspring and offspring for parent, not only among men but among birds and among most animals; it is felt mutually by members of the same race, and especially by men, whence we praise lovers of their fellowmen. We may even in our travels how near and dear every man is to every other. Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for unanimity seems to be 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.

But it is not only necessary but also noble; for we praise those who love their friends, and it is thought to be a fine thing to have many friends; and again we think it is the same people that are good men and are friends.

Not a few things about friendship are matters of debate. Some define it as a kind of likeness and say like people are friends, whence come the sayings 'like to like', 'birds of a feather flock together', and so on; others on the contrary say 'two of a trade never agree'. On this very question they inquire for deeper and more physical causes, Euripides saying that 'parched earth loves the rain, and stately heaven when filled with rain loves to fall to earth', and Heraclitus that 'it is what opposes that helps' and 'from different tones comes the fairest tune' and 'all things are produced through strife'; while

Empedocles, as well as others, expresses the opposite view that like aims at like. The physical problems we may leave alone (for they do not belong to the present inquiry); let us examine those which are human and involve character and feeling, e.g. whether friendship can arise between any two people or people cannot be friends if they are wicked, and whether there is one species of friendship or more than one. Those who think there is only one because it admits of degrees have relied on an inadequate indication; for even things different in species admit of degree. We have discussed this matter previously.

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The kinds of friendship may perhaps be cleared up if we first come to know the object of love. For not everything seems to be loved but only the lovable, and this is good, pleasant, or useful; but it would seem to be that by which some good or pleasure is produced that is useful, so that it is the good and the useful that are lovable as ends. Do men love, then, the good, or what is good for them? These sometimes clash. So too with regard to the pleasant. Now it is thought that each loves what is good for himself, and that the good is without qualification lovable, and what is good for each man is lovable for him; but each man loves not what is good for him but what seems good. This however will make no difference; we shall just have to say that this is 'that which seems lovable'. Now there are three grounds on which people love; of the love of lifeless objects we do not use the word 'friendship'; for it is not mutual love, nor is there a wishing of good to the other (for it would surely be ridiculous to wish wine well; if one wishes anything for it, it is that it may keep, so that one may have it oneself); but to a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for his sake. But to those who thus wish good we ascribe only goodwill, if the wish is not reciprocated; goodwill when it is reciprocal being friendship. Or must we add 'when it is recognized'? For many people have goodwill to those whom they have not seen but judge to be good or useful; and one of these might return this feeling. These people seem to bear goodwill to each other; but how could one call them friends when they do not know their mutual feelings? To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other for one of the aforesaid reasons.

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Now these reasons differ from each other in kind; so, therefore, do the corresponding forms of love and friendship. There are therefore three kinds of friendship, equal in number to the things that are lovable; for with respect to each there is a mutual and recognized love, and those who love each other wish well to each other in that respect in which they love one another. Now those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant. Therefore those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for themselves, and those who love for the

sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to themselves, and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant. And thus these friendships are only incidental; for it is not as being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or 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.

Now the useful is not permanent but is always changing. Thus when the motive of the friendship is done away, the friendship is dissolved, inasmuch as it existed only for the ends in question. This kind of friendship seems to exist chiefly between old people (for at that age people pursue not the pleasant but the useful) and, of those who are in their prime or young, between those who pursue utility. And such people do not live much with each other either; for sometimes they do not even find each other pleasant; therefore they do not need such companionship unless they are useful to each other; for they are pleasant to each other only in so far as they rouse in each other hopes of something good to come. Among such friendships people also class the friendship of a host and guest. On the other hand the friendship of young people seems to aim at pleasure; for they live under the guidance of emotion, and pursue above all what is pleasant to themselves and what is immediately before them; but with increasing age their pleasures become different. This is why they quickly become friends and quickly cease to be so; their friendship changes with the object that is found pleasant, and such pleasure alters quickly. Young people are amorous too; for the greater part of the friendship of love depends on emotion and aims at pleasure; this is why they fall in love and quickly fall out of love, changing often within a single day. But these people do wish to spend their days and lives together; for it is thus that they attain the purpose of their friendship.

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good-and goodness is an enduring thing. And each is good without qualification and to his friend, for the good are both good without qualification and useful to each other. So too they are pleasant; for the good are pleasant both without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and others like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good are the same or like. And such a friendship is as might be expected permanent, since there are in it all the qualities that friends should have. For all friendship is for the sake of good or of pleasure-good or pleasure either in the abstract or such as will be enjoyed by him who has the friendly feeling-and is based on a certain resemblance; and to a friendship of good men all the qualities we have named belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves; for in the case of this kind of friendship the other qualities also are alike in both friends, and that which is good without qualification is also without qualification pleasant, and these are the most lovable qualities. Love and friendship therefore are found most and in their best form between such men.

1 But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such men are rare. Further, such
2 friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says, men cannot know each other till they
3 have 'eaten salt together'; nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been
4 found lovable and been trusted by each. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each
5 other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are lovable and know the fact; for a
6 wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not.

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10 This kind of friendship, then, is perfect both in respect of duration and in all other respects, and in it
11 each gets from each in all respects the same as, or something like what, he gives; which is what ought
12 to happen between friends. Friendship for the sake of pleasure bears a resemblance to this kind; for
13 good people too are pleasant to each other. So too does friendship for the sake of utility; for the good
14 are also useful to each other. Among men of these inferior sorts too, friendships are most permanent
15 when the friends get the same thing from each other (e.g. pleasure), and not only that but also from
16 the same source, as happens between ready-witted people, not as happens between lover and beloved.
17 For these do not take pleasure in the same things, but the one in seeing the beloved and the other in
18 receiving attentions from his lover; and when the bloom of youth is passing the friendship
19 sometimes passes too (for the one finds no pleasure in the sight of the other, and the other gets no
20 attentions from the first); but many lovers on the other hand are constant, if familiarity has led them
21 to love each other's characters, these being alike. But those who exchange not pleasure but utility in
22 their amour are both less truly friends and less constant. Those who are friends for the sake of utility
23 part when the advantage is at an end; for they were lovers not of each other but of profit.

25 For the sake of pleasure or utility, then, even bad men may be friends of each other, or good men of
26 bad, or one who is neither good nor bad may be a friend to any sort of person, but for their own sake
27 clearly only good men can be friends; for bad men do not delight in each other unless some
28 advantage come of the relation.

30 The friendship of the good too and this alone is proof against slander; for it is not easy to trust
31 anyone talk about a man who has long been tested by oneself; and it is among good men that trust
32 and the feeling that 'he would never wrong me' and all the other things that are demanded in true
33 friendship are found. In the other kinds of friendship, however, there is nothing to prevent these
34 evils arising. For men apply the name of friends even to those whose motive is utility, in which sense
35 states are said to be friendly (for the alliances of states seem to aim at advantage), and to those who
36 love each other for the sake of pleasure, in which sense children are called friends. Therefore we too
37 ought perhaps to call such people friends, and say that there are several kinds of friendship—firstly and
38 in the proper sense that of good men qua good, and by analogy the other kinds; for it is in virtue of
39 something good and something akin to what is found in true friendship that they are friends, since

1 even the pleasant is good for the lovers of pleasure. But these two kinds of friendship are not often
2 united, nor do the same people become friends for the sake of utility and of pleasure; for things that
3 are only incidentally connected are not often coupled together.

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5 Friendship being divided into these kinds, bad men will be friends for the sake of pleasure or of
6 utility, being in this respect like each other, but good men will be friends for their own sake, i.e. in
7 virtue of their goodness. These, then, are friends without qualification; the others are friends
8 incidentally and through a resemblance to these...

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12 People in positions of authority seem to have friends who fall into distinct classes; some people are
13 useful to them and others are pleasant, but the same people are rarely both; for they seek neither
14 those whose pleasantness is accompanied by virtue nor those whose utility is with a view to noble
15 objects, but in their desire for pleasure they seek for ready-witted people, and their other friends they
16 choose as being clever at doing what they are told, and these characteristics are rarely combined.
17 Now we have said that the good man is at the same time pleasant and useful; but such a man does
18 not become the friend of one who surpasses him in station, unless he is surpassed also in virtue; if
19 this is not so, he does not establish equality by being proportionally exceeded in both respects. But
20 people who surpass him in both respects are not so easy to find.

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22 However that may be, the aforesaid friendships involve equality; for the friends get the same things
23 from one another and wish the same things for one another, or exchange one thing for another, e.g.
24 pleasure for utility; we have said, however, that they are both less truly friendships and less
25 permanent.

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27 But it is from their likeness and their unlikeness to the same thing that they are thought both to be
28 and not to be friendships. It is by their likeness to the friendship of virtue that they seem to be
29 friendships (for one of them involves pleasure and the other utility, and these characteristics belong
30 to the friendship of virtue as well); while it is because the friendship of virtue is proof against slander
31 and permanent, while these quickly change (besides differing from the former in many other
32 respects), that they appear not to be friendships; i.e. it is because of their unlikeness to the friendship
33 of virtue.

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37 But there is another kind of friendship, viz. that which involves an inequality between the parties,
38 e.g. that of father to son and in general of elder to younger, that of man to wife and in general that
39 of ruler to subject. And these friendships differ also from each other; for it is not the same that exists

1 between parents and children and between rulers and subjects, nor is even that of father to son the
2 same as that of son to father, nor that of husband to wife the same as that of wife to husband. For
3 the virtue and the function of each of these is different, and so are the reasons for which they love;
4 the love and the friendship are therefore different also. Each party, then, neither gets the same from
5 the other, nor ought to seek it; but when children render to parents what they ought to render to
6 those who brought them into the world, and parents render what they should to their children, the
7 friendship of such persons will be abiding and excellent. In all friendships implying inequality the
8 love also should be proportional, i.e. the better should be more loved than he loves, and so should
9 the more useful, and similarly in each of the other cases; for when the love is in proportion to the
10 merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is certainly held to be characteristic of
11 friendship.

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13 But equality does not seem to take the same form in acts of justice and in friendship; for in acts of
14 justice what is equal in the primary sense is that which is in proportion to merit, while quantitative
15 equality is secondary, but in friendship quantitative equality is primary and proportion to merit
16 secondary. This becomes clear if there is a great interval in respect of virtue or vice or wealth or
17 anything else between the parties; for then they are no longer friends, and do not even expect to be
18 so. And this is most manifest in the case of the gods; for they surpass us most decisively in all good
19 things. But it is clear also in the case of kings; for with them, too, men who are much their inferiors
20 do not expect to be friends; nor do men of no account expect to be friends with the best or wisest
21 men. In such cases it is not possible to define exactly up to what point friends can remain friends; for
22 much can be taken away and friendship remain, but when one party is removed to a great distance,
23 as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases. This is in fact the origin of the question whether
24 friends really wish for their friends the greatest goods, e.g. that of being gods; since in that case their
25 friends will no longer be friends to them, and therefore will not be good things for them (for friends
26 are good things). The answer is that if we were right in saying that friend wishes good to friend for
27 his sake, his friend must remain the sort of being he is, whatever that may be; therefore it is for him
28 only so long as he remains a man that he will wish the greatest goods. But perhaps not all the greatest
29 goods; for it is for himself most of all that each man wishes what is good.

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33 Most people seem, owing to ambition, to wish to be loved rather than to love; which is why most
34 men love flattery; for the flatterer is a friend in an inferior position, or pretends to be such and to
35 love more than he is loved; and being loved seems to be akin to being honored, and this is what most
36 people aim at. But it seems to be not for its own sake that people choose honor, but incidentally. For
37 most people enjoy being honored by those in positions of authority because of their hopes (for they
38 think that if they want anything they will get it from them; and therefore they delight in honor as a
39 token of favor to come); while those who desire honor from good men, and men who know, are

1 aiming at confirming their own opinion of themselves; they delight in honor, therefore, because they
2 believe in their own goodness on the strength of the judgement of those who speak about them. In
3 being loved, on the other hand, people delight for its own sake; whence it would seem to be better
4 than being honored, and friendship to be desirable in itself. But it seems to lie in loving rather than
5 in being loved, as is indicated by the delight mothers take in loving; for some mothers hand over
6 their children to be brought up, and so long as they know their fate they love them and do not seek
7 to be loved in return (if they cannot have both), but seem to be satisfied if they see them prospering;
8 and they themselves love their children even if these owing to their ignorance give them nothing of a
9 mother's due. Now since friendship depends more on loving, and it is those who love their friends
10 that are praised, loving seems to be the characteristic virtue of friends, so that it is only those in
11 whom this is found in due measure that are lasting friends, and only their friendship that endures.

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13 It is in this way more than any other that even unequals can be friends; they can be equalized. Now
14 equality and likeness are friendship, and especially the likeness of those who are like in virtue; for
15 being steadfast in themselves they hold fast to each other, and neither ask nor give base services, but
16 (one may say) even prevent them; for it is characteristic of good men neither to go wrong themselves
17 nor to let their friends do so. But wicked men have no steadfastness (for they do not remain even like
18 to themselves), but become friends for a short time because they delight in each other's wickedness.
19 Friends who are useful or pleasant last longer; i.e. as long as they provide each other with enjoyments
20 or advantages. Friendship for utility's sake seems to be that which most easily exists between
21 contraries, e.g. between poor and rich, between ignorant and learned; for what a man actually lacks
22 he aims at, and one gives something else in return. But under this head, too, might bring lover and
23 beloved, beautiful and ugly. This is why lovers sometimes seem ridiculous, when they demand to be
24 loved as they love; if they are equally lovable their claim can perhaps be justified, but when they have
25 nothing lovable about them it is ridiculous. Perhaps, however, contrary does not even aim at
26 contrary by its own nature, but only incidentally, the desire being for what is intermediate; for that is
27 what is good, e.g. it is good for the dry not to become wet but to come to the intermediate state, and
28 similarly with the hot and in all other cases. These subjects we may dismiss; for they are indeed
29 somewhat foreign to our inquiry.

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33 Friendship and justice seem, as we have said at the outset of our discussion, to be concerned with the
34 same objects and exhibited between the same persons. For in every community there is thought to be
35 some form of justice, and friendship too; at least men address as friends their fellow voyagers and
36 fellow soldiers, and so too those associated with them in any other kind of community. And the
37 extent of their association is the extent of their friendship, as it is the extent to which justice exists
38 between them. And the proverb 'what friends have is common property' expresses the truth; for
39 friendship depends on community. Now brothers and comrades have all things in common, but the

1 others to whom we have referred have definite things in common-some more things, others fewer;
2 for of friendships, too, some are more and others less truly friendships. And the claims of justice
3 differ too; the duties of parents to children, and those of brothers to each other are not the same, nor
4 those of comrades and those of fellow-citizens, and so, too, with the other kinds of friendship. There
5 is a difference, therefore, also between the acts that are unjust towards each of these classes of
6 associates, and the injustice increases by being exhibited towards those who are friends in a fuller
7 sense; e.g. it is a more terrible thing to defraud a comrade than a fellow-citizen, more terrible not to
8 help a brother than a stranger, and more terrible to wound a father than anyone else. And the
9 demands of justice also seem to increase with the intensity of the friendship, which implies that
10 friendship and justice exist between the same persons and have an equal extension...

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15 Every form of friendship, then, involves association, as has been said. One might, however, mark off
16 from the rest both the friendship of kindred and that of comrades. Those of fellow-citizens, fellow-
17 tribesmen, fellow-voyagers, and the like are more like mere friendships of association; for they seem
18 to rest on a sort of compact. With them we might class the friendship of host and guest. The
19 friendship of kinsmen itself, while it seems to be of many kinds, appears to depend in every case on
20 parental friendship; for parents love their children as being a part of themselves, and children their
21 parents as being something originating from them. Now (1) parents know their offspring better than
22 their children know that they are their children, and (2) the originator feels his offspring to be his
23 own more than the offspring do their begetter; for the product belongs to the producer (e.g. a tooth
24 or hair or anything else to him whose it is), but the producer does not belong to the product, or
25 belongs in a less degree. And (3) the length of time produces the same result; parents love their
26 children as soon as these are born, but children love their parents only after time has elapsed and
27 they have acquired understanding or the power of discrimination by the senses. From these
28 considerations it is also plain why mothers love more than fathers do. Parents, then, love their
29 children as themselves (for their issue are by virtue of their separate existence a sort of other selves),
30 while children love their parents as being born of them, and brothers love each other as being born
31 of the same parents; for their identity with them makes them identical with each other (which is the
32 reason why people talk of 'the same blood', 'the same stock', and so on). They are, therefore, in a
33 sense the same thing, though in separate individuals. Two things that contribute greatly to
34 friendship are a common upbringing and similarity of age; for 'two of an age take to each other', and
35 people brought up together tend to be comrades; whence the friendship of brothers is akin to that of
36 comrades. And cousins and other kinsmen are bound up together by derivation from brothers, viz.
37 by being derived from the same parents. They come to be closer together or farther apart by virtue of
38 the nearness or distance of the original ancestor.

1 The friendship of children to parents, and of men to gods, is a relation to them as to something good
2 and superior; for they have conferred the greatest benefits, since they are the causes of their being
3 and of their nourishment, and of their education from their birth; and this kind of friendship
4 possesses pleasantness and utility also, more than that of strangers, inasmuch as their life is lived
5 more in common. The friendship of brothers has the characteristics found in that of comrades (and
6 especially when these are good), and in general between people who are like each other, inasmuch as
7 they belong more to each other and start with a love for each other from their very birth, and
8 inasmuch as those born of the same parents and brought up together and similarly educated are
9 more akin in character; and the test of time has been applied most fully and convincingly in their
10 case.

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12 Between other kinsmen friendly relations are found in due proportion. Between man and wife
13 friendship seems to exist by nature; for man is naturally inclined to form couples-even more than to
14 form cities, inasmuch as the household is earlier and more necessary than the city, and reproduction
15 is more common to man with the animals. With the other animals the union extends only to this
16 point, but human beings live together not only for the sake of reproduction but also for the various
17 purposes of life; for from the start the functions are divided, and those of man and woman are
18 different; so they help each other by throwing their peculiar gifts into the common stock. It is for
19 these reasons that both utility and pleasure seem to be found in this kind of friendship. But this
20 friendship may be based also on virtue, if the parties are good; for each has its own virtue and they
21 will delight in the fact. And children seem to be a bond of union (which is the reason why childless
22 people part more easily); for children are a good common to both and what is common holds them
23 together.

24
25 How man and wife and in general friend and friend ought mutually to behave seems to be the same
26 question as how it is just for them to behave; for a man does not seem to have the same duties to a
27 friend, a stranger, a comrade, and a schoolfellow.

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31 There are three kinds of friendship, as we said at the outset of our inquiry, and in respect of each
32 some are friends on an equality and others by virtue of a superiority (for not only can equally good
33 men become friends but a better man can make friends with a worse, and similarly in friendships of
34 pleasure or utility the friends may be equal or unequal in the benefits they confer). This being so,
35 equals must effect the required equalization on a basis of equality in love and in all other respects,
36 while unequals must render what is in proportion to their superiority or inferiority. Complaints and
37 reproaches arise either only or chiefly in the friendship of utility, and this is only to be expected. For
38 those who are friends on the ground of virtue are anxious to do well by each other (since that is a
39 mark of virtue and of friendship), and between men who are emulating each other in this there

1 cannot be complaints or quarrels; no one is offended by a man who loves him and does well by him-
2 if he is a person of nice feeling he takes his revenge by doing well by the other. And the man who
3 excels the other in the services he renders will not complain of his friend, since he gets what he aims
4 at; for each man desires what is good. Nor do complaints arise much even in friendships of pleasure;
5 for both get at the same time what they desire, if they enjoy spending their time together; and even a
6 man who complained of another for not affording him pleasure would seem ridiculous, since it is in
7 his power not to spend his days with him.

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9 But the friendship of utility is full of complaints; for as they use each other for their own interests
10 they always want to get the better of the bargain, and think they have got less than they should, and
11 blame their partners because they do not get all they 'want and deserve'; and those who do well by
12 others cannot help them as much as those whom they benefit want.

13
14 Now it seems that, as justice is of two kinds, one unwritten and the other legal, one kind of
15 friendship of utility is moral and the other legal. And so complaints arise most of all when men do
16 not dissolve the relation in the spirit of the same type of friendship in which they contracted it. The
17 legal type is that which is on fixed terms; its purely commercial variety is on the basis of immediate
18 payment, while the more liberal variety allows time but stipulates for a definite quid pro quo. In this
19 variety the debt is clear and not ambiguous, but in the postponement it contains an element of
20 friendliness; and so some states do not allow suits arising out of such agreements, but think men who
21 have bargained on a basis of credit ought to accept the consequences. The moral type is not on fixed
22 terms; it makes a gift, or does whatever it does, as to a friend; but one expects to receive as much or
23 more, as having not given but lent; and if a man is worse off when the relation is dissolved than he
24 was when it was contracted he will complain. This happens because all or most men, while they wish
25 for what is noble, choose what is advantageous; now it is noble to do well by another without a view
26 to repayment, but it is the receiving of benefits that is advantageous. Therefore if we can we should
27 return the equivalent of what we have received (for we must not make a man our friend against his
28 will; we must recognize that we were mistaken at the first and took a benefit from a person we
29 should not have taken it from-since it was not from a friend, nor from one who did it just for the
30 sake of acting so-and we must settle up just as if we had been benefited on fixed terms). Indeed, one
31 would agree to repay if one could (if one could not, even the giver would not have expected one to
32 do so); therefore if it is possible we must repay. But at the outset we must consider the man by
33 whom we are being benefited and on what terms he is acting, in order that we may accept the
34 benefit on these terms, or else decline it.

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36 It is disputable whether we ought to measure a service by its utility to the receiver and make the
37 return with a view to that, or by the benevolence of the giver. For those who have received say they
38 have received from their benefactors what meant little to the latter and what they might have got
39 from others-minimizing the service; while the givers, on the contrary, say it was the biggest thing

1 they had, and what could not have been got from others, and that it was given in times of danger or
2 similar need. Now if the friendship is one that aims at utility, surely the advantage to the receiver is
3 the measure. For it is he that asks for the service, and the other man helps him on the assumption
4 that he will receive the equivalent; so the assistance has been precisely as great as the advantage to the
5 receiver, and therefore he must return as much as he has received, or even more (for that would be
6 nobler). In friendships based on virtue on the other hand, complaints do not arise, but the purpose
7 of the doer is a sort of measure; for in purpose lies the essential element of virtue and character.

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11 Differences arise also in friendships based on superiority; for each expects to get more out of them,
12 but when this happens the friendship is dissolved. Not only does the better man think he ought to
13 get more, since more should be assigned to a good man, but the more useful similarly expects this;
14 they say a useless man should not get as much as they should, since it becomes an act of public
15 service and not a friendship if the proceeds of the friendship do not answer to the worth of the
16 benefits conferred. For they think that, as in a commercial partnership those who put more in get
17 more out, so it should be in friendship. But the man who is in a state of need and inferiority makes
18 the opposite claim; they think it is the part of a good friend to help those who are in need; what,
19 they say, is the use of being the friend of a good man or a powerful man, if one is to get nothing out
20 of it?

22 At all events it seems that each party is justified in his claim, and that each should get more out of
23 the friendship than the other-not more of the same thing, however, but the superior more honor and
24 the inferior more gain; for honor is the prize of virtue and of beneficence, while gain is the assistance
25 required by inferiority.

27 It seems to be so in constitutional arrangements also; the man who contributes nothing good to the
28 common stock is not honored; for what belongs to the public is given to the man who benefits the
29 public, and honor does belong to the public. It is not possible to get wealth from the common stock
30 and at the same time honor. For no one puts up with the smaller share in all things; therefore to the
31 man who loses in wealth they assign honor and to the man who is willing to be paid, wealth, since
32 the proportion to merit equalizes the parties and preserves the friendship, as we have said. This then
33 is also the way in which we should associate with unequals; the man who is benefited in respect of
34 wealth or virtue must give honor in return, repaying what he can. For friendship asks a man to do
35 what he can, not what is proportional to the merits of the case; since that cannot always be done, e.g.
36 in honors paid to the gods or to parents; for no one could ever return to them the equivalent of what
37 he gets, but the man who serves them to the utmost of his power is thought to be a good man. This
38 is why it would not seem open to a man to disown his father (though a father may disown his son);
39 being in debt, he should repay, but there is nothing by doing which a son will have done the

equivalent of what he has received, so that he is always in debt. But creditors can remit a debt; and a father can therefore do so too. At the same time it is thought that presumably no one would repudiate a son who was not far gone in wickedness; for apart from the natural friendship of father and son it is human nature not to reject a son's assistance. But the son, if he is wicked, will naturally avoid aiding his father, or not be zealous about it; for most people wish to get benefits, but avoid doing them, as a thing unprofitable.-So much for these questions.

BOOK NINE

...

8

The question is also debated, whether a man should love himself most, or someone else. People criticize those who love themselves most, and call them self-lovers, using this as an epithet of disgrace, and a bad man seems to do everything for his own sake, and the more so the more wicked he is-and so men reproach him, for instance, with doing nothing of his own accord-while the good man acts for honor's sake, and the more so the better he is, and acts for his friend's sake, and sacrifices his own interest.

But the facts clash with these arguments, and this is not surprising. For men say that one ought to love best one's best friend, and man's best friend is one who wishes well to the object of his wish for his sake, even if no one is to know of it; and these attributes are found most of all in a man's attitude towards himself, and so are all the other attributes by which a friend is defined; for, as we have said, it is from this relation that all the characteristics of friendship have extended to our neighbors. All the proverbs, too, agree with this, e.g. 'a single soul', and 'what friends have is common property', and 'friendship is equality', and 'charity begins at home'; for all these marks will be found most in a man's relation to himself; he is his own best friend and therefore ought to love himself best. It is therefore a reasonable question, which of the two views we should follow; for both are plausible.

Perhaps we ought to mark off such arguments from each other and determine how far and in what respects each view is right. Now if we grasp the sense in which each school uses the phrase 'lover of self', the truth may become evident. Those who use the term as one of reproach ascribe self-love to people who assign to themselves the greater share of wealth, honors, and bodily pleasures; for these are what most people desire, and busy themselves about as though they were the best of all things, which is the reason, too, why they become objects of competition. So those who are grasping with regard to these things gratify their appetites and in general their feelings and the irrational element of the soul; and most men are of this nature (which is the reason why the epithet has come to be used

1 as it is-it takes its meaning from the prevailing type of self-love, which is a bad one); it is just,
2 therefore, that men who are lovers of self in this way are reproached for being so. That it is those
3 who give themselves the preference in regard to objects of this sort that most people usually call
4 lovers of self is plain; for if a man were always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act
5 justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the virtues, and in general were always to try
6 to secure for himself the honorable course, no one will call such a man a lover of self or blame him.

7
8 But such a man would seem more than the other a lover of self; at all events he assigns to himself the
9 things that are noblest and best, and gratifies the most authoritative element in and in all things
10 obeys this; and just as a city or any other systematic whole is most properly identified with the most
11 authoritative element in it, so is a man; and therefore the man who loves this and gratifies it is most
12 of all a lover of self. Besides, a man is said to have or not to have self-control according as his reason
13 has or has not the control, on the assumption that this is the man himself; and the things men have
14 done on a rational principle are thought most properly their own acts and voluntary acts. That this is
15 the man himself, then, or is so more than anything else, is plain, and also that the good man loves
16 most this part of him. Whence it follows that he is most truly a lover of self, of another type than
17 that which is a matter of reproach, and as different from that as living according to a rational
18 principle is from living as passion dictates, and desiring what is noble from desiring what seems
19 advantageous. Those, then, who busy themselves in an exceptional degree with noble actions all men
20 approve and praise; and if all were to strive towards what is noble and strain every nerve to do the
21 noblest deeds, everything would be as it should be for the common weal, and every one would secure
22 for himself the goods that are greatest, since virtue is the greatest of goods.

23
24 Therefore the good man should be a lover of self (for he will both himself profit by doing noble acts,
25 and will benefit his fellows), but the wicked man should not; for he will hurt both himself and his
26 neighbors, following as he does evil passions. For the wicked man, what he does clashes with what he
27 ought to do, but what the good man ought to do he does; for reason in each of its possessors chooses
28 what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his reason. It is true of the good man too that he does
29 many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies for them; for he will throw
30 away both wealth and honors and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for
31 himself nobility; since he would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild
32 enjoyment, a twelvemonth of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and
33 noble action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is
34 therefore a great prize that they choose for themselves. They will throw away wealth too on
35 condition that their friends will gain more; for while a man's friend gains wealth he himself achieves
36 nobility; he is therefore assigning the greater good to himself. The same too is true of honor and
37 office; all these things he will sacrifice to his friend; for this is noble and laudable for himself. Rightly
38 then is he thought to be good, since he chooses nobility before all else. But he may even give up
39 actions to his friend; it may be nobler to become the cause of his friend's acting than to act himself.

1 In all the actions, therefore, that men are praised for, the good man is seen to assign to himself the
2 greater share in what is noble. In this sense, then, as has been said, a man should be a lover of self;
3 but in the sense in which most men are so, he ought not.

4
5 **9**
6

7 It is also disputed whether the happy man will need friends or not. It is said that those who are
8 supremely happy and self-sufficient have no need of friends; for they have the things that are good,
9 and therefore being self-sufficient they need nothing further, while a friend, being another self,
10 furnishes what a man cannot provide by his own effort; whence the saying 'when fortune is kind,
11 what need of friends?' But it seems strange, when one assigns all good things to the happy man, not
12 to assign friends, who are thought the greatest of external goods. And if it is more characteristic of a
13 friend to do well by another than to be well done by, and to confer benefits is characteristic of the
14 good man and of virtue, and it is nobler to do well by friends than by strangers, the good man will
15 need people to do well by. This is why the question is asked whether we need friends more in
16 prosperity or in adversity, on the assumption that not only does a man in adversity need people to
17 confer benefits on him, but also those who are prospering need people to do well by. Surely it is
18 strange, too, to make the supremely happy man a solitary; for no one would choose the whole world
19 on condition of being alone, since man is a political creature and one whose nature is to live with
20 others. Therefore even the happy man lives with others; for he has the things that are by nature
21 good. And plainly it is better to spend his days with friends and good men than with strangers or any
22 chance persons. Therefore the happy man needs friends.

23
24 What then is it that the first school means, and in what respect is it right? Is it that most identify
25 friends with useful people? Of such friends indeed the supremely happy man will have no need, since
26 he already has the things that are good; nor will he need those whom one makes one's friends
27 because of their pleasantness, or he will need them only to a small extent (for his life, being pleasant,
28 has no need of adventitious pleasure); and because he does not need such friends he is thought not to
29 need friends.

30
31 But that is surely not true. For we have said at the outset that happiness is an activity; and activity
32 plainly comes into being and is not present at the start like a piece of property. If (1) happiness lies
33 in living and being active, and the good man's activity is virtuous and pleasant in itself, as we have
34 said at the outset, and (2) a thing's being one's own is one of the attributes that make it pleasant, and
35 (3) we can contemplate our neighbors better than ourselves and their actions better than our own,
36 and if the actions of virtuous men who are their friends are pleasant to good men (since these have
37 both the attributes that are naturally pleasant),-if this be so, the supremely happy man will need
38 friends of this sort, since his purpose is to contemplate worthy actions and actions that are his own,
39 and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both these qualities.

1
2 Further, men think that the happy man ought to live pleasantly. Now if he were a solitary, life would
3 be hard for him; for by oneself it is not easy to be continuously active; but with others and towards
4 others it is easier. With others therefore his activity will be more continuous, and it is in itself
5 pleasant, as it ought to be for the man who is supremely happy; for a good man qua good delights in
6 virtuous actions and is vexed at vicious ones, as a musical man enjoys beautiful tunes but is pained at
7 bad ones. A certain training in virtue arises also from the company of the good, as Theogony's has
8 said before us.

9
10 If we look deeper into the nature of things, a virtuous friend seems to be naturally desirable for a
11 virtuous man. For that which is good by nature, we have said, is for the virtuous man good and
12 pleasant in itself. Now life is defined in the case of animals by the power of perception in that of
13 man by the power of perception or thought; and a power is defined by reference to the
14 corresponding activity, which is the essential thing; therefore life seems to be essentially the act of
15 perceiving or thinking. And life is among the things that are good and pleasant in themselves, since
16 it is determinate and the determinate is of the nature of the good; and that which is good by nature
17 is also good for the virtuous man (which is the reason why life seems pleasant to all men); but we
18 must not apply this to a wicked and corrupt life nor to a life spent in pain; for such a life is
19 indeterminate, as are its attributes. The nature of pain will become plainer in what follows. But if life
20 itself is good and pleasant (which it seems to be, from the very fact that all men desire it, and
21 particularly those who are good and supremely happy; for to such men life is most desirable, and
22 their existence is the most supremely happy) and if he who sees perceives that he sees, and he who
23 hears, that he hears, and he who walks, that he walks, and in the case of all other activities similarly
24 there is something which perceives that we are active, so that if we perceive, we perceive that we
25 perceive, and if we think, that we think; and if to perceive that we perceive or think is to perceive
26 that we exist (for existence was defined as perceiving or thinking); and if perceiving that one lives is
27 in itself one of the things that are pleasant (for life is by nature good, and to perceive what is good
28 present in oneself is pleasant); and if life is desirable, and particularly so for good men, because to
29 them existence is good and pleasant for they are pleased at the consciousness of the presence in them
30 of what is in itself good); and if as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his
31 friend is another self):-if all this be true, as his own being is desirable for each man, so, or almost so,
32 is that of his friend. Now his being was seen to be desirable because he perceived his own goodness,
33 and such perception is pleasant in itself. He needs, therefore, to be conscious of the existence of his
34 friend as well, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought;
35 for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of man, and not, as in the case of
36 cattle, feeding in the same place.

37
38 If, then, being is in itself desirable for the supremely happy man (since it is by its nature good and
39 pleasant), and that of his friend is very much the same, a friend will be one of the things that are

desirable. Now 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...

12

Does it not follow, then, that, as for lovers the sight of the beloved is the thing they love most, and they prefer this sense to the others because on it love depends most for its being and for its origin, so for friends the most desirable thing is living together? For friendship is a partnership, and as a man is to himself, so is he to his friend; now in his own case the consciousness of his being is desirable, and so therefore is the consciousness of his friend's being, and the activity of this consciousness is produced when they live together, so that it is natural that they aim at this. And whatever existence means for each class of men, whatever it is for whose sake they value life, in that they wish to occupy themselves with their friends; and so some drink together, others dice together, others join in athletic exercises and hunting, or in the study of philosophy, each class spending their days together in whatever they love most in life; for since they wish to live with their friends, they do and share in those things which give them the sense of living together. Thus the friendship of bad men turns out an evil thing (for because of their instability they unite in bad pursuits, and besides they become evil by becoming like each other), while the friendship of good men is good, being augmented by their companionship; and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mold of the characteristics they approve-whence the saying 'noble deeds from noble men'. -So much, then, for friendship; our next task must be to discuss pleasure.