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# ARISTOTLE ON THE FORMS OF FRIENDSHIP

JOHN M. COOPER

## I

NEITHER in the scholarly nor in the philosophical literature on Aristotle does his account of friendship (*φιλία*) occupy a very prominent place. I suppose this is partly, though certainly not wholly, to be explained by the fact that the modern ethical theories with which Aristotle's might demand comparison hardly make room for the discussion of any parallel phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Whatever else friendship is, it is, at least typically, a personal relationship freely, even spontaneously, entered into, and ethics, as modern theorists tend to conceive it, deals rather with the ways in which people are required to regard, and behave toward, one another, than with the organization of their private affairs. To the extent, then, that one shares this modern outlook one will tend to neglect, or treat merely as an historical curiosity, Aristotle's efforts to define friendship and to place it within the framework of human *eudaimonia* (flourishing), the theory of which is central to moral philosophy as he understands it. Yet in the *Nicomachean Ethics* the two books on *φιλία* make up nearly a fifth of the whole,<sup>2</sup> and this seems to me a fair measure of the importance of this subject to the complete understanding both of Aristotle's overall moral theory and even of many of the more circumscribed topics (moral virtue and pleasure, for example) to which so much scholarly and philosophical attention has been devoted. If, as I suggest, the failure of commentators to appreciate its importance is partly the effect of distortions produced by the moral outlook that has predominated in modern moral philosophy, the careful study of these books may help to free us from constricting prejudices and perhaps even make it possible to discover in Aristotle a plausible

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<sup>1</sup> Kant's discussion in the *Lectures on Ethics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 200–209, is only a partial exception: he follows Baumgarten's textbook somewhat mechanically at this point, and does not integrate the phenomenon into his overall theory.

<sup>2</sup> Approximately the same proportion is taken up in *Eudemian Ethics* by its discussion of friendship (Book VII).

and suggestive alternative to the theories constructed on the narrower base characteristic of recent times.

All the standard treatments of Aristotle on *φιλία* point out that the Greek concept expressed by this word is much wider than our “friendship” (or the equivalents in other modern languages). Its field covers not just the (more or less) intimate relationships between persons not bound together by near family ties, to which the words used in the modern languages to translate it are ordinarily restricted, but all sorts of family relationships (especially those of parents to children, children to parents, siblings to one another, and the marriage relationship itself);<sup>3</sup> the word also has a natural and ordinary use to characterize what goes in English under the somewhat quaint-sounding name of “civic friendship.” Certain business relationships also come in here, as does common membership of religious and social clubs and political parties. It is not enough, however, just to list the fairly diverse sorts of relationship that form the field of Aristotle’s investigation; one wants to know, if possible, what it was about them that inclined the Greeks to group them together under this common name. W. D. Ross suggests that the word “can stand for any mutual attraction between two human beings,”<sup>4</sup> but, to judge from Aristotle’s discussion itself, this is not true: aside from the fact that “mutual attraction” might seem to have erotic, or at any rate passionate, overtones that make it unsuitable as a characterization of, e.g., business and citizenly ties, this account clearly lets in too much. People can be “mutually attracted” to one another without in any way developing active ties—without doing anything together, or for one another—and such mere attraction would not be counted as *φιλία*. Aristotle is himself always careful to emphasize the practical and active element in the relationships he investigates under this name, as e.g., in the *Rhetoric* (whose discussion of friendship

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<sup>3</sup> Such family relationships are in fact the original and, in some ways, the central cases of *φιλία*. It should be noted, as the Greeks were themselves quick to see (cf., Euripides, *Phoenissae* 1446: φίλος γὰρ ἐχθρὸς ἐγένετ', ἀλλ' ὁμῶς φίλος), that, unlike the other types of case, family-*φιλία* existed even despite the absence of good-will, unself-interested well-doing, and the other practical attitudes and actions that in Aristotle’s account serve to define *φιλία*. This is because it was assumed, as a norm, that where family ties were of a certain sort these modes of feeling and action ought to be forthcoming; their absence did not destroy the *φιλία* itself (as the quotation from Euripides just given illustrates).

<sup>4</sup> *Aristotle* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), p. 223.

and hatred, B4, is essential reading on this topic), where he defines liking (τὸ φιλεῖν)<sup>5</sup> as “wanting for someone what one thinks good,<sup>6</sup> for his sake and not for one’s own, and being inclined, so far as one can, to do such things for him,” and then characterizes a friend (φίλος) as someone who likes and is liked by another person (1380b36–1381a2). This account suggests, in fact, that the central idea contained in φιλία is that of doing well by someone for his own sake, out of concern for *him* (and not, or not merely, out of concern for oneself). If this is right, then the different forms of φιλία listed above could be viewed just as different contexts and circumstances in which this kind of mutual well-doing can arise; within the family, in the state at large, and among business partners and political cronies, well-doing out of concern for other persons can arise, and where it does so, there exists a “friendship.” I suggest that if we want some indication of what is common to all the personal relationships which the Greeks counted as φιλίαι we cannot do better than follow Aristotle’s lead here. At any rate, I shall argue that this definition from the *Rhetoric* does state the core of Aristotle’s own analysis of φιλία. According to him, φιλία, taken most generally, is any relationship characterized by mutual liking, as this is defined in the *Rhetoric*, that is, by mutual well-wishing and well-doing out of concern for one another.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Much harm is caused by translators who render this verb by “love,” since then there is bound to be confusion when one comes to translate στέργειν and ἐρᾶν. I render φιλεῖν by “like,” στέργειν by “love” and ἐρᾶν by “be in love.” Ἔρως I translate “sexual attachment,” reserving both “love” (noun) and “friendship” for φιλία itself.

<sup>6</sup> Or: “what he thinks good.” The Greek is ambiguous.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle consistently expresses this altruistic side of friendship by the use of a single Greek phrase (or its variants): the friend does well to his friend ἐκείνου ἔνεκα (1155b31). It is important to be clear from the outset what is and what is not implied by this phrase, taken by itself. (1) In Aristotle’s usage, to say that one acts “for someone else’s sake” means, at least, that the fact that the other person needs or wants, or would be benefited by, something is taken by the agent as by itself a reason for doing or procuring that something, and that he acts for that reason. (2) It seems also implied that this reason is by itself sufficient to determine the agent to action. (3) But it is not implied that this is the agent’s *only* reason for acting as he does, nor, in particular, that he does not also have a self-interested reason for acting. (4) Nothing is implied about the relative strengths of the reason founded on the other person’s good and such other reasons as may be at work at the same time; it isn’t, for instance, implied that the agent’s concern, in the given action, for the other person’s

If this characterization is correct, it should be clear why Aristotle's theory of friendship must be considered a cardinal element in his ethical theory as a whole. For it is only here that he directly expresses himself on the nature, and importance to a flourishing human life, of taking an interest in other persons, merely as such and for their own sake. In fact, Aristotle holds not only that active friendships of a close and intimate kind are a necessary constituent of the flourishing human life, but also that "civic friendship" itself is an essential human good. That is to say, he holds not only that every person needs to have close personal friendships in which common and shared activities are the core of the relationship, but also that fellow-citizens, who are not otherwise personally connected, ought nonetheless to be predisposed to like one another and to wish and do each other well. In holding this he is in effect declaring that the good man will conduct himself towards other persons in a spirit, not merely of rectitude (mere justice), but actually of friendship. Hence it is clear that Aristotle's discussion of friendship contains a very significant amplification of the theory of moral virtue expounded in the middle books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and that his theory of virtue cannot be completely understood unless read in the light of it.

But does Aristotle really make well-wishing and well-doing out of concern for the other person's good a condition of friendship of all these diverse types? He seems to be widely interpreted as holding this to be a condition of only one form of friendship, while the others

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good is stronger than his concern for his own. (5) Nothing specific is implied about the psychological source or nature of the agent's concern for the other person; it might be a deep emotional attachment, like the love of parent for child, or whatever passions are involved in the attachment of lovers to one another, or, as we say, the concern for the welfare of persons "just as such," or any of various other motives might be at work in a given case. As we shall see, Aristotle does have special views about the strength and the psychological source of a person's concern for his friend's good, but these are further questions the answers to which are not determined in any way by saying merely that a friend acts to secure his friend's good for his friend's own sake. In what follows, I frequently express Aristotle's point here by saying that friends act out of concern for one another, and refer to "unself-interested" or "disinterested" good-will as characteristic of friends. All these expressions should be interpreted in the light of the qualifications just noted. In particular, "disinterested" is not intended to indicate the absence of passion or special attachment. The point is just that if one is someone's friend one wants that person to prosper, achieve his goals, be happy, and so on, in the same sort of way in which he wishes these things for himself, whatever else one may want as well, and whatever explains one's having this desire.

involve exclusively self-centered motivations. To settle this question will require a complete examination of Aristotle's theory of the forms of friendship and his views on what is essential to each. This task I undertake in what follows. I leave for treatment elsewhere the further question why Aristotle thinks no human being can flourish in whose life the activities of friendship are not an important ingredient.<sup>8</sup>

## II

At the center of Aristotle's analysis of *φιλία* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* stands his theory that there are three basic kinds or species (*εἶδη*, 1156a7, 1157b1) of friendship, depending on what it is that attracts and binds the one person to the other. In some cases what cements the association is the pleasure, in others some advantage, that the one gets from the other; in a third set of cases it is the recognition of the other person's moral goodness. Aristotle counts the resulting relationships friendships of different types in virtue of the differences in what forms the bond between the associated parties. Furthermore, Aristotle thinks that the central case, by comparison with which the others are to be understood, is friendship based on the recognition of moral goodness. This much is clear.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle," forthcoming in the *Philosophical Review*, 86 (1977).

<sup>9</sup> It is not necessary for my purposes to enter more specifically into the question how Aristotle thinks the derivative kinds of friendship are related to the central case. But it should be noted that whereas in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle claims that *φιλία* is a *πρὸς ἐν λεγόμενον* (1236a16-18), an instance of what G. E. L. Owen calls "focal meaning" ("Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle," in *Aristotle and Plato at the Mid-Fourth Century*, eds. Owen and I. Düring, Göteborg, 1960, pp. 163-190; see pp. 169-170 on *φιλία* in the *EE*), he does not make the same claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Instead, he relies on a looser connection by resemblance (*ὁμοίωμα*, 1157a1; *καθ' ὁμοιότητα*, a31-32, 1158b6; *τῷ ὁμοιωσθαι*, 1157b5), holding that the derivative relationships count as friendships by reason of resembling the central case. Owen (pp. 187-189) notes that Aristotle consistently denied that (sensible) resemblance is by itself a sufficient basis for claiming focal connection, so that the *NE*'s repeated reference to resemblance, and the total absence of the terminology used elsewhere to express focal meaning, ought surely to be taken to mark a different implied pattern of analysis from that of the *EE* (commentators from Aspasius to Gauthier to the contrary notwithstanding). On this see now the cogent arguments of W. W. Fortenbaugh, "Aristotle's Analysis of Friendship: Function and Analogy, Resemblance, and Focal Meaning," *Phronesis* XX (1975), pp. 51-62.

On many important details, however, Aristotle is notably obscure. I shall begin by mentioning two of these.

First, when exactly does Aristotle recognize a friendship as one involving mutual recognition of moral goodness? He usually refers to this kind of friendship by such phrases as “the friendship of people who are good and alike in virtue” (1156b7-8) or “the friendship of good persons” (1157a20, b25; similarly 1158a1, b7). He also calls this friendship “perfect” (τελεία, 1156b7, 34), since it exhibits fully and perfectly all the characteristics that one reasonably expects a friendship to have. By calling the parties to such a relationship “good men” (ἀγαθοί) and describing their friendship as “perfect” Aristotle seems to imply that only to fully virtuous persons—heroes of intellect and character—is it open to form a friendship of this basic kind. So, it would follow, ordinary people, with the normal mixture of some good and some bad qualities of character, are not eligible partners for friendships of the basic type; they would be doomed, along with thoroughly bad people (1157a16-19, 1157b1-3; *EE* 1236b10-12, 1238a32-33), to having friendships of the other two types, at best. Does Aristotle mean to imply that one who is not completely virtuous can only be befriended for the sake of some pleasure or advantage he brings, that no one can associate with him (unless under deception: cf., 1165b8-15) for the sake of his good qualities of character?

The second point that calls for comment concerns the two deficient types. In the course of laying the ground in *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 2 for his distinction between the three types of friendship, Aristotle remarks that not every case of liking (φιλεῖν) something occurs within the context of a friendship: one can like wine, for example, but this is not evidence of a friendship between oneself and wine, because (1) the wine does not like you back, and (2) you don't wish well to the wine. Thus, he goes on, a friendship exists only where you wish to the other party what is good for him, for his own sake, and this well-wishing is reciprocated: “people say that one ought to wish to a friend what is good, for his own sake; but those who wish what is good [to someone else] in this way people call ‘well-disposed’ (εὖνους) [and not ‘friends’], if the other person does not return the wish: for friendship is good will (εὐνοία) when reciprocated” (1155b31-34). Here Aristotle seems to endorse the central idea contained in the *Rhetoric*'s definition of friendship, that friendship is mutual well-wishing out of concern for one another;

he makes it characteristic of friendships, of whatever type, that a friend wishes well to his friend for his friend's own sake.<sup>10</sup> That he means to make this sort of well-wishing a component of all friendship, and not just of some special type, is clear from the context; he has not yet distinguished the three species of friendship (he only does this in the following chapter), and is at this point merely marking off, in order to set it aside, the wine-drinker's sort of liking. The cases of liking that he retains for study, he says, are all ones in which one finds reciprocal well-wishing of the parties for one another's sake. The implication is that not only in "perfect" friendship, but also in pleasure- and advantage-friendship, a friend wishes his friend well for the friend's own sake. On the other hand, Aristotle repeatedly contrasts the two derivative types of friendship with the basic type by emphasizing the self-centeredness of pleasure- and advantage-friends; thus he says that in erotic relationships (one class of pleasure-friendships) people "love not one another but their incidental features" (1164a10-12), i.e., what gives pleasure to themselves. Similarly for advantage-friendships: "Those who are friends on account of advantage cease to be such at the same time as the advantage ceases; for they were not friends of one another but of the benefit to themselves" (1157a14-16; similarly 1165b3-4). This seems to suggest that in pleasure- and advantage-friendships each party is concerned *solely* with his own good, and this would mean that they could not have the sort of concern for one another that Aristotle seems in VIII, 2 to attribute to friends. Other evidence, to which we shall turn in section IV below, seems to indicate the same thing. Which is Aristotle's considered view? Or is he simply inconsistent on this point?

It should be observed that if Aristotle holds both that pleasure- and advantage-friends are wholly self-centered, and that only per-

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<sup>10</sup> Strictly, of course, Aristotle only reports here what "people say," but he must be endorsing these views, since by the end of the chapter (1156a3-5) he is drawing inferences on his own behalf partly from them: friends, he says, "must wish well to (ἐὐνοεῖν) and want what is good for one another . . ." That both "people" and Aristotle himself define ἐὐνοεῖν as *disinterested* well-wishing (and not well-wishing *tout court*) has traditionally been taken as the burden of these lines: both Aspasius in his *Commentaria* (163.9-11, 27-29) and Bonitz in his *Index Aristotelicus* (298a45) so take them. This reading is undoubtedly correct, especially in view of Aristotle's usage elsewhere (see *NE* 1167a13-17 and *EE* 1241a7-8 and my discussion below p. 632), and I adopt it in what follows.

fectly virtuous persons are capable of having friendships of any other type, he will be adopting an extremely harsh view of the psychological capabilities of almost everyone. For, clearly enough, there are few or no paragons of virtue in the world, and if only such paragons can have friendships of the basic kind, then most people including virtually all of Aristotle's readers, will be declared incapable of anything but thoroughly self-centered associations. This would be a depressing result, and one which, given Aristotle's generally accommodating attitude toward the common sense of the ordinary man, should occasion surprise, at least in the absence of compelling general reasons on the other side. In what follows I shall argue that, despite initial appearances, Aristotle does not make friendship of the central kind the exclusive preserve of moral heroes, and that he does not maintain that friendships of the derivative kinds are wholly self-centered: pleasure- and advantage-friendships are instead a complex and subtle mixture of self-seeking and unself-interested well-wishing and well-doing.

### III

As already remarked, Aristotle distinguishes the three types of friendship from one another by reference to what it is that causes the parties to like one another: *τριῶν ὄντων δι' ἃ φιλοῦσιν* (1155b27)—*διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον, διὰ τὸ ἡδύ and δι' ἀρετήν*. Strictly, of course, it is not the actual properties of a person, but those that some one else conceives him as possessing, that are responsible for the existence of a friendship: in the case of pleasure, perhaps, there is hardly room for mistakes, but, plainly, one can be mistaken about whether some one is advantageous to know, or morally good. Though Aristotle in describing friendships usually neglects this distinction, and speaks of friends of the various types as *actually* pleasant or advantageous to one another, or morally good, he does on occasion take explicit note of the decisive role of appearances here. Thus in *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 3 he discusses what becomes of the friendship you have made with some one, taking him to be a good person (*ἐὰν δ' ἀποδέχηται ὡς ἀγαθόν*, 1165b13), when you find out otherwise. While such a friendship lasts, the deceived party will like his friend "for his virtue" (*δι' ἀρετήν*), even though he may in fact have none; so the friendship, from his side at least, will be a "friendship of the good." What gives a friendship its character as a friendship of a

particular kind is the state of mind of the partners—their intentions toward and their conceptions of one another. Now, clearly enough, in the case of pleasure- and advantage-friends it is *some* (conceived) pleasure or advantage that their friends give them that makes them like them; the friend need not be thought to be pleasant or advantageous in every way or every context, but only in *some*, in order for the friendship to exist. One may well be friends with someone because he is a pleasant drinking-companion, even while recognizing his unsuitability as a companion in other pleasant pursuits. Up to a certain point, perhaps, a pleasure-friendship is more complete and perfect of its kind the greater the variety and scope of the pleasures the friends may share; but this is a difference in scope and perfection within a class of friendships which all belong to the same basic type. The type is determined by what it is about the other person that forms the bond, and this may perfectly well—indeed, typically will—involve a very limited and partial view of him as a pleasant companion.

It would be natural to suppose that within the class of virtue-friendships there could be a similar variation. Some virtue-friendships might involve the recognition of complete and perfect virtue, virtue of every type and in every respect, in the associates; other friendships of the same type might be based, not on the recognition by each of perfect virtue in the other, but just of some morally good qualities that he possesses (or is thought to possess). Thus, one might be attached to someone because of his generous and open spirit, while recognizing that he is in some ways obtuse, or not very industrious, or somewhat self-indulgent. Such a friendship would belong to the type, *virtue-friendship*, because it would be based on the conception of the other person as morally good (in some respect, in some degree), even though the person does not have, and is not thought to have, a perfectly virtuous character—just as a pleasure-friend need not be, or be thought to be, perfectly pleasant or pleasant in every way. Here again, the question of what type of friendship a given relationship belongs to would be settled by examining the conception of the person under which one is bound to him; if it is good qualities of the person's character, and not pleasure or advantage to oneself, that causes one to like him, it will be a virtue-friendship, even though these qualities may be, and be known to be, limited in their goodness and/or conjoined with other not so good, or even positively bad, personal characteristics.

Now it is clear, I think, that this must be how Aristotle understands virtue-friendship, considered as one of the three basic types of friendship, despite the prominence in his exposition of that most perfect instance, the association of two perfectly good men. This comes out most clearly from his discussion of friendship between unequals. Ideally, he recognizes (1158b30-33), friendship demands absolute equality—equality of status between the partners and equality of pleasure or advantage, given and received, or moral goodness, as the case may be. But in each of the three basic types (1162a34-b4) there occur also unequal friendships. Sometimes one party gives more pleasure than he gets, or benefits less from the association than his friend does, and similarly friendships exist, Aristotle claims, where one party is recognized to be morally better than the other. One class of unequal virtue-friendships is that between husband and wife (1158b13-19). Here Aristotle's idea seems to be that men as such are morally superior to women, so that a friendship between the absolutely best man and the absolutely best woman, each recognized as such, would be an unequal friendship. In such a friendship the disparity in goodness does not imply any deficiency on the side of the lesser person with respect to her own appropriate excellences; she will be perfect of her kind, but the kind in question is inherently lower. But Aristotle also recognizes unequal virtue-friendships between those whose natural status is equal (1162b6-13), and in that case the inequality must consist in one of the partners being not only less morally good than the other, but deficient with respect to his own appropriate excellences. So in this case we will have a virtue-friendship where the superior person likes the inferior for such virtues as he has (or some of them), while recognizing that his character is not perfectly good. Even more significant for our purposes is Aristotle's discussion in IX 3, 1165b23 ff., of a virtue-friendship which starts out equal but is threatened with dissolution as one party improves in character and accomplishments and eventually outstrips the other. In this case it is clear that Aristotle is willing to countenance a virtue-friendship where *both* parties are quite deficient with respect to their appropriate excellences.

There can be no doubt, then, that on Aristotle's theory what makes a friendship a virtue-friendship is the binding force within it of *some*—perhaps, for all that, partial and incomplete—excellence of the character, and the perfect friendship of the perfectly virtuous is only an especially significant special case of this. For

this reason, it seems preferable to refer to friendship of the central kind not, as Aristotle most often tends to do, as “friendship of the good,” but, as he sometimes calls it, “friendship of character” (ἡ τῶν ἡθῶν φιλία, 1164a12, διὰ τὸ ἡθος φιλεῖν, 1165b8-9, ἡ ἡθικὴ φιλία, *EE* 1241a10, 1242b36, 1243a8, 32, 35; cf., ἐκ τῆς οὐνηθείας τὰ ἡθῆ στέργωσι, *NE* 1157a11, and ἔοικε . . . τῆς κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον φιλίας ἢ μὲν ἡθικὴ ἢ δὲ νομικὴ εἶναι, 1162b21-23). The expression “character-friendship” brings out accurately that the basis for the relationship is the recognition of good qualities of character, without in any way implying that the parties are moral heroes. I will hereafter adopt this alternative terminology. One should not, however, overlook the significance of the fact that Aristotle himself prefers to characterize the central type of friendship by concentrating almost exclusively on the friendship of perfectly good men. For it is an aspect of the pervasive teleological bias of his thinking, which causes him always to search out the best and most fully realized instance when attempting to define a kind of thing. Aristotle does not himself mistake the perfect instance for the only member of the class, and there is no necessity for us to do so. But because, in this case, I believe his readers have often been misled, it seems best in expounding Aristotle’s views to depart from his own preferred terminology.

#### IV

The central and basic kind of friendship, then, is friendship of character. Such friendships exist when two persons, having spent enough time together to know one another’s character and to trust one another (1156b25-29), come to love one another because of their good human qualities: Aristotle’s word for “love” here is *στέργειν*, a word which is used most often to apply to a mother’s love for her children and other such close family attachments.<sup>11</sup> Each, loving the

<sup>11</sup> The centrality of this emotional bond in Aristotle’s analysis is sometimes overlooked, but it is there, nonetheless. In *NE* IV, 6, 1126b16–28, in characterizing the nameless minor social virtue which shows itself in the right sort of behavior in ordinary social intercourse—the person who has it will openly assert his own views and preferences, as appropriate, while also heeding and yielding to those of others when this is right—Aristotle says that this kind of person behaves toward others in the sort of way that a friend does: “for the person in this intermediate condition is very like

other for his good qualities of character, wishes for him whatever is good, for his own sake, precisely in recognition of his goodness of character, and it is mutually known to them that well-wishing of this kind is reciprocated (1156a3-5). They enjoy one another's company and are benefited by it (1156b12-17) and in consequence spend their time together or even live with one another (*συνημερεύειν καὶ συζῆν*, 1156b4-5). Provided that no contingency physically separates them for any considerable period (1157b11-13), such a friendship, once formed, will tend to be continuous and permanent, since it is grounded in knowledge of and love for one another's good qualities of character, and such traits, once formed, tend to be permanent (1156b11-12).

Pleasure- and advantage-friendships are, according to Aristotle, counted as friendships only by reason of their resemblance to this central case.<sup>12</sup> Thus character-friends are both pleasant and beneficial to one another, and pleasure-friends, though not necessarily beneficial, are of course pleasant to one another, while advantage-friends derive benefits, though perhaps not pleasure, from their association (1156b35-1157a3, 1156a27-28).<sup>13</sup> But are there further, direct resemblances, based on properties that all three types of friendship have in common? If, as I suggested above, Aristotle means to adopt in *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 2 the *Rhetoric's* definition of friendship as always involving well-wishing

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what, with love (*τὸ στέργειν*) added, we call a good friend. But his condition differs from friendship because he lacks passion (*πάθος*) and love (*τὸ στέργειν*) towards those with whom he associates." Aristotle does not in *NE* VIII-IX (or *EE* VII) list *στέργειν* formally as a condition or component of friendship, but this seems to be only because he presupposes it as obvious. At any rate he refers frequently enough in *NE* VIII-IX to friends as loving (*στέργειν*) one another, one another's characters, etc. Since Bywater's index omits all of these passages I add the following (I think complete) list of places where the word appears in these books: 1156a15, 1157a11, 28, 1161b18, 25, 1162a12, b30, 1164a10, 1167a3, 1168a2, 7, 22.

<sup>12</sup> The resemblance is partial at best: neither of the derivative friendships tends to be permanent (1156a19-20); neither requires an extended preparatory period of testing and getting to know one another (1156a34-35, 1158a14-18); advantage-friends do not even tend to spend their time together (1156a27-28). One can have many friends of these kinds, but only very few of the other (1158a10 ff.).

<sup>13</sup> Thus character-friendship, by resembling in these different ways these other two types of relationship, links them to one another, despite the fact that in this crucial respect (motive) they diverge fairly widely from one another. On this see Fortenbaugh, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

to one's friend for his own sake, then the types will have much in common: in every friendship, of whichever of the three types, the friend will wish his friend whatever is good, for his own sake, and it will be mutually known to them that this well-wishing is reciprocated.<sup>14</sup> As I have said, I believe that Aristotle does hold this view, but there are complications that must now be entered into.

The chief complication is caused by the qualifications which Aristotle immediately imposes on his statement in VIII, 2 that mutually known, reciprocated *εὐνοία* is essential to friendship. He says that friends must "wish well to (*εὐνοεῖν*) and want what is good for one another, and be known to one another as doing this, on one of the aforesaid grounds" (1156a3-5), i.e., because they find their friend pleasant, or beneficial, or possessed of admirable qualities of character. But what does Aristotle mean by this "because?" What kind of ground does he have in mind here? Perhaps he means that in a pleasure-friendship the one person wants the other to prosper *in order that* his own (the well-wisher's) pleasure may be continued or increased. Similarly, an advantage friend would want and be willing to try to secure what his friend needed, in order that his friend might continue to be in a position, or be better able, to see to *his* needs in due course. That is, well-wishing on the ground of pleasure or advantage would mean well-wishing in order to get pleasure or advantage for oneself. But this interpretation runs into an immediate objection. For although it is certainly possible to wish someone well both for one's own sake (because his success will bring advantages or enjoyments to oneself) and for his, it does seem incoherent to suggest that someone might wish well to someone else for that other person's sake *in order to* secure his own interests or enjoyments. To wish for someone else's good for his sake entails (perhaps means) wishing for his good *not* as a means to one's own (or anyone else's) good. But on this interpretation Aristotle would be guilty of this incoherent thought: he does not say merely that a pleasure-friend wishes for his friend's prosperity because the friend is pleasant to him, but that he has *εὐνοία* for

<sup>14</sup> It should be noticed also that Aristotle does on occasion say that friends of the derivative types love (*στέργειν*) one another (1156a14-15, 1157a28, 1162a12), thus implying at least a relatively close emotional attachment. He sometimes seems to deny this, however: see, e.g., 1164a10-11, and my discussion below, p. 640-641.

his friend for this reason, and *εὐνοία* is defined in this very context (1155b32, where *οὕτω* is to be explicated by *ἐκείνον ἔνεκα*, b31) as wishing someone well *for his own sake*, and does not mean wishing him well *tout court*.

It might be suggested that Aristotle, despite the apparent definition of *εὐνοία* at 1155b32, intends the word to be understood in the reduced sense of “wishing well (*period*)” when, a few lines later, he says that friends of all types wish each other well (*εὐνοεῖν*). Such a reduction in sense is in itself unlikely within the context of a single argument, however, and the evidence about Aristotle’s usage of the word elsewhere seems to show that he always understands by it “well-wishing for the other person’s sake.” There is no doubt that this is how *εὐνοία* is understood in his official account of it in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 5, and in the corresponding passage of the *Eudemean Ethics*, VII, 7 (1241a1-14) Aristotle actually denies that *εὐνοία* exists in pleasure- and advantage-friendships at all, precisely on the ground that “if one wishes for someone what is good because he is useful to oneself, one would not wish this for his sake but for one’s own, while *εὐνοία* is for the sake not of the well-wisher himself but for that of the person to whom one wishes well” (1241a5-8).<sup>15</sup> We shall have to return to this passage of the *Eudemean Ethics* later; for the moment it is enough to point out how decisive and explicit Aristotle is here that *εὐνοία* requires not just well-wishing, but even well-wishing for the other person’s sake. The apparent definition of *εὐνοία* in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 2 is therefore not something put forward in passing, easily subject to immediate unannounced dilution; it is a statement of Aristotle’s fully considered understanding of what *εὐνοία* is.

It should be recalled that the necessity for taking *εὐνοεῖν* in a reduced sense in 1156a4 was caused by interpreting the claim that a pleasure- or an advantage-friend wishes his friend well *because* his friend is pleasant or advantageous to him (*διὰ τὸ ἡδύ, διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον*) as meaning *in order to* secure his own pleasure or advantage. If *διὰ* is taken in this prospective way, as expressing merely what the well-wisher hopes to produce or achieve by his

<sup>15</sup> The text here, as often in *EE* VII, is obviously corrupt, though I believe the sense, as I have given it, is beyond doubt. I accept Jackson’s *ἔνεκα* for *εὐνοία* of the MSS at a8, and ignore in my translation the lacuna at a7.

friend's prosperity, then it is impossible to interpret Aristotle coherently. But there is another, in itself more plausible, interpretation of the force of *διά* here. Notice first that if *διά* does mean "for the sake of," it ought to mean the same thing in the parallel remark about character-friendships: a character-friend wishes well to his friend *δι'ἀρετήν*, i.e., on this interpretation, for the sake of excellence of character. One might, of course, make some sense of this: a person wants his friend to prosper so that he (the friend, presumably) can wax more virtuous or continue to do virtuous deeds. But it is not the only, nor even the most natural, way of understanding the claim that character-friends wish each other well because of excellence of character. In this case, the "because" (*διὰ τὴν ἀρετήν*) seems more likely to mean "in recognition of their friend's having a good character," so that it expresses a consequence or result of the friend's being morally good rather than some purpose that the well-wisher has in wanting him to prosper.<sup>16</sup> Thus, a character-friend wishes his friend to prosper, because he recognizes his good character and thinks that it is fitting for those who are morally good to prosper. Understanding the "because" in this causal way makes it at least as much retrospective as prospective; the well-wishing and well-doing are responses to what the person is and has done rather than merely the expression of a hope as to what he will be and may do in the future. Now, if one interprets the "because" in this causal way in all three cases, as one must if one is to take it so in any of them, there is no special difficulty in understanding Aristotle's attribution of *εὐνοία* to all types of friends. For the pleasure-friend will now be said to wish well to his friend for his friend's own sake, in consequence of recognizing him as someone who is and has been an enjoyable companion, and the advantage-friend wishes his friend well for his friend's own sake, in consequence of recognizing him as someone who regularly benefits him and has done so in the past. Aristotle will here be making, in effect, the psychological claim that those who have enjoyed one another's company or have been mutually benefited through their common association, will, as a result of the

<sup>16</sup> This interpretation is more in conformity with the predominant usage of *διά*, which, though it can sometimes express a purpose (cf., Liddell-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press 1940], s.v. B III 3), normally expresses an antecedent causal condition. Had Aristotle wanted to refer here to the well-wisher's purpose he would presumably have written *τοῦ χρησίμου* (etc.) *ἔνεκα*.

benefits or pleasures they receive, tend to wish for and be willing to act in the interest of the other person's good, independently of consideration of their *own* welfare or pleasure. A full-fledged friendship will exist, then, when such intentions are recognized by both parties as existing reciprocally.<sup>17</sup>

Before this interpretation can be accepted, however, we must see how it fits with what Aristotle says in VIII, 3-4, where he marks off character-friends, as "friends without qualification" (*ἀπλῶς*, 1157b4), from the other types, whom he counts as friends only "incidentally" (*κατὰ συμβεβηκός*, 1156a17, b11, 1157b4). Friends wish each other well, he says, "in that respect in which they are friends" (*ταύτη ἣ φιλοῦσιν*, 1156a9-10): so, he explains, an advantage-friend or a pleasure-friend wishes his friend well "*qua* beneficial or pleasant" (*ἣ χρήσιμος ἢ ἡδύς*, a16). Hence, he implies, advantage- and pleasure-friends are only incidentally one another's friends, while character-friends are friends in an unqualified way. In interpreting this passage I want to take up two points. First, what does Aristotle mean by saying that a friend of one of the lesser types wishes his friend well (merely) *qua* pleasant or *qua* advantageous to himself? Does this amount to saying that these types of friends regard each other exclusively as means to their own satisfaction or advancement? And secondly, how is it that to wish someone well "*qua* pleasant" or "*qua* advantageous" is a ground for saying that someone who does this is only "incidentally" a friend? I will take up the second point first.

Clearly enough, whether one person is beneficial or pleasant to another is an incidental characteristic of him: his being so results from the purely external and contingent fact that properties or abilities he possesses happen to answer to needs or wants, equally

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<sup>17</sup> It is, obviously, compatible with these intentions (see below) that a friend should also expect his friendship to bring pleasure and/or advantage to himself: indeed Aristotle makes it very clear, as at 1156a22-24, that pleasure and advantage are both cause (*δι' ὃ*) and defining purpose (*πρὸς ὃ*) in the case of these lesser friendships. The point is that even though a person looks for pleasure or advantage from a relationship and would withdraw from it if he thought this end no longer attainable through it, he can still, on the assumption that the pleasure or advantage does remain firm, wish his friend well for his own sake. Here pleasure or advantage, assumed to be a stable property of the relationship, serves as cause, not as goal, of the well-wishing.

contingent, that characterize the other person. If, then, the conception of the other person under which one is his friend—as beneficial, or as pleasant to oneself—is something that is only incidentally true of him, the same thing must also be said of that property which one acquires as a result of so regarding him: that one is a friend of the other person must be something that holds true only incidentally. By contrast, Aristotle claims, character-friends are friends of one another essentially (*καθ' αὐτούς*, 1156a11, *δι' αὐτούς*, 1156b10, 1157b3) or without qualification (*ἀπλῶς*). Admittedly, it is not a necessary truth about any individual that he has those good qualities of character for which he is loved (just as it is not a necessary truth about the pleasant or advantageous friend that he has those properties that yield pleasure or advantage). But on Aristotle's theory of moral virtue, the virtues are essential properties of humankind: a person realizes more or less fully his human nature according as he possesses more or less fully those properties of character which count as moral excellences. And since individual persons are what they essentially are by being human beings, it can be said that a person (any person) realizes his own essential nature more fully the more completely and adequately he possesses the moral excellences. So if one is the friend of another person, and wishes him well, because of good moral qualities he possesses, one will be his friend because he is something that he is essentially and not incidentally (cf., 1156b8-9: *οὗτοι* (sc., character-friends) *γὰρ τὰγαθὰ ὁμοίως βούλονται ἀλλήλοις ἢ ἀγαθοί, ἀγαθοὶ δ' εἰσὶ καθ' αὐτούς*.) And, in consequence, the property that one acquires as a result of so regarding him, that of being his friend, can be said to relate one to him essentially and not incidentally. It is because his friend is just what he essentially is, a human being, that a character-friend wishes him well; pleasure-friends and advantage-friends wish their friends well not, or not merely, as what they essentially are.

In this train of thought, the operative consideration is the conception of the other person under which one wishes him well, and since the argument here is developed directly out of the passage in VIII, 2, in which Aristotle declares that friends wish each other well on account of pleasure, advantage, or moral goodness, we can find support in it for the interpretation proposed above of that earlier passage. Properly understood, neither passage denies that friends

of the derivative types wish their friends well for the friend's own sake; instead, they specify what it is about the other person that supports this response. In this respect all three types of friendship run parallel. There is, however, an important difference between the well-wishing that forms part of a character-friendship and the well-wishing in the other two cases. This follows from the fact, developed in VIII, 3-4, that only character-friends are friends essentially and without adventitious qualification. For given the close connection that Aristotle asserts between moral excellence and what a human being essentially is, a character-friend's well-wishing is more unrestricted, less hedged about by special assumptions and special expectations, than the well-wishing of the other types of friend. A character-friend wishes for his friend's well-being as, and because he is, a good man. But good qualities of character are, once fully acquired, permanent or nearly so (1156b12), since these properties belong to one's essential nature as a human being, and one's essential nature, once fully realized, is a permanent part of what one is. By contrast, pleasantness and advantageousness, just because they are incidental properties of a person (and depend upon the special circumstances, interests, etc., of other persons as well) are subject to change (1156a21-22, 1156b1). So character-friendships are much more permanent attachments than pleasure- and advantage-friendships are.

But these temporal limitations carry with them another limitation: in wishing well to one's friend because of his pleasantness or advantageousness to oneself, one is implicitly imposing limits of a special and narrow kind upon one's well-wishing. One's concern for the other person's good extends only so far as and so long as he remains a particular sort of person, pleasant or advantageous as the case may be: one likes and wishes well to someone conceived of as pleasant or advantageous to oneself, and the good one wishes him to have, for his own sake, is therefore restricted to what he can acquire without, thereby or in consequence, ceasing to be pleasant or advantageous. One wants him to prosper, for his own sake, and not merely as a means to one's own good; nevertheless, one does not want him to prosper in such a way or to such an extent that one no longer gets the pleasure or benefits one has received from associating with him. In short, in wishing someone well, for his own sake, because he is

pleasant or advantageous, one's first commitment is to his retention of the property of pleasantness or advantageousness, and any good one wishes him to have, for his own sake, must be compatible with the retention of that special property under which, as his friend, one wishes him well in the first place.<sup>18</sup>

This, at any rate, I take to be the burden of Aristotle's claim that friends want good things for their friends "in that respect in which they are friends" (*ταύτη ἣ φιλοῦσιν*, 1156a10), viz., *qua* persons pleasant or advantageous to themselves (a16) or *qua* persons of good character (*ἣ ἀγαθοί*, b8-9). He does not say explicitly that the conception of the other person under which one is his pleasure- or advantage-friend implies these limitations to one's well-wishing, but he does draw the parallel inference about character-friends. Thus, Aristotle says, friends do not wish that their friends should become gods (although being a god is a very good thing) because to become a god is to cease to be a human being, and it is of a human being that one is the friend and, therefore, as a human being that one wishes for his prosperity: *εἰ δὴ καλῶς εἶρηται ὅτι ὁ φίλος τῷ φίλῳ βούλεται*

<sup>18</sup> This consequence of Aristotle's theory of pleasure- and advantage-friends is, from our point of view, perhaps not a very palatable one. One might, for example, rather think that people involved in a sexual liaison which is also a pleasure-friendship would, just to the extent that they regard one another as friends, be committed to sacrificing the liaison itself, if it came to that, if the welfare or prosperity (or some other important good) of one of them made this seem desirable. On Aristotle's account of pleasure-friendship, however, as I have interpreted it, there would be no such commitment. (If there were, that would show that the friendship was not purely a pleasure-friendship, but was verging toward being a character-friendship: cf., 1157a8-12.) Pleasure- and advantage-friendships, on Aristotle's conception, are, despite his denial that they are wholly self-centered, much more self-centered than perhaps we would be inclined to think them. It should also, perhaps, be noted here that Aristotle, on my interpretation, does not have to deny that one might (out of simple gratitude, for example) wish and do well to someone who had ceased to be pleasant or advantageous to oneself. His point is that well-wishing *as an ingredient in friendship* is limited by the other person's continuing to (be thought to) be pleasant or advantageous. Nor is this an arbitrary restriction: if those who have once been close companions cease to take pleasure in one another's company, then their friendship is dead, no matter how much they do for one another thereafter out of gratitude for past favors or pleasures. The same thing holds of business friendships. Friendship, of whatever sort, requires a continuing lively interest of one person in another, and *mere* gratitude for past pleasure or past services is not enough to provide this.

τὰγαθὰ ἐκείνου ἔνεκα, μένειν ἂν δέοι οἷός ποτ' ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνος· ἀνθρώπῳ δὴ ὄντι βουλήσεται τὰ μέγιστα ἀγαθὰ (1159a8-11).<sup>19</sup> If, then, the well-wishing of a character-friend is tacitly restricted to such goods as the friend can acquire while still remaining what he essentially is (a human being), pleasure- and advantage-friends, in accordance with their more restricted conceptions of other persons as their friends, will want their friends' prosperity only within the limits imposed by the existence and continuance of those special properties of pleasantness and advantageousness as possessors of which they are their friends.

Friends of all three types, then, on Aristotle's theory in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, wish for their friend's well-being out of concern for the friend himself. This is as true of a businessman who, through frequent profitable association, becomes friends with a regular customer, as it is of a husband and wife or two intimate companions who love one another for their characters. Such a businessman looks first and foremost for mutual profit from his friendship, but that does not mean that he always calculates his services to his customer by the standard of profit. Finding the relationship on the whole profitable, he likes this customer and is willing to do him

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<sup>19</sup> I follow here the traditional interpretation, found, e.g., in Ross's translation. J. Burnet (*The Ethics of Aristotle*, [London: Methuen, 1900], p. 363), followed by R.-A. Gauthier (*Aristote: L'Ethique à Nicomaque* [Louvain and Paris: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1958], p. 693), takes the text to say instead that one does not wish his friend to become a god because to do so would be to wish to deprive *him* of a good, namely one's friendship. This is textually more awkward, but just possible. Burnet and Gauthier apparently opt for it because they think it attributes a more seemly (because purely altruistic) intention to this well-wisher, who is presumed to be morally virtuous. But this is an illusion. After all, becoming a god might well entail a sufficient improvement in one's condition so that the loss of a human friendship would be more than compensated for, and in that case one's friend could hardly claim to be acting altruistically in refusing to want one to achieve this status. There is no incompatibility at all (*pace* Gauthier) in wishing for one's friend's good and wishing that he should be deified (or in some other way improve his condition at the cost of the friendship). Hence the passage only makes a coherent point if interpreted in the traditional way. Friendship, even the purest, essentially involves the desire for one's own good (as well as the desire for that of one's friend), and there is no reason to interpret away signs of Aristotle's recognition of this fact. Notice also that at the end of the passage Aristotle emphasizes (1159a11–12) that a person's first concern is (properly) with his own good, a remark that is perfectly in place on the traditional interpretation, but hardly so on Burnet's and Gauthier's.

services otherwise than as a means to his own ultimate profit. So long as the general context of profitability remains, the well-wishing can proceed unchecked; the profitability to the well-wisher that is assumed in the well-wishing is not that of the *particular* service rendered (the particular action done in the other person's interest) but that of the overall fabric of the relationship.<sup>20</sup> Here, then, one has a complex and subtle mixture of self-seeking and unself-interested well-wishing and well-doing. The overriding concern of the advantage-friend is for his own profit. But this does not mean that every action and wish of his is ultimately aimed at the realization

<sup>20</sup> It is instructive in interpreting advantage-friendship to notice that Aristotle distinguishes two kinds (*NE* VIII 13, 1162b21–1163a9): one which is *νομική* and *ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς* (1162b23, 25–26: i.e., governed by explicitly agreed upon exchanges of services) while the other is *ἠθικὴ* (1162b23, 31: i.e., it rests on the parties' characters, as decent people who do not need to buy one another's attentions). It is interesting to observe that in the latter sort of friendship, Aristotle says the parties give to one another *ὡς φίλω*, i.e., in the spirit in which true friends do, without looking for or soliciting any particular, exact return. In fact, as this comment betrays, it is only what Aristotle calls *ἠθικὴ φιλία κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον* that counts at all as a *φιλία* on his own announced criteria: the other types don't really have *εὐνοια* for one another, so that their association is a *purely* commercial affair and hence no friendship, not even an advantage-friendship. That Aristotle is not clearer on this point here shows, I think, a certain unwillingness on his part to embrace unreservedly the idea that no association can count as a friendship that does not involve disinterested well-wishing. A comparison of this passage with the corresponding argument in the *EE* (1242b31–1243b14) will serve to place Aristotle's inconsistency on this point into proper focus. The *EE* begins by marking off the same two types of advantage-friendship (1242b31–32), *νομική* and *ἠθικὴ*. But as the argument proceeds it becomes apparent (b38–1243a2) that this division is provisional only; the latter type is really a confused relationship, in which the parties cannot decide whether to treat one another as *real* friends (that is, character-friends, in which case they ought not to demand repayment for their services at all) or as advantage-friends (that is, friends of the type which has just been described as *one kind* of advantage-friend, the *νομική*, in which case commercial practice is the accepted model for their relationship). Thus, in this passage Aristotle actually implies that it is only where an association is *purely* commercial that it can count as an advantage-friendship, as his denial in the *EE* of *εὐνοια* to advantage-friends (1241a3–5) also implies. The *NE* discussion, in insisting that the *ἠθικὴ φιλία κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον* is a legitimate type of advantage-friendship, is therefore a distinct improvement; as often, however, Aristotle, in reworking this passage to bring it into line with his later views, refuses to abandon completely the earlier ideas which are causing the trouble. What results is a half-way house in which both the *νομική* and the *ἠθικὴ* count as legitimate advantage-friendships, even though his mature view would seem to imply that the *νομική* is not in reality a friendship at all.

of something profitable to himself. He genuinely likes his friend and has a genuine and unself-interested concern for his good, and he will do him services that are not motivated, at least not entirely, by self-interest. Of course, some services he will refuse, because they will cost him too much, thus endangering the general profitability to himself of the association that is the basic presupposition of the friendship and therefore of any friendly service falling within it. Other services, however, no doubt small ones for the most part, he will freely perform. The same pattern of unself-interested well-wishing and self-seeking will be found in pleasure-friendships, with mutual pleasantness taking the place of mutual advantageousness.

The admixture of self-seeking in character-friendships is significantly less than in pleasure- and advantage-friendships. A character-friend loves his friend because of properties that belong to the friend essentially, and not merely incidentally. This means that he loves him for what he himself is, and not for merely external properties, or relations in which he stands to other persons. Hence the well-wishing characteristic of such a friendship does not take place within so restricted a context as that imposed by the self-centered desires for pleasure and profit that operate in the other types of friendship. The assumption in the case of character-friends that corresponds to the assumption of the pleasantness or advantageousness of the other person in the derivative friendships, is just that the other person is a good human being. So the character-friend wishes his friend well in any way that is not inconsistent with his being the good human being he is assumed to be. He wants and expects both pleasure and advantage from his association with his friend, but aiming at these is not an essential condition of the friendship itself. He associates with a good person because of his goodness; pleasure and advantage may follow in due course, but his intention in maintaining the friendship is fixed on the goodness of the other person, not on his pleasantness or profitability. So, although there is unself-interested well-wishing in all three types of friendship, it is both broader and deeper in a character-friendship than in the other two. For it is only in this case that the conception of the other person under which one is his friend and wishes him well for his own sake is a conception that corresponds to what he himself essentially is.

Bearing in mind these important differences between character-friends and the other two types, one might say, with some justice, that only character-friends really love *one another*, that only they

really wish one another well for *one another's* sake. By this, one would mean that only character-friends concern themselves with the actual persons, themselves, that their friends are. It is in this light that I think those few remarks of Aristotle's are to be interpreted which at first sight seem to deny that unself-interested well-wishing occurs at all in the derivative friendships. Thus he says at 1156b7-11 that "the friendship of good persons who are alike in moral virtue is perfect friendship. For these alike wish good things for one another *qua* good, and they are good in virtue of being themselves (*καθ' αὐτούς*). But those who wish good things to their friends for the friends' sake are most truly friends; for they are friends by being themselves (*δι' αὐτούς*) and not incidentally." Here Aristotle appears to deny, by implication, that other sorts of friends do wish good things for one another for their friends' own sake, but in reality, as the context shows, his point would be better put by saying that although in the other friendships there *is* well-wishing for the friend's own sake, and not merely as a means to the well-wisher's good, the friend himself is conceived in an external and incidental way (he is not loved and cared for as being what he himself essentially is), so that it is not for the sake of himself as he *essentially* is that the well-wishing takes place. It is only in character-friendships that the well-wishing is for the sake of the person conceived as being what he himself essentially is; so one can hint, as Aristotle does here, though with some risk of misleading his readers, that only a character-friend acts for his friend's own sake. It is in the same way that I believe other apparently aberrant passages ought to be interpreted (thus 1157a15-16, *οὐ γὰρ ἀλλήλων ἦσαν φίλοι ἀλλὰ τοῦ λυσιτελοῦς*; 1164a10-11, *οὐ γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἔστεργον ἀλλὰ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα*; 1165b3, *ἐκείνων* (sc. *τοῦ χρησίμου καὶ τοῦ ἡδοῦς*) γὰρ ἦσαν φίλοι).

It is interesting to observe that this subtle and acute analysis of the derivative friendships, allowing for unself-interested well-wishing (*εὐνοια*) within the confines of an association primarily motivated by self-seeking, was not firmly worked out until late in Aristotle's career. At any rate, the *Eudemian Ethics* seems to lack it. It is a striking fact that well-wishing, which is prominent from the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*' discussion (VIII, 2) as one essential component of friendship, is mentioned only twice (1236b30, 1238b5), and both times in passing, in the long chapter, *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, 2, in which the theory of the three types of friendship is developed and explained. At one place (1241a1-14, mentioned

above) in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle considers that the self-centeredness of the derivative friendships precludes all possibility of well-wishing out of regard for the other person; yet later on (1244a20-26) he appears to say that wanting what is good for a friend is a characteristic of all three types of friendship.<sup>21</sup> If this is shorthand, as it would be in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for wanting a friend's good for his sake, then the *Eudemian Ethics* has no clear and consistent theory on this point. It should be carefully noted that in the *Nicomachean Ethics*' chapter (IX, 5) on εὐνοια (which corresponds to *EE* 1241a1-14) Aristotle does not repeat the *Eudemian Ethics*' blanket denial of εὐνοια to pleasure- and advantage-friends. He makes instead the more interesting, and reduced, claim that those who adopt an attitude of unself-interested well-wishing towards someone although they do not know him personally or associate with him in any way can, by prolonged and habitual association, convert their good will into actual friendship, but that the resulting friendship will always be a character-, and never a pleasure- or advantage-friendship (1167a10-14). Spontaneous good will of the kind here under discussion can only be based on admiration for goodness of character; one can feel good will toward someone whom one *thinks* is a good person even though one has no deep personal knowledge of his character and has not personally been affected by any noble action of his, but no one feels good will for someone else on the mere ground that he *might* be a pleasant companion or useful business partner. These sorts of good will only arise *after* the pleasure or the profit has begun to be actualized, and exist always as a response to profit or pleasure one has actually found in associating with someone else (cf., 1167a14-15). It is the expectation of pleasure or profit that brings one to develop such friendships as these, and there is no such thing as unself-interested well-wishing for the sake of one's own pleasure or profit (οὐδὲ γὰρ εὐνοια ἐπὶ τούτοις γίνεται, 1167a13-14). So what Aristotle denies here is that εὐνοια precedes, and possibly turns into, a friendship of one of the derivative sorts;<sup>22</sup> he does not deny that once such a relationship has begun,

<sup>21</sup> So at any rate it seems to read if we accept Jackson's conjecture at a23. The text here is very corrupt.

<sup>22</sup> It is true that in VIII 2, 1155b34–1156a1, Aristotle says that it is possible to feel εὐνοια for someone whom one does not know, but takes to be χρήσιμος (to oneself), and there seems nothing to prevent such εὐνοια

*εὐνοια* develops within it. The positive point Aristotle makes here seems to me very acutely observed; in any event, it does not count against the thesis I have argued for in this section, namely, that friends even of the derivative types pursue one another's good out of unself-interested good will.

## V

If I am right, then, Aristotle's views on what is essential to friendship do not, as prevailing interpretations imply, commit him to holding that almost everyone has nothing but selfish motivations. On his theory ordinary decent people are capable even of character-friendship, with all that that implies in the way of unselfish interest in others, and in any event, pleasure- and advantage-friendship themselves already involve a considerable degree of unselfish concern for the good of other persons. In concluding this discussion, I want to make three further comments about Aristotle's theory, so understood.

First of all, Aristotle does not make the mistake, which a superficial reading would seem to convict him of, of counting as *φιλία*, even of a diluted sort, just any established relationship in which two or more persons to their mutual knowledge receive pleasure or profit from associating together. That it would be a mistake to call in English all such relationships friendships (in no matter how relaxed a sense) I take to be obvious; a businessman is no friend of *all* his regular customers, and when a personal relationship is more or less purely exploitative it would be taken for irony to describe the persons in question as friends. Friendship requires, at a minimum,

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from growing into an advantage-friendship, under appropriate further conditions. This remark need not, however, be taken to be inconsistent with the doctrine of IX 5 as I have interpreted it. For, as Aristotle emphasizes in IX 5 (1167a14–15), *εὐνοια* is a normal response to having been well treated, and probably the *εὐνοια* envisaged in the VIII 2 passage is a response to what the well-wisher takes to have been benefits accruing to himself from the other person's activities: he is grateful, say, to his distant and not personally known superior for his efforts on behalf of their common business, and so wishes him well for his own sake. What Aristotle denies in IX 5 is only that *εὐνοια* can be formed merely on the expectation of future profit (or pleasure); *εὐνοια* formed wholly in advance of any interchange among the parties can only be based on the belief that the person is morally good, and hence can only, if at all, turn into character-friendship.

*some* effective concern for the other person's good (including his profit and his pleasure) out of regard for him. Aristotle seems to feel, as we do, that the expectation, at least, of interest in the other person's good for his own sake was part of what the word itself conveyed. In conceding (as e.g., at 1157a25-36) that because general usage counts as friends those bound together merely by advantage or pleasure, philosophical theory must allow that such people are friends (though of a derivative type), Aristotle is not reluctantly being forced to recognize as *φιλίαι* certain classes of wholly self-centered relationships. His reluctance is fully explained by the facts, which he argues for at length, that these relationships are less permanent, based less on knowledge of and interest in the other person and his character, and involve to a much lesser degree the merging of one's interests and the sharing of one's life with another person, all of which are contained as ideals and, in that sense, as norms within the very idea of *φιλία*.

An objection might, however, be raised against this interpretation. For, it might be said, whereas Aristotle explicitly argues that the derivative types of friendship only get that name by certain different resemblances they bear to character-friendship, on my view there is one property that all friendships share: friends always have *εὐνοια* for one another. Why then does Aristotle not assign this property the central and unifying place in his account of the three types of friendship which on this interpretation it would seem to have? The answer seems to be that, as Aristotle understands the matter, if one is to speak strictly, having *εὐνοια* for one another is not, as we loosely take it and I have described it above (p. 630), a single property possessed in common by friends of whatever type. For, as he puts it (1156a3-5) *δεῖ ἄρα εὐνοεῖν ἀλλήλοις καὶ βούλεσθαι τὰγαθὰ μὴ λανθάνοντας δι' ἓν τι τῶν εἰρημένων*: and, as we have seen, the differences in the ground of this well-wishing bring with them differences in its scope and nature. So, Aristotle seems to hold, it would be wrong to say that there is *an* attitude of unself-interested concern for the other person's good that is common to all friendships. Instead, there are three different, though resembling, attitudes, one characteristic of each of the three types. So also, although he remarks that in every type of friendship there is mutual and reciprocated liking (*ἀντιφίλησις οὐ λανθάνουσα*, 1156a8-9), he does not count this as a single property that all friendships exhibit in common, and presumably for the same reason: the basis of this liking and so its nature varies too widely from case to case.

Finally, I should emphasize that Aristotle's theory is a theory

of what a friendship is, i.e., what is true of those who are friends; it does not, except incidentally, have anything to say about how friendships are formed in the first place. In some sense, no doubt, it is on Aristotle's view the desire for pleasure or profit, or the interest in moral excellence, that brings together those who then become friends. But, clearly enough, in the actual course of events, the first meeting may well be quite accidental and subsequent stages in the development of the relationship quite unmotivated by any explicit form of these interests. The casual, even unexpected, discovery of pleasure, profit, or moral qualities may elicit the responses that lead to the establishment of a friendship, without there being any premeditation or planning on either side. It may well be only in the clear light of hindsight that one could say that the desire for pleasure or profit, or the interest in moral excellence, was working to bring these people together; Aristotle's theory does not imply any stronger connection than this between these motives and the formation of the corresponding types of friendship.

## VI

This, then, is Aristotle's account of the three forms of personal friendship. There is one further form of friendship to which Aristotle devotes some attention and which, for that reason as well as for its importance to his moral theory generally, we ought explicitly to notice. This is that diluted and reduced form that I have called "civic friendship."<sup>23</sup>

Aristotle does not state as explicitly as one might wish what the nature of this kind of friendship is and how it is related to the three forms of personal friendship, but it seems clear enough on examination that he regards it as a special case of advantage-friendship.<sup>24</sup> At any rate, he emphasizes in his account of civic friendship that the civic community is formed and survives for the sake of the common advantage derived by its members from it (1160a11-12), so that it is essential to such a community that it aims at securing what is needed by its members to support their lives (a21-23). Civic friendship, then, as the special form of friendship characteristic of this kind of community, is founded on the experience and continued expectation, on the part of each citizen, of profit and

<sup>23</sup> My interest in this subject and some of my ideas on it were stimulated by a conversation with John Rawls.

<sup>24</sup> So Gauthier, *op. cit.*, pp. 696-697. And see *EE* 1242b22-23, ἡ δὲ πολιτικὴ (sc., φιλία) ἐστὶ μὲν κατὰ τὸ χρῆσιμον.

advantage to himself, in common with the others, from membership in the civic association. This is to say that civic friendship is a kind of advantage-friendship. Given the account of advantage-friendship presented above, one can say, then, that civic friendship exists where the fellow-citizens, to one another's mutual knowledge, like (*φιλεῖν*) one another, that is, where each citizen wishes well (and is known to wish well) to the others, and is willing to undertake to confer benefits on them, for their own sake, in consequence of recognizing that he himself is regularly benefited by the actions of the others. In a community animated by civic friendship, each citizen assumes that all the others, even those hardly or not at all known to him, are willing supporters of their common institutions and willing contributors to the common social product, from which he, together with all the other citizens, benefits. So they will approach one another for business or other purposes in a spirit of mutual good-will and with willingness to sacrifice their own immediate interests to those of one another, as friendship demands. They are accommodating rather than suspicious, anxious to yield a point rather than insisting on the full letter of their rights whenever some dispute arises.

If this is what civic friendship is, it is not surprising that Aristotle should remark that law-givers are more concerned to foster friendship among their citizens than they are to put their relations on a footing of justice (1155a23-24). For justice can exist perfectly well among those who care nothing for one another and who would not lift a finger to help any one else, except insofar as rules of justice might require. The sense of justice, understood as respect for fairness and legality, is compatible with a suspicious, narrow, hard, and unsympathetic character. Hence, as Aristotle says (1155a26-27), those who are merely just in their mutual relations have need also of friendship, whereas those who are friends do not need to become just in addition: since, as friends, they already feel a lively concern for one another's welfare, they already acknowledge reasons not to harm or work to disadvantage and can be expected to reach an accommodation without having to invoke strict rules of justice. Those who are truly friends will not wrong one another, not, however, out of love of justice and legality, but from love of one another. Aristotle adds (a28) that it is within the context of friendship that the claims of justice are both most extensive and most insistent:<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Καὶ τῶν δικαίων τὸ μάλιστα φιλικὸν εἶναι δοκεῖ.* Some commentators take this to mean that equity (*τὸ ἐπιεικές*—which Aristotle

one owes more to one's friends than to strangers, and the closer the friendship, the more extensive are one's obligations; a breach of justice is more serious when it is a friend whom one wrongs. The more complete the sentiment of friendship is among the members of a community, the greater the extent of the requirements of justice among them and the more stringent its demands. Hence law-givers, in being specially concerned to make their citizens friends, are at the same time advancing the cause of justice and extending its scope—justice, however, founded on mutual liking and mutual good-will, rather than mere rectitude.

Beyond this, Aristotle has little explicit to say about civic friendship. It is, however, an extremely important component both of his political theory and of his theory of human character. For, given his account of what friendship is, it is not difficult to see how, in decently arranged cities, people should naturally come to have friendly feelings toward one another. In such a city the benefits of civic life will be both substantial and obvious to everyone, and anyone with even ordinary intelligence will be able to see that the benefits to him are the direct consequence of his fellow-citizens' cooperative efforts. Recognizing this, he will come to wish them well and want to reciprocate by doing his part to uphold and further the community's interests. The sentiment of civic friendship is thus seen as the natural outcome of experience and understanding of the regular operation of a decently structured civic community.

Furthermore, as we have seen, Aristotle holds that fellow-citizens who are friends will behave justly to one another, so that the process, just sketched, by which a person comes to acquire friendly feelings towards his fellow-citizens is at the same time the development of a disposition to act justly towards them. Now, although Aristotle does not say so here, those who are friends are disposed also to act courageously, generously, good-temperedly, and so on for all the moral virtues, towards one another. To have friendly feelings towards someone is thus to have the disposition to treat that person virtuously in all respects, because one loves and values him as a person. So the process by which one comes to acquire

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defines, in effect, at *NE* 1139b11–27 as being guided by the spirit rather than the letter of the law) is especially characteristic of friendship (see Grant and Steward *ad loc.*; Ernst Hoffman takes this view for granted in his "Aristoteles' Philosophie der Freundschaft," repr. in Fritz-Peter Hager, ed., *Ethik und Politik des Aristoteles* [Darmstadt, 1972], pp. 149–182). The interpretation I have offered seems to me more natural, however. The main point is in any event an Aristotelian one: see *NE* VIII 9, 1160a3–8.

friendly feelings towards one's fellow-citizens is the acquisition of a disposition to act in all respects morally toward them, and not merely a disposition to act justly. The sentiment of civic friendship, in short, transforms what might otherwise be hard and narrow forms of all the virtues. By grounding the disposition to act virtuously on love and disinterested good will towards others as persons with whom one shares social life to one's own and their mutual benefit, civic friendship is a necessary supplement to the virtues themselves, since only through it does a person come to have the warmth and the sympathetic attachment to other persons which one rightly demands of a perfectly and fully moral person.

Connected with this, there is a more general reason why Aristotle's conception of civic friendship is important. For although he does not argue the point explicitly for civic friendship, as he does (*NE*, IX, 9) for personal friendship,<sup>26</sup> it is clear from what I have just said that, on Aristotle's view, civic, and not just personal, friendship is an essential component in the flourishing human life. In order to flourish a person needs the more fully realized forms of the moral virtues that only civic friendship brings. Hence, for Aristotle, to achieve the best possible human life, one must develop sentiments of attachment to others with whom one is joined in a common social life.<sup>27</sup> Equally, of course, as just indicated, Aristotle thinks that no human life is really satisfactory that is not partly structured around close personal relationships founded on mutual knowledge and love. Taken altogether, then, the topic of friendship is of decisive significance for an understanding of Aristotle's moral theory.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See my "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle" (n. 8 above) for a discussion of these arguments.

<sup>27</sup> It is essential to bear this in mind when reading and assessing Aristotle's theory of what a moral virtue is and how it is acquired in book II of the *NE*. His account of the moral virtues as dispositions to feel and act in certain ways, and his theory of moral training through repeated practice, are developed largely in abstraction from their connection with these aspects of friendship. One can only form a full conception of Aristotle's theory of the virtues and of moral development by supplementing the book II account with the relevant portions of his theory of friendship.

<sup>28</sup> I wish to thank Richard Kraut, G. J. Massey, Alexander Nehamas, Mae Smethurst and Charles M. Young for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.