

1

ARISTOTLE

5

NICOMACHEAN ETHICS**BK. EIGHT**

10

1

15

20

25

30

35

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.

40

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.

45

50

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

1 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
5 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.

10 2

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;
15 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
20 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
25 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
30 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, the must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to
35 each other for one of the aforesaid reasons.

3

Now these reasons differ from each other in kind; so, therefore, do the corresponding forms of
40 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
45 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,
50 and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to themselves,

1 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
5 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
10 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
15 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
20 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;
25 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.

30 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
35 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
40 might be expected permanent, since there meet 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
45 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.

50

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

10
4

15
20
25
30
This kind of friendship, then, is perfect both in respect of duration and in all other respects, and in it each gets from each in all respects the same as, or something like what, he gives; which is what ought to happen between friends. Friendship for the sake of pleasure bears a resemblance to this kind; for good people too are pleasant to each other. So too does friendship for the sake of utility; for the good are also useful to each other. Among men of these inferior sorts too, friendships are most permanent when the friends get the same thing from each other (e.g. pleasure), and not only that but also from the same source, as happens between readywitted people, not as happens between lover and beloved. For these do not take pleasure in the same things, but the one in seeing the beloved and the other in receiving attentions from his lover; and when the bloom of youth is passing the friendship sometimes passes too (for the one finds no pleasure in the sight of the other, and the other gets no attentions from the first); but many lovers on the other hand are constant, if familiarity has led them to love each other's characters, these being alike. But those who exchange not pleasure but utility in their amour are both less truly friends and less constant. Those who are friends for the sake of utility part when the advantage is at an end; for they were lovers not of each other but of profit.

35
For the sake of pleasure or utility, then, even bad men may be friends of each other, or good men of bad, or one who is neither good nor bad may be a friend to any sort of person, but for their own sake clearly only good men can be friends; for bad men do not delight in each other unless some advantage come of the relation.

40
45
50
The friendship of the good too and this alone is proof against slander; for it is not easy to trust anyone talk about a man who has long been tested by oneself; and it is among good men that trust and the feeling that 'he would never wrong me' and all the other things that are demanded in true friendship are found. In the other kinds of friendship, however, there is nothing to prevent these evils arising. For men apply the name of friends even to those whose motive is utility, in which sense states are said to be friendly (for the alliances of states seem to aim at advantage), and to those who love each other for the sake of pleasure, in which sense children are called friends. Therefore we too ought perhaps to call such people friends, and say that there are several kinds of friendship-firstly and in the proper sense that of good men qua good, and by analogy the

1 other kinds; for it is in virtue of something good and something akin to what is found in true
friendship that they are friends, since even the pleasant is good for the lovers of pleasure. But
these two kinds of friendship are not often united, nor do the same people become friends for the
5 sake of utility and of pleasure; for things that are only incidentally connected are not often
coupled together.

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

15 6.

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

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

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

45 7

50 But there is another kind of friendship, viz. that which involves an inequality between the parties,
e.g. that of father to son and in general of elder to younger, that of man to wife and in general

1 that of ruler to subject. And these friendships differ also from each other; for it is not the same
that exists between parents and children and between rulers and subjects, nor is even that of
father to son the same as that of son to father, nor that of husband to wife the same as that of wife
5 to husband. For the virtue and the function of each of these is different, and so are the reasons for
which they love; the love and the friendship are therefore different also. Each party, then, neither
gets the same from the other, nor ought to seek it; but when children render to parents what they
ought to render to those who brought them into the world, and parents render what they should to
10 their children, the friendship of such persons will be abiding and excellent. In all friendships
implying inequality the love also should be proportional, i.e. the better should be more loved
than he loves, and so should the more useful, and similarly in each of the other cases; for when
the love is in proportion to the merit of the parties, then in a sense arises equality, which is
15 certainly held to be characteristic of friendship.

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

40 8

Most people seem, owing to ambition, to wish to be loved rather than to love; which is why most
men love flattery; for the flatterer is a friend in an inferior position, or pretends to be such and to
45 love more than he is loved; and being loved seems to be akin to being honoured, and this is what
most people aim at. But it seems to be not for its own sake that people choose honour, but
incidentally. For most people enjoy being honoured by those in positions of authority because of
their hopes (for they think that if they want anything they will get it from them; and therefore
50

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

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

40
9

Friendship and justice seem, as we have said at the outset of our discussion, to be concerned with
45 the same objects and exhibited between the same persons. For in every community there is
thought to be some form of justice, and friendship too; at least men address as friends their
fellow-voyagers and fellowsoldiers, and so too those associated with them in any other kind of
community. And the extent of their association is the extent of their friendship, as it is the extent

50

1 to which justice exists between them. And the proverb 'what friends have is common property'
expresses the truth; for friendship depends on community. Now brothers and comrades have all
things in common, but the others to whom we have referred have definite things in common-
5 some more things, others fewer; for of friendships, too, some are more and others less truly
friendships. And the claims of justice differ too; the duties of parents to children, and those of
brothers to each other are not the same, nor those of comrades and those of fellow-citizens, and
so, too, with the other kinds of friendship. There is a difference, therefore, also between the acts
10 that are unjust towards each of these classes of associates, and the injustice increases by being
exhibited towards those who are friends in a fuller sense; e.g. it is a more terrible thing to defraud
a comrade than a fellow-citizen, more terrible not to help a brother than a stranger, and more
terrible to wound a father than any one else. And the demands of justice also seem to increase
15 with the intensity of the friendship, which implies that friendship and justice exist between the
same persons and have an equal extension...

12

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

50

1 They come to be closer together or farther apart by virtue of the nearness or distance of the original ancestor.

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

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

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

40 13

There are three kinds of friendship, as we said at the outset of our inquiry, and in respect of each some are friends on an equality and others by virtue of a superiority (for not only can equally good men become friends but a better man can make friends with a worse, and similarly in friendships of pleasure or utility the friends may be equal or unequal in the benefits they confer). This being so, equals must effect the required equalization on a basis of equality in love and in all other respects, while unequals must render what is in proportion to their superiority or inferiority. Complaints and reproaches arise either only or chiefly in the friendship of utility, and

50

1 this is only to be expected. For those who are friends on the ground of virtue are anxious to do
well by each other (since that is a mark of virtue and of friendship), and between men who are
emulating each other in this there cannot be complaints or quarrels; no one is offended by a man
5 who loves him and does well by him-if he is a person of nice feeling he takes his revenge by
doing well by the other. And the man who excels the other in the services he renders will not
complain of his friend, since he gets what he aims at; for each man desires what is good. Nor do
complaints arise much even in friendships of pleasure; for both get at the same time what they
10 desire, if they enjoy spending their time together; and even a man who complained of another for
not affording him pleasure would seem ridiculous, since it is in his power not to spend his days
with him.

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

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

50 It is disputable whether we ought to measure a service by its utility to the receiver and make the

1 return with a view to that, or by the benevolence of the giver. For those who have received say
they have received from their benefactors what meant little to the latter and what they might have
got from others-minimizing the service; while the givers, on the contrary, say it was the biggest
5 thing they had, and what could not have been got from others, and that it was given in times of
danger or similar need. Now if the friendship is one that aims at utility, surely the advantage to
the receiver is the measure. For it is he that asks for the service, and the other man helps him on
the assumption that he will receive the equivalent; so the assistance has been precisely as great as
10 the advantage to the receiver, and therefore he must return as much as he has received, or even
more (for that would be nobler). In friendships based on virtue on the other hand, complaints do
not arise, but the purpose of the doer is a sort of measure; for in purpose lies the essential
element of virtue and character.

15
14

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

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

40 It seems to be so in constitutional arrangements also; the man who contributes nothing good to
the common stock is not honoured; for what belongs to the public is given to the man who
benefits the public, and honour does belong to the public. It is not possible to get wealth from the
common stock and at the same time honour. For no one puts up with the smaller share in all
things; therefore to the man who loses in wealth they assign honour and to the man who is
45 willing to be paid, wealth, since the proportion to merit equalizes the parties and preserves the
friendship, as we have said. This then is also the way in which we should associate with
unequals; the man who is benefited in respect of wealth or virtue must give honour in return,
repaying what he can. For friendship asks a man to do what he can, not what is proportional to
50 the merits of the case; since that cannot always be done, e.g. in honours paid to the gods or to

1 parents; for no one could ever return to them the equivalent of what he gets, but the man who
serves them to the utmost of his power is thought to be a good man. This is why it would not
seem open to a man to disown his father (though a father may disown his son); being in debt, he
5 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
10 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.

15

BOOK NINE

...

20

8

The question is also debated, whether a man should love himself most, or some one else. People
criticize those who love themselves most, and call them self-lovers, using this as an epithet of
25 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 honour's sake, and the more so the better he is, and acts for his friend's
sake, and sacrifices his own interest.

30

35

40

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
neighbours. 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.

45

50

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, honours, and bodily
pleasures; for these are what most people desire, and busy themselves about as though they were

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

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

35 Therefore the good man should be a lover of self (for he will both himself profit by doing noble
acts, and will benefit his fellows), but the wicked man should not; for he will hurt both himself
and his neighbours, following as he does evil passions. For the wicked man, what he does
clashes with what he ought to do, but what the good man ought to do he does; for reason in each
40 of its possessors chooses what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his reason. It is true of
the good man too that he does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if
necessary dies for them; for he will throw away both wealth and honours and in general the
goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility; since he would prefer a short
45 period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelvemonth of noble life to many
years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones. Now those
who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is therefore a great prize that they choose for
themselves. They will throw away wealth too on condition that their friends will gain more; for
50

1 while a man's friend gains wealth he himself achieves nobility; he is therefore assigning the
greater good to himself. The same too is true of honour and office; all these things he will
sacrifice to his friend; for this is noble and laudable for himself. Rightly then is he thought to be
5 good, since he chooses nobility before all else. But he may even give up actions to his friend; it
may be nobler to become the cause of his friend's acting than to act himself. In all the actions,
therefore, that men are praised for, the good man is seen to assign to himself the greater share in
what is noble. In this sense, then, as has been said, a man should be a lover of self; but in the
10 sense in which most men are so, he ought not.

9

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

35
What then is it that the first school means, and in what respect is it right? Is it that most identify
friends with useful people? Of such friends indeed the supremely happy man will have no need,
since he already has the things that are good; nor will he need those whom one makes one's
40 friends because of their pleasantness, or he will need them only to a small extent (for his life,
being pleasant, has no need of adventitious pleasure); and because he does not need such friends
he is thought not to need friends.

45 But that is surely not true. For we have said at the outset that happiness is an activity; and
activity plainly comes into being and is not present at the start like a piece of property. If (1)
happiness lies in living and being active, and the good man's activity is virtuous and pleasant in
itself, as we have said at the outset, and (2) a thing's being one's own is one of the attributes that
50

1 make it pleasant, and (3) we can contemplate our neighbours better than ourselves and their
actions better than our own, and if the actions of virtuous men who are their friends are pleasant
to good men (since these have both the attributes that are naturally pleasant),-if this be so, the
5 supremely happy man will need friends of this sort, since his purpose is to contemplate worthy
actions and actions that are his own, and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both
these qualities.

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

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

50

1 their living together and sharing in discussion and thought; for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of man, and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place.

5 If, then, being is in itself desirable for the supremely happy man (since it is by its nature good and 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...

10
12

15 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
20 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
25 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
30 better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mould 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.

35

40

45

50