

LOCATING FRIENDSHIP'S PLACE IN ARISTOTELIAN HUMAN FLOURISHING

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Scholars are having some difficulty in exactly locating the place of friendship in human flourishing. The difficulty lies in reconciling: (i) Aristotle's position that friendship is necessary for human flourishing, and (ii) the very features of human flourishing fleshed out by Aristotle. In this paper, I propose that a way to handle the difficulty is by considering important distinctions or nuances with regard to human flourishing, and by fleshing out how these distinctions shed light on the place of friendship in human flourishing. In particular, I argue that properly locating the place of friendship in human flourishing largely depends on what is meant by human flourishing or what aspect of human flourishing one is referring to. In the Nicomachean Ethics, human flourishing is construed by Aristotle in two, not exclusive but related, ways. Aristotle construes human flourishing as the chief good. And Aristotle construes human flourishing as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence. Given that two construal of human flourishing, the place of friendship in human flourishing can also be construed in two ways: (1) the place of friendship in human flourishing as the chief good, and (2) the place of friendship in human flourishing as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence.

Keywords: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, friendship, human flourishing, virtue

INTRODUCTION

Locating the place of friendship in human flourishing is important for a number of reasons. First, it provides one with an insight as to why Aristotle allotted a large amount of discussion about friendship in his ethical treatise *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle allots two books (Books VIII and IX), amounting to already one-fifth of the whole treatise, just for a discussion on friendship. Now, if the *Nicomachean Ethics* is all about human flourishing, then to allot one-fifth of the *Nicomachean Ethics* just for a discussion on friendship already says something about the status of friendship in relation to human flourishing: that friendship is something that a discussion on human flourishing cannot take for granted. Locating the place of friendship in human flourishing provides an insight as to why such is the case.

Second, it paves a way for a better appreciation or understanding of the many facets of Aristotle's discussion of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For instance, his distinction between the three species of friendship and the reason for making such a distinction is better brought to the fore in light of knowing the place of friendship in human flourishing. Misunderstandings about and aversion towards Aristotle's taxonomy of friendships (see, for instance: Cambre 2023, 35-55; Elisher 2023, 353-376; Ward 2008, 32-57) may be brought about by a failure to see friendship in light of Aristotle's overall project of accounting for what human flourishing consists in.

Finally, one of the primary reasons for scholars who engage Aristotelian insights with contemporary technologies (see for instance: Vallor 2016, 159-187; Elder 2018, 139-161), to approach social media friendship through Aristotelian virtue ethics is that friendship plays an integral and central role in Aristotle's account of human flourishing. Now, if friendship has no place in human flourishing in the first place, then scholarly efforts to approach social media friendship through Aristotelian virtue ethics lose a primary justification. Therefore, securing the place of friendship in human flourishing is something that is beneficial not only for a better understanding of Aristotle's theory of friendship but also for securing the warrant of contemporary philosophers of technology's respective projects on social media friendship.

Despite the above, scholars (Festin 2018, 109-113; Miller 2014, 319-349; Whiting 2006, 276-304; Pakaluk 2005, 257-285; Pangle 2003, 183-200; Price 1989, 103-130) are having some difficulty in exactly locating the place of friendship in human flourishing. The difficulty lies in reconciling: (i) Aristotle's position that friendship is necessary for human flourishing and (ii) the very features of human flourishing fleshed out by Aristotle. In Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he (2009, 142) writes "without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods" (*NE* VIII.1 1155a 5-10). And in Book IX, he (2009, 176) continues "it is strange...to make the supremely happy man a solitary" (*NE* IX.9 1169b 15-20). However, a closer look at Aristotle's account of human flourishing especially in Book X reveals that human flourishing has a number of features that make it quite difficult to establish if friendship really has a place in a flourishing life.

For instance, as a chief good, human flourishing is said to have the feature of *self-sufficiency*. When human flourishing is attained, it "makes life desirable and lacking in nothing" (*NE* I.7 1097b 15-20 / Aristotle 2009, 11). All the other goods, whether instrumental or intrinsic, become dispensable once human flourishing is attained. Now, if friendship is one of the intrinsic goods, then when human flourishing is attained, friendship becomes dispensable. As such, it appears that friendship has no place in human flourishing.

In another instance, it is said that among the excellences or virtues that constitute human flourishing, it is performing the functions of one's intellectual part of the soul well (*intellectual virtue*) that is essentially or primarily human flourishing, and not so much performing the functions of one's desiderative part of the soul well (*moral virtue*). Moral virtue is only secondarily human flourishing. As such, the contemplative life is the flourishing life, and the contemplative activity constituting it is the chief of all human activities. It is when a human being engages in excellent contemplation that he or she is perfectly and supremely flourishing. Peculiar to contemplation is that it has the features of *finality* and *self-sufficiency*. Aristotle (2009, 194) writes, "Nothing

arises from it apart from contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action" (*NE* X.7 1177b 1-5). He (2009, 194) continues "even when by himself, he can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still, he is the most self-sufficient" (*NE* X.7 1177a 30-35). If Aristotle is correct in this regard, then friendship's place in human flourishing indeed appears to be bleak.

In this paper, I propose that a way to handle the difficulty is by considering important distinctions or nuances with regard to human flourishing, and by fleshing out how these distinctions shed light on the place of friendship in human flourishing. In particular, I argue that properly locating the place of friendship in human flourishing largely depends on what is meant by human flourishing or what aspect of human flourishing, as elucidated by Aristotle, one is referring to. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, human flourishing is construed by Aristotle in two, not exclusive but related, ways. Aristotle construes *human flourishing as the chief good*. And Aristotle construes *human flourishing as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence*. Given that two construal of human flourishing, the place of friendship in human flourishing can also be construed in two ways: (1) the place of friendship in human flourishing as the chief good, and (2) the place of friendship in human flourishing as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence.

Accordingly, this paper is divided into three major parts. The first part identifies the place of friendship in *human flourishing construed as the chief good*. Here it is demonstrated that the distinction between an *inclusivist-pluralistic* account of human flourishing and an *exclusivist-monistic* account of human flourishing may inform how to properly locate friendship in human flourishing construed as the chief good. The second part identifies the place of friendship in *human flourishing construed as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence*. Here it is demonstrated that friendship has a place in the excellence of the activity of the desiderative soul (*moral virtue*) and the excellence of the activity of the intellectual soul (*intellectual virtue*). Finally, the third part maintains that while indeed friendship has a place both in *human flourishing construed as the chief good* and *as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence*, only *virtue friendships* can rightfully take such a place. Here, an important distinction is argued for: while indeed virtue friendship is able to contribute to both moral and intellectual virtue, such contribution cannot be merely a *means-to-an-end* type of contribution. If virtue friendship is to truly (not artificially/superficially) have a place in human flourishing, it should not merely be a means to human flourishing but an *instance*, *occasion*, or *moment* of human flourishing itself.

FRIENDSHIP'S PLACE IN HUMAN FLOURISHING AS THE CHIEF GOOD

We begin by locating the place of friendship in human flourishing as the chief good. We do that by first elaborating how human flourishing is the chief good. Aristotle (2009, 3) begins his ethical treatise with an observation that every human rational activity aims at some good (*NE* I.1 1094a 1-5). In particular, he mentions art/craft (*techne*), inquiry (*methodos*), action (*praxis*), and choice/decision

(*prohairesis*) as activities that aim at some good. Although each activity aims at some good, it does not mean that they aim at the same good. In fact, one of the things that can differentiate one activity from another is the good they respectively aim at. What differentiates medical art from shipbuilding art, for example, is the good they respectively aim at, namely: health in the case of medical art, and a vessel in the case of shipbuilding art.

In addition, not all goods have the same value (*NE* I.1 1094a 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 3). Some goods are pursued for their own sake, which for brevity's sake we shall refer to as *intrinsic goods*. Others are pursued for the sake of something else (say, for the sake of the intrinsic goods), which we shall refer to as *instrumental goods*. Instrumental goods are subordinate in hierarchy to intrinsic goods. And since it is the respective goods that the activities aim at that differentiate activities, then some activities are pursued for their own sake, which we shall refer to as *intrinsic activities*. And some activities are pursued for the sake of something else, which we shall refer to as *instrumental activities*. And since instrumental goods are subordinate to intrinsic goods, then instrumental activities are subordinate to intrinsic activities.

Now, Aristotle (2009, 3) argues that, when analyzed more closely, even those we consider as intrinsic goods can also be pursued for the sake of something else, for yet another good which is pursued for its own sake. And this, yet another good pursued for its own sake, is also pursued for the sake of another good pursued for its own sake, and so on and so forth (*NE* I.1 1094a 10-15). This chain/hierarchy of goods cannot go on to infinity, however. For our pursuits would be empty and vain. We would be pursuing goods and putting effort into pursuing them without knowing why we are pursuing them, that is, for what end we are pursuing them. There must be some end, then, to this hierarchy of goods – an end not anymore chosen for the sake of something else. This end, Aristotle (2009, 3) thinks, is the *chief good* (*NE* I.2 1094a 20-25). And as the good that an activity aims at provides the character of the activity, as was mentioned earlier, then the activity that aims at the chief good is the *chief activity* of all human activities.

There is general agreement, Aristotle (2009, 5) notes, that flourishing (*eudaimonia*) is the chief good (*NE* I.4 1095a 15-20). And since we are referring to the chief good for human beings (not the chief good for plants or animals), we can more properly call the kind of flourishing referred to here as *human flourishing* (*NE* I.13 1102a 10-15 / Aristotle 2009, 20). To flourish, to thrive, to be fulfilled, to be successful, to be well as a human being, not as a plant or an animal or any other non-human being, is agreed to be the chief good, and the activity corresponding to it is the chief human activity. While there is general agreement that human flourishing is the chief good, there is disagreement about what human flourishing is and what it consists in (*NE* I.4 1095a 20-25 / Aristotle 2009, 5). People have different views about the nature of human flourishing brought about by the differences in the goods that they equate human flourishing with (*NE* I.4 1095a 20-25 / Aristotle 2009, 5). Some identify it with pleasure. Others with wealth. Yet others with honor and many more.

Aristotle (2009, 7) argues, however, that while it is true that the aforementioned goods are pursued for their own sake, thus are intrinsic goods, they cannot entirely amount to human flourishing if human flourishing is to be the chief good (*NE* I.5 1096a 5-10). There is something about the aforementioned intrinsic goods, particularly

wealth, honor, and pleasure, that renders them not to be the chief good. Already hinted at the beginning of his treatise, Aristotle argues that for a good in question to be the chief one, it must satisfy two conditions: *finality* (*teleion*) and *self-sufficiency* (*autarkes*). For a good in question to be the chief good, it must be final, meaning it should be pursued, desired, chosen for its own sake and not for the sake of something else (*NE* I.7 1097a 30-35 / Aristotle 2009, 10). In addition, it also must be self-sufficient, meaning it is “that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing” (*NE* I.7 1097b 15-20 / Aristotle 2009, 11). Given these criteria, Aristotle shows how goods such as wealth, honor, and pleasure, though they are intrinsic goods, are not the chief good by showing how they fail to satisfy, in some respects, the aforementioned criteria. While we do not have the space to elaborate on Aristotle’s reasons why they fail to satisfy such criteria, suffice to say that, for Aristotle (2009, 10), these goods, though intrinsic, are still not pursued for their own sake but for the sake of something else, that is, human flourishing (*NE* I.7 1097b 1-5). It is because people judge that through the attainment of these intrinsic goods, they shall flourish as human beings. While human flourishing, on the other hand, is pursued not for the sake of pleasure, honor, wealth, and anything else but itself (*NE* I.7 1097b 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 10). Thus, because pleasure, wealth, and honor are not pursued for their sake, they alone cannot amount to what human flourishing is, if human flourishing is to be the chief good.

While Aristotle makes it clear that the intrinsic goods are not the chief good for failing to satisfy the criteria for a good in question to be considered as the chief good, there is something counterintuitive about why intrinsic goods are considered as intrinsic in the first place if they are still pursued for something else such as the chief good. How can they be intrinsic if they are pursued for something else? This brings us to a debate among scholars on how to understand human flourishing as the chief good. This debate is infamously known as the *Dominant-Inclusivist Debate* in Aristotelian scholarship. But for the sake of parallelism of terms, we shall use the label *Exclusivist-Inclusivist* in this paper. Note, however, that our brief detour in this debate does not aim to be exhaustive. In addition, we also do not aim to provide a position in the debate. We aim to simply use the debate in order to put to light the place of friendship in human flourishing as the chief good.

There are two major contending positions in the debate about how to understand human flourishing as the chief good. The *exclusivist view*, also known as the *monistic conception of human flourishing*, maintains that human flourishing is a monistic good that is distinct from all other intrinsic goods (Lear 2009, 396). As such, human flourishing is distinct from (and not constituted by) the intrinsic goods. It is exclusively the highest of the intrinsic goods (Brown 2009, 207). As a consequence, once human flourishing is attained, all the other intrinsic goods become dispensable. A notable representative of this position is Anthony Kenny (1992, 16-42). On the other hand, the *inclusivist view*, also known as the *pluralist conception of human flourishing*, argues that human flourishing is not a monistic good that is distinct from all the other intrinsic goods; rather, human flourishing is nothing but the sum of all the intrinsic goods (Brown 2009, 207). Human flourishing is constituted by the intrinsic goods (Lear 2009, 207). As a consequence, intrinsic goods do not become dispensable once human flourishing is attained for precisely human flourishing only obtains when these

intrinsic goods are present. When these intrinsic goods are dispensed, human flourishing is also dispensed. A notable representative of this position is John Lloyd Akcrill (1980, 15-33).

Given these two ways of interpreting human flourishing as the chief good, the problem of the counterintuitiveness of calling intrinsic goods as intrinsic while they are pursued for something else only arises for those who subscribe to the exclusivist-monistic view and not for those who subscribe to the inclusivist-pluralistic view. The reason is that the exclusivist-monistic view has to argue for how these intrinsic goods are called intrinsic: (1) while they are pursued for the sake of another distinct good which is the chief good and (2) while they are to be dispensed when the distinct chief good is attained. On the other hand, the inclusivist-pluralistic view does not need to grapple with such a problem because the attainment of these intrinsic goods – especially when attained *altogether* rather than at least one of them – already guarantees the attainment of human flourishing. Indeed, they are truly intrinsic in this case because they are not pursued for the sake of a distinct chief good. Pursuing them already amounts to pursuing human flourishing, the chief good.

Friendship's Place in an Inclusivist-Pluralistic Account of Human Flourishing

While we do not claim to have dissolved or resolved the problem about the status of intrinsic goods in relation to the chief good, it is enough for our purposes to have shown that there is a way to understand their status depending on how one interprets human flourishing as the chief good. Now, accompanying these two ways of interpreting human flourishing as the chief good comes the concern about the place of friendship in human flourishing. While friendship is one of the intrinsic goods, if not the greatest (*NE* I.8 1099b 1-5 / Aristotle 2009, 14; *NE* IX.9 1169b 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 176), there seems to be a problem about locating its place when human flourishing as the chief good is understood exclusively-monistically. There will be no qualms about the place of friendship in human flourishing as the chief good when human flourishing is understood inclusively-pluralistically because human flourishing ceases to obtain when one of the intrinsic goods such as friendship ceases to obtain. As such, friendship is indispensable to human flourishing. Consequently, friendship truly has a place in human flourishing. However, human flourishing when understood exclusively-monistically will mean that friendship will be dispensable once the distinct chief good that is human flourishing is attained.

Friendship's Place in an Exclusivist-Monistic Account of Human Flourishing

Fortunately, the likes of Lear (2009, 400) think that there is a way to salvage intrinsic goods from being dispensable once the chief good is attained. Lear (2009, 400) thinks that intrinsic goods serve as *ornaments* for the attainment of the chief good. As ornaments, they “call to the agent’s attention and celebrate his possession of the good” (Lear 2009, 400). It “does not increase the amount of the good that he has, but it helps him to delight in it and remain aware that he has achieved the good whose end is entirely itself” (Lear 2009, 400). If Lear is correct, then friendship, among all the other intrinsic goods, qualifies very well as an ornament to human flourishing. As we

shall elaborate later, one shall see that the flourishing human being contemplating his or her virtuous friends who are actually his or her another self allows him or her: (1) to be aware and assess better his or her actions since he or she can contemplate others better than his or her own (*NE IX.9 1169b 30-35* / Aristotle 2009, 177), and (2) to delight in himself or herself his or her being a flourishing human being (*NE IX.9 1170a 15-35 – 1170b 1-15* / Aristotle 2009, 177-178). In addition, one can see later that such contemplation and delight are not only an ornament to human flourishing but are actually an instance, moment, or occasion of human flourishing.

If the above is correct, then indeed friendship has a place in human flourishing as the chief good, regardless of the interpretation of human flourishing one subscribes to. Friendship has an indispensable place in human flourishing as the chief good interpreted inclusively-pluralistically by virtue of being one of the intrinsic goods that constitute human flourishing. As human flourishing ceases to obtain when the intrinsic goods constituting it cease to obtain, then when friendship ceases to obtain, human flourishing ceases to obtain. On the other hand, friendship has an indispensable place in human flourishing as the chief good interpreted exclusively-monistically by virtue of being an ornament to human flourishing – an ornament that qualifies as an object of contemplation and as a signal to the attainment of human flourishing. And more importantly, such contemplation and the delightful experience accompanying the signal that one attained human flourishing is already an instance, moment, or occasion of human flourishing itself.

FRIENDSHIP'S PLACE IN HUMAN FLOURISHING AS THE ACTIVITY OF THE RATIONAL SOUL IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXCELLENCE

Let us, on the other hand, locate the place of friendship in human flourishing construed as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence. We do that by first elaborating on how Aristotle arrived at such an understanding of human flourishing and how Aristotle fleshes out the salient features of human flourishing. According to Aristotle (2009, 11), to say that human flourishing is the chief good, that is, that it satisfies the conditions of self-sufficiency and finality do not entirely contribute to a fuller understanding of human flourishing because it does not really say something about what human flourishing is and what it consists in (*NE I.7 1097b 20-25*). What does it mean to flourish as a human being? What does it mean to thrive, to be well, to be fulfilled, to be successful as a human being *qua* human being? What does it mean to be good in being a human being? Or simply put, what does it mean to be a good human being?

Aristotle (2009, 11) thinks that we may well begin by looking into the *function (ergon) of the human being*. “For just as a flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist, and in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the ‘well’ is thought to reside in the function, so it would seem to be for man, if he has a function” (*NE I.7 1079b 25-30* / Aristotle 2009, 11). Aristotle (2009, 11) maintains that a human being’s function cannot be the life or activity of nutrition, growth, and reproduction because “it seems to belong even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man” (*NE I.7 1097b 30-35*). Aristotle (2009, 11) also thinks that the life or activity of perception

cannot be a human being's function because "it also seems to be shared even by the horse, the ox, and every animal" (*NE* I.7 1098a 1-5). The life or activity left for the human being is the life or activity of reason, that is, thinking. Thus, although human beings also share with plants and animals the nutritive and perceptive activity or life, their function cannot reside in them if they are to be truly human as human. It is the rational life or activity that makes a human being a human being.

Now that Aristotle has identified the function of the human being, he now fleshes out what human flourishing means, what being a good human being means. Aristotle argues that if the function of the human being is to think, and we say that a being that has a function is a good one by virtue of performing its function well; then a human being is a good, successful human being by virtue of performing his or her function well that is by thinking well. For a human being to flourish, therefore, such a human being must perform his or her function well, that is, to think well. Thus, Aristotle (2009, 11-12) defines human flourishing (*eudaimonia*) as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence (*arete*), where excellence is also referred to as *virtue* (*NE* I.7 1098a 5-20).

Having defined human flourishing, Aristotle proceeds with a discussion of the details of the definition's components, specifically the "rational soul" and "excellence" or "virtue." Aristotle (2009, 20) begins with a discussion of the soul (*psuche*). Since human flourishing is the excellent or virtuous activity of the rational soul, a fuller understanding of what excellence or virtue is and, consequently, what human flourishing is, necessitates a certain understanding of what the soul is (*NE* I.13 1102a 15-20). For Aristotle (2009, 20), the soul consists of an irrational division/part and a rational division/part (*NE* I.13 1102a 25-30). The *irrational part of the soul* consists of two further sub-parts: a part that is vegetative and a part that is desiderative. The *vegetative part*, according to Aristotle (2009, 20), is responsible for nutrition and growth and is shared by all living beings (*NE* I.13 1102a 30-35). As such, Aristotle (2009, 20) maintains, the excellence or virtue of this part of the soul "has by its nature no share in human excellence" (*NE* I.13 1102b 1-10). In addition, the functions of this part of the soul are most excellent in sleep, and since a human being is called good or bad in terms of his or her activities while awake and not while asleep, then the excellence or virtue of the vegetative part of the soul does not constitute human excellence (*NE* I.13 1102b 1-10 / Aristotle 2009, 20). The *desiderative part* of the soul, on the other hand, though irrational by not being able to think, has a share in reason by virtue of having the capacity or tendency to listen to or obey the rational part of the soul (*NE* I.13 1102b 10-15, 30-35; 1103a 1-5 / Aristotle 2009, 21). As such, by virtue of being able to listen to or obey reason, the excellence of this part of the soul shares in human excellence. A human being desiring well or not constitutes his or her being a good or a bad human being. Finally, there is the *rational part of the soul* that is strictly rational (*NE* I.13 1103a 1-5 / Aristotle 2009, 21). This is the part of the soul that essentially thinks and which manages or commands the desiderative part of the soul.

Given this understanding of the soul, we can now better understand what is referred to as the "rational soul" in the definition of human flourishing earlier. For Aristotle, the "rational soul" referred to here is not exclusively the part of the soul that is strictly rational but also includes the part of the soul that is also rational, although loosely, by virtue of having the capacity to obey and listen to the part of the soul that

is strictly rational. The reason is that we call human beings good or bad human beings not only by virtue of thinking well or thinking badly but also by virtue of desiring well or desiring badly. As such, we can more appropriately construe the “rational soul” being referred to here as the parts of the soul that have a rational principle strictly and loosely. The rational soul, *per se*, is the part of the soul that has a rational principle strictly, while the desiderative soul is the part of the soul that has a rational principle loosely, that is, by virtue of being able to listen to the rational soul. As such, Aristotle (2009, 21) argues, human excellence or virtue can also be divided into two: (1) the excellence of the part of the strictly rational soul which Aristotle calls *intellectual virtue* (*dianoitike arete*), (2) and the excellence of the part of the loosely rational soul which Aristotle calls *moral virtue* (*ethike arete*) (NE I.13 1103a 1-5). Thus, human beings are said to be morally virtuous when they perform the function of their desiderative part well, that is, when they desire well and not badly. On the other hand, human beings are said to be intellectually virtuous when they perform the function of their rational part well, that is, when they think well and not badly.

Given the above distinctions, a more nuanced picture of human flourishing is given to us by Aristotle. Human flourishing is the excellent performance of the functions or activities of the part of the soul that is rational in the strict sense and the part of the soul that is rational in the loose sense. At this point, we can already state in broad strokes the place of friendship in human flourishing. If human flourishing is the excellent activity of the parts of the soul that is strictly and loosely rational, then friendship's place in human flourishing can be construed as: (i) friendship being a means to human flourishing, that is, as indispensably contributing to the excellent functioning or activity of the said parts of the soul; and (ii) friendship being an occasion, an instance, a moment of human flourishing itself, that is, as being an excellent activity of the said parts of the soul itself. How these cases are the case shall be elaborated further in the succeeding sections.

Friendship's Place in the Excellent Activity of the Desiderative Soul

Meanwhile, what remains now for Aristotle is to flesh out what moral virtue and intellectual virtue are, respectively. He begins with moral virtue. Aristotle (2009, 28) starts by identifying the *genus* of moral virtue. Aristotle (2009, 29) maintains, “If, then, the virtues are neither passions nor capacities, all that remains is that they should be *states of character*” (NE II.5 1106a 10-15). However, Aristotle (2009, 29) thinks that saying that moral virtue or excellence is a state of character is insufficient. It is also necessary to say what sort of “state” it is because not all states of character are virtuous or excellent (NE II.6 1106a 10-15 / Aristotle 2009, 29). There are poor states of character. There is a need to flesh out the *differentia* of moral virtue. According to Aristotle (2009, 29), virtue or excellence, in general, is the sort of state that makes a human being perform his or her function well (NE II.6 1106a 20-25). And since moral virtue or excellence specifically refers to the excellence of the desiderative part of the soul, then moral virtue or excellence is the sort of state that makes a human being perform the function of his or her desiderative part well, that is, to desire well or to feel well.

Under what conditions, then, is a human being performing the function of his or her desiderative soul well? When is he or she desiring well or feeling well? According to Aristotle (2009, 30), just as in every art where a work is done well when it is neither excessive nor deficient but only intermediate, moral virtue or excellence is also the intermediate (*meson*) between excess and deficiency (NE II.6 1106b 5-15 / Aristotle 2009, 30). A human being desires well or feels well when he or she desires or feels neither excessively nor deficiently but intermediately. To feel the passions “at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue” (NE II.6 1106b 20-25 / Aristotle 2009, 30). Thus, moral virtue lies in the intermediate between excess and deficiency, while moral vice or wickedness is in the excess and the deficiency (NE II.6 1106b 30-35; 1107a 1-5 / Aristotle 2009, 31). Some examples of moral virtues or excellences include *courage*, the intermediate between the excessive feeling of confidence in the face of danger (rashness) and the deficient feeling of confidence in the face of danger (cowardice); and *temperance*, the intermediate between the excessive desire to satisfy the appetites (over-indulgence) and the deficient desire to satisfy the appetites (insensibility) (NE II.7 1107b 1-5 / Aristotle 2009, 32).

At this point, we can now make the place of friendship in human flourishing more specific. Given Aristotle’s discussion on moral virtue or excellence, if friendship is to have a place in human flourishing, then friendship must contribute to the human being’s desiring well or feeling well, meaning friends must be able to contribute to each other’s desiring or feeling at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way. One way to do that, as we shall see later, is through friendship, being an avenue for the exercise or actualization of moral virtues, especially those that necessitate two or more individuals, such as justice and generosity. This construes friendship as a means to human flourishing insofar as moral virtue or excellence is concerned. However, as we shall demonstrate later, we shall see that Aristotle construes friendship itself as a moral virtue, and so an individual pursuing friendship with another individual contributes to the cultivation of moral virtue. Thus, as moral virtue constitutes human flourishing, then friendship itself is an instance, occasion, or moment of human flourishing.

Friendship’s Place in the Excellent Activity of the Intellectual Soul

In the meantime, we proceed with intellectual virtue or the excellence of the functioning or activity of the strictly rational part of the soul. While moral virtue or excellence is always the desiring or feeling at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, what the right time, right object, right people, right motive, and right way is not always the same. It varies depending on the circumstance or situation. And no circumstance or situation is totally the same. The question now is: what determines the right time, right object, right people, right motive, and right way for this and that particular circumstance or situation? This brings us to the rational or intellectual part of the soul and its excellence. Aristotle (2009, 102) argues that it is the rational or intellectual part of the soul that determines the right for this or that particular circumstance. And if the rational or

intellectual part of the soul functions excellently, it will be able to correctly identify what is right for this or that particular circumstance (*NE* VI.1 1138b 30-35 / Aristotle 2009, 102).

The rational or intellectual part of the soul is not monolithic, though. It has subparts/subdivisions: the *contemplative/scientific subpart* (*theoretike dianoia*) and the *calculative/deliberative subpart* (*praktikon dianoetikon*). As such, although the intellectual or rational part of the soul's primary function is to think, the kind of thinking done by each subpart differs from each other. The difference is brought about by the difference in their objects. And since the kind of thinking done by each subpart differs from one another, the virtue or excellence of each subpart also differs from one another.

The contemplative/scientific subpart thinks about the kind of invariable things, such as necessary truths and objects (*NE* VI.1 1139a 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 103). These are things that cannot be otherwise. That the planets revolve around the sun and that a triangle has three sides are examples. While the calculative/deliberative subpart thinks about the kind of things that are variable (*NE* VI.1 1139a 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 103). These are things that can be otherwise. That one can feel anger in this way, or that way, in this or that particular situation is an example. One does not deliberate if the planets revolved around the sun or if a triangle has three sides, but one deliberates whether one should be angry in this way or that way in this or that particular situation (*NE* VI.7 1141b 10-15 / Aristotle 2009, 109). It is for this reason that the contemplative/scientific subpart is said to deal with things that are universal, while the calculative/deliberative subpart is said to deal with things that are more particular (*NE* VI.7 1141b 15-17 / Aristotle 2009, 109).

Given the above difference, while the primary activity of the intellectual or rational part of the soul is thinking, the kind of thinking done by its subparts differs from one another. The kind of thinking done by the contemplative/scientific subpart is said to be theoretical or pure thinking, more properly called contemplation or study (*theoria*). While the kind of thinking done by the calculative/deliberative subpart is said to be practical thinking, thinking with a view to action (*praxis*), more properly called deliberation (*bouleusis*) (*NE* VI.2 1139a 20-30 / Aristotle 2009, 103).

Accordingly, the excellence of each subpart is also different. The state wherein the activity of the contemplative/scientific subpart is said to be in an excellent one is called *philosophic wisdom* (*sophia*). It is a combination of *scientific knowledge* (*episteme*) and *intuitive reason* (*nous*) (*NE* VI.7 1141b 1-5 / Aristotle 2009, 108). Scientific knowledge is said to be the "state of capacity to demonstrate" or "knowledge arrived at by syllogism, i.e. by demonstrative reasoning" (*NE* VI.3 1139b 30-35 / Aristotle 2009, 105). While intuitive reason is said to be grasping the first principles that scientific knowledge uses in demonstration (*NE* VI.6 1141a 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 107). Since philosophic wisdom is the combination of scientific knowledge and intuitive reason, it is said to be "the most finished of the forms of knowledge." It is knowledge of not only "what follows from the first principles, but...also...truth about the first principles" (*NE* VI.7 1141a 15-20 / Aristotle 2009, 108).

On the other hand, the state wherein the activity of the calculative/deliberative subpart is said to be in an excellent one is called *practical wisdom* (*phronesis*). This brings us back to the earlier question about what determines the right time, the right

object, the right people, the right motive, and the right way for this and that particular circumstance or situation. According to Aristotle (2009, 115), it is the deliberative/calculative faculty that determines what is right for this or that particular circumstance (*NE* VI.12 1144a 20-22). And not just any state of the deliberative/calculative faculty, but an excellent state. In other words, practical wisdom. For it is possible to deliberate poorly or wrongly by arriving at the wrong way to feel or desire in this particular circumstance or situation. This is the reason why practical wisdom is also said to be to “deliberate well about what is good and expedient...about what sorts of things conduce to the good life in general” (*NE* VI.5 1140a 25-30 / Aristotle 2009, 106).

At this point, we can now again surmise the place of friendship in human flourishing in light of the excellence of the performance of the functions or activities of the rational part of the soul. Just as in moral virtue, where friendship can be both a means to human flourishing and an instance of human flourishing, friendship, insofar as intellectual virtue is concerned, can also be construed both as a means to and as an instance of human flourishing. Friendship, as we shall see later, can be a means to excellent deliberation or practical wisdom, especially in the contemplative element present in deliberation, where an individual contemplates himself or herself through his or her friend. Such contemplation informs the deliberation of such an individual. Meanwhile, friendship is an instance of human flourishing because there can also be a contemplative activity in friendship where such an activity is pursued for its sake and not for anything else. This happens when one simply contemplates oneself through one's friend (who is one's other self) and delights in such contemplation. Thus, such contemplation becomes an instance or a moment of the contemplation akin to the Active Intellect's (Aristotelian God's) contemplative activity, that is, the contemplator contemplating itself (*Noesis noeseos*).

Friendship's Place in the Contemplative Activity

There is but one last aspect of human flourishing that we have to take into account in order to secure the place of friendship in human flourishing, and that is the contemplative life being the flourishing life. If human flourishing is the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence or virtue, then what sort of life or activity is it essentially? Aristotle (2009, 194) argues that the contemplative activity (*theoria*) is the activity that is essentially the flourishing life. A human being flourishes as a human being when he or she contemplates excellently (*NE* X.7 1177a 18). It is “when the intellect studies the highest truths and objects, as distinct from the use of the intellect in practical matters” that the human being is perfectly and supremely flourishing (Brown 2009, 265). The reason why this is so can be found in Aristotle's claim that human flourishing is the chief good. As a chief good, human flourishing must be *final* and *self-sufficient*. As such, the activity that essentially is human flourishing must be an activity that is final and self-sufficient, hence, becoming the chief activity of all human activities – the activity that makes a human being truly a human being (*NE* X.6 1176b 1-10 / Aristotle 2009, 192). And of all human activities, it is the contemplative activity that satisfies finality and self-sufficiency.

The contemplative activity is final, Aristotle (2009, 194) argues, because it is pursued for its own sake. "Nothing arises from it apart from contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action" (*NE X.7 1177b 1-5*). Aristotle (2009, 194-195), for instance, cites political and military activities as activities where we gain something apart from them, such as peace and order, but from contemplation we do not gain anything apart from itself (*NE X.7 1177b 1-5, 15-25*). On the other hand, the contemplative activity is self-sufficient because the one who contemplates "even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient" (*NE X.7 1177a 30-35* / Aristotle 2009, 194). Contrast this to morally excellent or virtuous activities. A just human being necessarily needs another human being for him or her to exercise justice. The courageous person needs dangerous circumstances to exercise courage (*NE X.7 1177a 25-35* / Aristotle 2009, 194).

Not only is the contemplative activity final and self-sufficient, but it is also the best, most continuous, and pleasantest. It is the best "since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best knowable objects" (*NE X.7 1177a 20-25* / Aristotle 2009, 194). Unchanging, invariable, necessary truths, which are the objects of the contemplative subpart of the rational soul are superior to the changing, variable, and contingent truths which are the objects of the calculative subpart. It is most continuous because "we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can *do anything*" since it does not depend on things outside itself such as another human being and other external necessities that are not always available (*NE X.7 1177a 20-25* / Aristotle 2009, 194). It is the most pleasant of all excellent or virtuous activities because "The pursuit of it is thought to offer pleasures marvelous for their purity and their enduringness" (*NE X.7 1177a 25-30* / Aristotle 2009, 194). And "[t]hose who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire" (*NE X.7 1177a 25-30* / Aristotle 2009, 194). Those who deliberate on variable things still experience pain in the activity due to the difficulty of sifting through such things while those who contemplate on invariable things delight in the activity (Brown 2009, 265).

This does not mean, however, that the morally virtuous or morally excellent life forms no part in human flourishing. Aristotle (2009, 196) argues that the morally virtuous life is a flourishing life as well because we call a human being a good or bad human being not only because of his or her thinking well or thinking badly but also because of his or her desiring/feeling well or desiring/feeling badly (*NE X.8 1178a 10-15*). Only that, Aristotle (2009, 196) clarifies, the morally virtuous life is a flourishing life secondarily (*NE X.8 1178a 10*). There are two reasons why such is the case. The first reason is already mentioned earlier. For a human being to be morally virtuous or excellent, he or she still needs external equipment and other people to actualize the virtues or excellences. "The liberal man will need money for the doing of his liberal deeds, and the just man too will need it for the returning of services...the brave man will need power if he is to accomplish any of the acts that correspond to his virtue, and the temperate man will need opportunity" (*NE X.8 1178a 30-35* / Aristotle 2009, 196). But for a human being to be intellectually virtuous or excellent in the strictest sense, that is, through excellent contemplative activity, he or she needs "no such things, at least with a view to the exercise of his activity" (*NE X.9 1178b 1-5* / Aristotle 2009,

197). In fact, things and people external to himself or herself, Aristotle (2009, 197) maintains, may even become hindrances to his or her contemplative activity.

The second reason is more religious in bent. Aristotle argues that the contemplative life or activity is superior to the moral life or activity because the former shares in the divine life. God, as understood by Aristotle, is a purely rational being. It is nothing but contemplative intellect (Brown 2009, 266). As such, its activity is pure contemplation. Now, if the divine activity is pure contemplation, then the activity of contemplation that human beings exercise shares in the divine activity. If the divine activity is superior to the activity of human beings by virtue of the superiority of the divine over the human, then the contemplative activity of human beings is superior to the moral activities of human beings (*NE* X.7 1177b 25-30 / Aristotle 2009, 195). Interestingly, this particular share of human beings in the divine life is the reason why for Aristotle (2009, 198), one “who exercises his reason and cultivates it seems to be both in the best state of mind and most dear to the gods” (*NE* X.8 1179a 20-25) because “[i]f the gods have any care for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in that which was best and most akin to them (i.e. reason)” (*NE* X.8 1179a 25-30).

Now here comes the problem of locating the place of friendship in human flourishing insofar as human flourishing construed as essentially the contemplative activity is concerned. If the contemplative activity is by nature self-sufficient, meaning it needs little to no things or people external to itself, then does the flourishing human being still need friendship? Do friends still play a crucial role in this self-sufficient contemplative activity? As already hinted at earlier, the answer is that friendship, particularly the contemplation there is in friendship, is an instance or a moment of the contemplative activity that Aristotle refers to as final, self-sufficient, best, most continuous, pleasantest, and dear to the gods. The reason is that, as we shall see later, a friend being another self of the other friend enriches the kind of self-sufficient contemplation of the other friend. First, by facilitating the contemplation of the other friend’s self. Second, by providing an additional pleasure in the pleasure already experienced by the other friend in contemplating himself or herself. This contemplation and the pleasure accompanying it are instances of the contemplation that is final, self-sufficient, best, most continuous, pleasantest, and dear to the gods.

VIRTUE FRIENDSHIP AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

The foregoing discussions have shown that friendship, indeed, has a place in human flourishing. Friendship has a place in human flourishing construed as the chief good. Friendship also has a place in human flourishing, construed as the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence. The question now is, are all kinds of friendships capable of fulfilling the place of friendship in human flourishing that we have identified? Are all kinds of friendships contributive to moral virtue and intellectual virtue? Are all kinds of friendships instances or moments of moral virtue and intellectual virtue? Aristotle argues that only friendships based on excellence or virtue (*virtue friendships*) have a place in human flourishing and are thereby contributive to, and an instance or moment of human flourishing. Now, why such is

the case and how such is the case shall be discussed in the following. We begin by distinguishing *virtue friendships* from other kinds of friendship.

Three Species/Kinds of Friendship

While *goodwill* (wishing for the good of the other) is characteristic of friendship, *love* is more primordial for two reasons. First, friendship, which in Greek is *philia*, is an abstract noun derived from the verb *to philein*, which means “to love” or “to hold dear” (Whiting 2006, 276). As such, friendship, more than well-wishing, is loving or holding dear. This brings us to the other reason why love is more primordial in friendship. Precisely because one loves or holds dear the other, one wishes the good of the other. Love is “an affection which has as its cause something that one recognizes in another and esteems as valuable” (Pakaluk 2009, 472), which “results in a corresponding wish for that person’s good” (Pakaluk 2009, 473). Without loving that someone or something, that is, without valuing that someone or something, one will not wish the good of that someone or something, more so the good of that someone or something for that someone or something’s sake. This primordially of love, of holding dear, of valuing, over well-wishing or wishing the good of the other, is the reason why the target of the reciprocally recognized well-wishing for the other’s sake in friendship is the *object of love*. That which we love is the target, end, reason, and justification for why two persons chose to wish each other good or well.

However, not everything is an object of love. Not everything is lovable or worthy of love. What is loved is only the lovable, which comes in three forms: the good (*agathon*), the pleasant (*hedu/hedone*), and the useful (*chresimon*) (*NE* VIII.2 1155b 15-20 / Aristotle 2009, 143). Therefore, there are three grounds on which people love. People love what they love because it is useful, or it is pleasant, or it is good (*NE* VIII.2 1155b 25-30 / Aristotle 2009, 143). Now, if the good, the useful, and the pleasant are that which a lover values or holds dear, and the reciprocally recognized well-wishing for the other is an offshoot of valuing or holding dear the useful, the good, and the pleasant found in the other, then there are three forms or kinds of reciprocally recognized well-wishing in friendship depending on the reason for loving, valuing or holding dear (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 144). There is a reciprocally recognized well-wishing because the other is useful. There is the reciprocally recognized well-wishing because the other is pleasant. And there is the reciprocally recognized well-wishing because the other is good, or more specifically, the other is virtuous or excellent. Accordingly, we yield: (1) friendships based on/because of/for the sake of utility (*utility friendships*), (2) friendships based on/because of/for the sake of pleasure (*pleasure friendships*), and (3) friendships based on/because of/for the sake of virtue or excellence (*virtue friendships*).

In friendships based on utility, friends “love each other because of utility” (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 10-15 / Aristotle 2009, 144). Here, one does not love the other because of who he or she is but because of some utility that the other provides. Thus, one does not really love the other in this kind of friendship but only the utility that one gets from the other (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 10-15 / Aristotle 2009, 144). Aristotle maintains that the friendship existing between old people (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 20-25 / Aristotle 2009, 144), between host and guest (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 30-35 / Aristotle 2009, 145), between

alliances of states (*NE* VIII.4 1157a 25-30 / Aristotle 2009, 147), between commercially minded people (*NE* VIII.6 1158a 20-25 / Aristotle 2009, 149), and between contraries (such as the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the learned) (*NE* VIII.8 1159b 10-15 / Aristotle 2009, 152) are examples of friendships based on utility.

On the other hand, in *pleasure friendships* or friendships based on pleasure, the friends love each other because of the pleasure they derive from each other. Thus, in this kind of friendship, one does not love the other for who he or she really is but for the pleasure that one gets from the other. It is because the other is pleasant, and not because of who he or she really is, that one loves the other (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 10-20 / Aristotle 2009, 144). Aristotle maintains that a paradigm example of this kind of friendship is the friendship of young people. According to Aristotle (2009, 145), the friendships of young people, who more often than not live under the guidance of emotions, primarily aim at pleasure (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 30-35). They “pursue above all what is pleasant to themselves and what is immediately before them” (*NE* VIII.3 1156a 30-35 / Aristotle 2009, 145).

Finally, in *virtue friendships* or friendships based on excellence or virtue, friends love each other not because of the utility or pleasure they get from each other but because of who they really are (*NE* VIII.3 1156b 11 / Aristotle 2009, 145). And for Aristotle, who one really is, one’s true self, is one’s state of character and intellect (Millgram 1987, 374; Miller 2014, 328). This is the reason why this kind of friendship is called virtue friendship, because what is held dear or valued or loved is the excellence of character (moral virtue) and the excellence of intellect (intellectual virtue) of the other. As such, Aristotle (2009, 145) argues, this kind of friendship is the “friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue” (*NE* VIII.3 1156b 5-10).

Earlier, we mentioned that not all friendships have a place in human flourishing. Only virtue friendship contributes to human flourishing, as well as an instance or a moment of human flourishing. Why is that the case? Given our preceding discussion, the reason is that only virtue friendship consists of friends who are respectively excellent/virtuous and hence, are flourishing, or are striving to be excellent/virtuous (hence, an instance of human flourishing). Each friend contributes to each other’s excellence/virtue by being excellent/virtuous and by the activities that they share. These friends will never engage in vicious or wicked activities that result in vice.

On the other hand, pleasure and utility friendships do not necessarily contribute to human flourishing because it is not necessary nor guaranteed that the friends consisting these kinds of friendship are excellent/virtuous. As Aristotle (2009, 146) writes, “because of pleasure or utility...even bad men may be friends of each other” (*NE* VIII.4 1157a 15-20). That vicious or wicked individuals can be friends with each other is quite intuitive, even in our contemporary era. Some people befriend each other for the utility that they get from each other, such as protection from the law, or acquisition of wealth; or for the pleasure that they get from each other, such as pleasures that accompany/supervene activities that are not proper to human beings, as human beings such as overindulgence in drinking, eating, drugs, and sex. The kinds of utility and pleasure they pursue are not the kinds that contribute to human flourishing; more so, not the kind that is an instantiation of human flourishing.

Given the above, what is left for us now is to elaborate on exactly: (i) how virtue friendship contributes to the moral and intellectual virtue or excellence of the friends,

and (ii) how virtue friendship itself is an instance, an occasion of moral and intellectual virtue or excellence. Aristotle provides a number of arguments for that. As such, we can more systematically present Aristotle's arguments as: (1) arguments that show how virtue friendship contributes to moral virtue, (2) arguments that show how virtue friendship is an instance or moment of moral virtue, (3) arguments that show how virtue friendship contributes to intellectual virtue, and (4) arguments that show how virtue friendship is an instance or moment of intellectual virtue.

Virtue Friendship's Contribution to Moral Virtue

Most morally virtuous activities are non-self-sufficient, meaning that most morally virtuous activities cannot be accomplished by just the individual alone without the need for things external to themselves, such as resources, fortunes, and other human beings. For example, for human beings to be courageous, they need circumstances that will allow them to exercise courage, such as dangerous and risky situations. Without such circumstances, they cannot be courageous. The same is true with justice. For human beings to be just, they must need other people in order to exercise justice. The virtue of justice reaches perfection not through an individual being just to himself or herself but through being just to another person. This also applies to liberality or generosity. For human beings to be generous, they need other people to exercise generosity. Now, if most of the moral virtues necessitate other people for their exercise and perfection, then friendship can be an avenue for the exercise of virtues, because friends, among other people, can be the recipient or object of moral virtues such as justice and generosity. Friends can reciprocally exercise moral virtues for each other. As Aristotle (2009, 177) writes, "a certain training in virtue arises also from the company of the good" (*NE IX.9 1170a 10-15*). Further, Aristotle (2009, 142;176;180) even thinks that it is more noble, laudable, and desirable to do virtuous actions towards friends than towards strangers (*NE VIII.1 1155a 5-10; IX.9 1169b 10-15; IX.11 1171a 25-30*).

In addition, "it is not easy to be continuously active" (*NE IX.9 1170a 5-10 / Aristotle 2009, 177*). By virtue of being a human being, it is difficult for an individual to continuously engage in morally virtuous activities. The human being, unlike the gods, is finite and limited both in respect of the soul and most especially in respect of the body. Human frailty always gets in the way of the pursuit of flourish as a human being. As such, Aristotle (2009, 177) thinks that friends can provide each other with some assistance in order to engage in morally virtuous activities in a more continuous manner. "With others therefore his activity will be more continuous" (*NE IX.9 1170a 5-10*). The assistance that friendship can provide in the pursuit of morally virtuous activities forms part of its contribution to the moral excellences of each friend.

Virtue Friendship as an Instance of Moral Virtue

The preceding has shown that virtue friendship indeed has a contribution to the exercise of the moral virtue of each friend. First, by being each other's object or recipient of morally virtuous activities, thus making friendship a context or an avenue to exercise moral virtues. And second, by each friend providing some assistance for

the continuance of morally virtuous activities. However, all these show that virtue friendship is only a *means for some end*. Friends engaging in the friendship appear to be only using each other and the relationship for some ulterior motive, that is, for their own respective flourishing. Thus, rendering the friendship quite artificial. Fortunately, Aristotle has a way of showing that friendship, and for that matter, virtuous friendship, is not only a means for an end, but is also an end in itself. Friendship itself is an instance or a moment of moral virtue. And if moral virtue constitutes human flourishing, then friendship itself is already an instance or a moment of human flourishing.

Aristotle (2009, 142) construes friendship as one of the moral virtues (*NE* VIII.1 1155a 1-5). As a moral virtue, it is a state of character. And as a state of character, it has as its domain the passions of goodwill and love. These passions must be in a certain state for them to qualify as the state of character of friendship. In the case of goodwill, it must be reciprocated and mutually recognized (*NE* VIII.2 1156a 3-5 / Aristotle 2009, 144). In the case of love, it must be grounded on some object of love – the useful, the pleasant, or the excellent (*NE* VIII.2 1155b 25-30 / Aristotle 2009, 143). As such, if friendship is a moral virtue, then the cultivation of friendship already amounts to a cultivation of moral virtue. Friendship itself, especially virtue friendship, is an instance or a moment of moral virtue. And if moral virtue constitutes human flourishing, then cultivating friendship, which is a moral virtue, is already an instance or moment of human flourishing.

Further, Aristotle (2009, 176) construes human beings as by nature “political,” meaning human beings by nature “lives with others” (in this context, in the *polis* or city-state) (*NE* IX.9 1169b 15-20; *NE* I.7 1097b 10-15 / Aristotle 2009, 11; *Pol.* I.2 1253a 2-25 / Aristotle 1995, 10-12). Now, if human beings are social beings, then the flourishing of an individual cannot help but include excellently living with others. As such, if friends are one of the “others” whom one lives or interacts with, then cultivating friendship is an instance of the flourishing of one’s political or social nature through the exercise or activity of excellent socialization. Indeed, while there are circumstances when friendship, specifically virtue friendship, appears to be merely a means for some end, such as the flourishing of the individual friends, friendship is most importantly an *instance* of moral virtue – an instance of human flourishing.

Virtue Friendship’s Contribution to Intellectual Virtue

An analysis of how Aristotle presents the relation of virtue friendship to intellectual virtue reveals that Aristotle makes use of the contemplative activity that is present both in the activity of the deliberative subpart of the rational soul and the activity of the contemplative subpart of the rational soul to show that *virtue friendship contributes to practical wisdom*, while *virtue friendship is an instance or a moment of philosophic wisdom*. While Aristotle argues that deliberation is the primary activity of the deliberative subpart of the rational soul, he also maintains that there is an element of contemplation in deliberation, more so in excellent deliberation or practical wisdom, especially when friendship is taken into account. How such is the case is what follows.

Earlier, we saw that part of deliberation is to deliberate on the means through which we can attain that which is good for us both in the long-run and in the present. One deliberates the means by which we can attain human flourishing in the long-run,

and the means by which we ought to feel and act in this way in this particular situation at present. Now, one of the prerequisites to deliberation is self-knowledge. One has to know at least some things about oneself for deliberation to ensue. One has to at least know the present state of one's character, whether excellent or poor, to deliberate on means to improve it or enrich it. One has to know if one is virtuous at present or is already becoming vicious to deliberate on the steps one should take in order to improve or enrich oneself. What is peculiar about self-knowledge is that it is not an easy endeavor. The reason is that we tend to be partial and even biased towards ourselves. As such, it is possible that the kind of knowledge we have about ourselves is incorrect. And if deliberation necessitates knowledge of the self, then an incorrect knowledge of the self possibly results in an incorrect deliberation about what is good for us and the means to attain it. Aware of such a possibility, Aristotle, through friendship, provides a way to address the difficulty.

Aristotle (2009, 177) notes that while it is true that we have a tendency to be partial and biased towards things that are our own, which includes our self, we tend to be more impartial and unbiased towards things external to us, which includes other people. "We can observe our neighbors better than ourselves" (*NE* IX.9 1169b 30-35). Now, if we are more impartial towards things external to us, it is possible that such things can contribute to better self-knowledge, especially if these things are in some way related to one's self. This is where *friends as our other self* come in.¹ Our friend is definitely external to us. And yet despite being external, it is also related to us by being our another self. Now, if self-knowledge becomes better when we observe things external to us and yet related to us, then observing one's friend who is external to us and yet is our another self contributes to better self-knowledge. If excellent deliberation is largely dependent on excellent self-knowledge, then the contribution of a friend to self-knowledge largely forms part of excellent deliberation. Indeed, friendship contributes to practical wisdom. The element of contemplation in deliberation is located in the person observing his or her friend (who is his or her another self) reflecting/mirroring back aspects of the person's self that aids the person's deliberation. Thus, the friend contributes to the person's excellent deliberation or practical wisdom.

Virtue Friendship as an Instance of Intellectual Virtue

The above again shows that friendship is a mere *means to an end*. One's friend is simply an aid to the element of contemplation present in the deliberative activity. One's friend is simply a mirror that reflects to oneself aspects about oneself that are relevant to deliberation. However, there is another way to show that friendship is not a mere means to exercising intellectual virtue. There is a way to show that friendship is an *instance or a moment of intellectual virtue*, and that is through the contemplative activity, not of the deliberative subpart but of the contemplative/theoretical subpart of the rational soul. While there is an element of contemplation in the activity of the deliberative subpart, such contemplation only renders friendship as a mere means to an end. But the kind of contemplation that is happening in the activity of the contemplative/theoretical subpart renders friendship as an end in itself, as an occasion or instance of intellectual virtue, and consequently of human flourishing.

Earlier, we noted that contemplative activity is the activity that is essentially human flourishing because contemplation actualizes our highest human faculty, which is the intellect. And the intellect, in turn, among other faculties, is who we truly are as humans. What is peculiar with the contemplative activity, however, is that it is self-sufficient. Unlike morally virtuous activities, which necessitate things external to the agent to be in its best state, the contemplative activity, by nature do not need things external to the contemplator to be in its best state. If such is the case, where does friendship picture in such contemplative activity?

Here is where Aristotle demonstrates that virtuous friendship is an instance or a moment of intellectual virtue, a moment of excellent contemplative activity. He does that by showing how the friend being another self of the contemplator does not disturb the self-sufficiency of the contemplator, but in fact, enriches the activity of contemplation's best state. Elsewhere in Aristotle's works, particularly in the *Metaphysics* (XII.7 1072b-1073a; XII.9 1074b-1076a) and *De Anima* (III.4 429a-430a; III.5 430a-430b; III.6 430b-431a; III.7 431a-432a), Aristotle argues that contemplation is in its best state when it is self-sufficient, continuous, homogenous, indivisible, unaffected, and unmixed (Miller 2014, 340). Contemplation only achieves such a self-sufficient pure state when its object is nothing but itself. A contemplator is in his or her best state as a contemplator when his or her object is nothing but himself or herself, for if his or her object is something external to him or her, his or her contemplation becomes self-insufficient and impure, thereby not being in the best state. However, by virtue of being a human being, an individual does not always achieve such pure and perfect contemplation. In fact, Aristotle only attributes such a kind of contemplation to God, who is purely contemplative activity, contemplating nothing but Itself unceasingly (*Noesis noeseos*). But despite such difficulty for a human being, Aristotle (2009, 195) admonishes that a human being "must strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us," our share in the Divine's contemplative activity, if we are to be a truly flourishing human being (*NE X.7 1177b 30-35*).

Now, friendship pictures in the pure and perfect contemplative activity of an individual through such individual contemplating himself or herself through his or her friend, who is his or her another self, without any ulterior motivation such as those in deliberation earlier. Here, the individual simply contemplates and delights in the contemplative activity. The contemplation is an end in itself.

While it is true that the friend is someone external to the individual, hence the kind of contemplation that the individual does may fail to satisfy self-sufficiency and purity in that respect, it, on the other hand, satisfies self-sufficiency and purity in the respect that whenever the individual contemplates his or her friend, he or she is actually contemplating himself or herself by virtue of the friend being his or her another self. In addition, the friend being external to the individual actually does not always pose as a disadvantage to the contemplation of the individual. In fact, the friend being external and yet identical to the individual, enriches the individual's contemplation, given the fact that the individual can be mistaken about the kind of self he or she is contemplating due to the inherent partiality and bias on things internal to one's self. Thus, by virtue of each friend contemplating each other's respective selves in the friendship, each friend respectively contemplates self-sufficiently and purely.² Each friend mirroring or

reflecting each other's selves is an instance, an occasion, a moment of the kind of contemplation that Aristotle considers as best and Divine.

Virtue Friendship and Pleasure Supervening Moral and Intellectual Virtue

But Aristotle remains unsatisfied. He argues that not only is friendship an instance or a moment of moral and intellectual virtue, but it is also a moment or an instance of the pleasure one experiences in perceiving or contemplating that one is the agent or doer of a morally virtuous and/or intellectually virtuous action. The virtuous person is not just pleased in doing virtuous actions but is more pleased that it is he or she and not another person who is the agent of such actions. "A thing's being one's own is one of the attributes that make it pleasant," writes Aristotle (2009, 177) in *NE* IX.9 1169b 30-35. The same goes in *NE* IX.9 1170b 1-5: "To perceive what is good present in oneself is pleasant" (Aristotle 2009, 177). And of virtuous human beings, Aristotle (2009, 178) writes in *NE* IX.9 1170b 1-5: "they are pleased at the consciousness of the presence in them of what is in itself good." Now, while it is true that a virtuous human being alone can perceive himself or herself by virtue of having the capacity to be self-conscious or to engage in second-order perception (Pangle 2003, 190), such second-order perception is enriched by the presence of a friend who is one's another self. The reason is that if a friend is a one's another self, then to perceive that friend is to perceive oneself. To perceive one's friend amounts to second-order perception. If my friend is my other self and my friend is virtuous, then to perceive my friend is to perceive myself who is virtuous. If to perceive that I am virtuous is pleasant, then to perceive my virtuous friend who is my another self is pleasant.

Indeed, Aristotle brings friendship's relation to human flourishing to even greater heights as he shows how the pleasure there is in contemplating oneself through contemplating one's friend instantiates the pleasure there is in contemplating that one's self is the agent of a morally and/or intellectually virtuous act. We say even greater heights because doing a morally and/or intellectually virtuous act is already pleasurable. But perceiving or contemplating that it is oneself who is doing such a morally and/or intellectually virtuous act is doubly pleasurable. The contemplative element there is in friendship is able to instantiate such greater pleasure, so to speak.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that indeed friendship has a place in human flourishing. Friendship has a place in human flourishing construed as the chief good by virtue of friendship being one of the intrinsic goods that either constitute the chief good (if one subscribes to the inclusivist-pluralist account of human flourishing) or serve as an ornament to the chief good (if one subscribes to the exclusivist-monistic account of human flourishing). On the other hand, friendship has a place in human flourishing construed as the activity of the soul in accordance with excellence by virtue of friendship's indispensable contribution to the actualization of moral and intellectual excellences or virtues, as well as friendship's instantiation of the moral and intellectual virtues or excellences itself. Friendship is not just a means to human flourishing, but it

is also an occasion, a moment, or an instance of human flourishing itself. Further, it was shown that of all the three species of friendship, only virtue friendship contributes to moral and intellectual virtue. And only virtue friendship instantiates moral and intellectual virtue.³

Ultimately, this paper is able to show that the amount of discussion that Aristotle allots to friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is not an unjustified one by virtue of the important place that friendship has in human flourishing. In addition, the taxonomizing of friendship that Aristotle accomplished is also justified by the need to specify which among the kinds of friendship has a place in human flourishing. Finally, by showing that friendship has a place in human flourishing, this paper is able to secure the warrant of philosophers of technology's choice of Aristotelian virtue ethics in their approach to social media friendship. As friendship has a place in human flourishing, then it is justifiable that Aristotelian virtue ethics be used as a framework in analyzing social media friendship.⁴

NOTES

1. "My friend is my another self" can be quite puzzling at first but when clarified becomes more intuitive. My friend being my another self does not mean that everything about my self is identical to everything about the self of my friend. Definitely, my friend is irreducible to my self. What is required in friendship is that both friends must have at least one thing similar or identical. While there are many things that friends can be similar or identical with, friends if they are to be truly or genuinely friends, in Aristotle (2009, 168)'s standard, should be identical in excellence or virtue. As such, in true or genuine friendship, my virtuous friend is my another virtuous self (*NE IX.4* 1166a 1-5). Further, that which friends similarly share does not have to be static all throughout the friendship. In fact, what makes friendship more meaningful and worthwhile is the fact that friends can shape, influence, and draw each other's selves as their friendship grows and matures (Millgram 1987, 367-368). As such, the reason why my friend is my another self is because my self is part and parcel of the kind of self that my friend has become. Interestingly, the infamous, "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are" and "Birds of the same feather flock together" invoke this notion of friends being each other's selves.

2. It may be argued that the kind of self-sufficiency being referred to here is a *qualified* one rather than an *absolute* one, the latter being the kind of self-sufficiency the *Noesis noeseos* is in. As such, it appears that the self-sufficiency here fails to partake in the kind of self-sufficiency that is at par with the *Noesis noeseos*. I reply that when taken at face value, the kind of self-sufficiency referred to in this context may be seen as only qualified self-sufficiency, and not absolute self-sufficiency. The reason is that unlike gods, human beings by virtue of being humans still indeed are dependent on people, things, equipment, among others that are external to themselves. They cannot live without the help of both material objects and fellow human beings. Aristotle in many instances in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* emphasized such point. However, I argue that this does not largely affect the position we are making in this paper. One can address the concern by clarifying that there are

activities or instances where self-sufficiency is qualified, hence failing to partake in the *Noesis noeseos*; and that are activities or instances where self-sufficiency is absolute, hence able to partake in the *Noesis noeseos*. The contemplation present in the activity of the deliberative subpart of the rational soul is an instance of an activity that is self-sufficient but qualified; while the contemplation present in the activity of the theoretical subpart of the rational soul is an instance of an activity that is absolutely self-sufficient. The former is such because deliberation cannot ensue without proper self-knowledge, and proper self-knowledge cannot ensue without the insight one can get from persons and things outside oneself. Meanwhile, the latter is such because theoretical thinking, thinking about universal and necessary truths, can ensue even without largely subscribing to empirical data. Hence, the distinction in the discipline of philosophy between *necessary* and *contingent truths*. Accordingly, the activity of the person contemplating his or her self through his or her friend in the process of his or her personal deliberation can be said to be self-sufficient but a qualified one; while the activity of the person contemplating his or her self through his or her friend without any ulterior motive can be said to be absolutely self-sufficient. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for bringing to the fore this possible objection to the position we are making in this paper.

3. It may be argued that the claim that virtue friendship is an instance of human flourishing is a controversial or a strong reading of Aristotle. However, I reply that it only becomes controversial or strong within the exclusivist-monistic account of human flourishing, and not within the inclusivist-pluralistic account of human flourishing. The reason is that in the former, human flourishing is construed as separate from intrinsic goods. Intrinsic goods which include friendship are merely means to human flourishing. Once human flourishing is attained these intrinsic goods are dispensable. As such, in this account of human flourishing, it is controversial and strong to say that friendship (particularly, virtue friendship) is an instance of human flourishing because friendship is only a means to human flourishing. Once human flourishing is attained, friendship is dispensable. However, when the inclusivist-pluralistic account of human flourishing is taken into consideration, to say that friendship is an instance of human flourishing becomes less controversial and less strong. The reason is that human flourishing is construed not as separate from intrinsic goods but as constituted by intrinsic goods. Intrinsic goods which include friendship are not merely means to human flourishing but are the very components of human flourishing. Human flourishing cannot be attained and maintained without these intrinsic goods. Intrinsic goods are indispensable. As such, whenever we are in a friendship that is virtuous, such friendship is an occasion, an instance, a moment of human flourishing. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for bringing to the fore this possible objection to the position we are making in this paper.

4. Interestingly, the distinctions and nuances we highlighted in this paper regarding the place of friendship in human flourishing has some implications in the way virtue ethicists of technology frame their questions regarding social media friendship. In the literature, scholars often grapple with the issue of whether or not social media friendships can count as a virtue friendship. Oftentimes, the strategy is to flesh out the key features of virtue friendship and the key features of social media friendship, and then examine if the latter is able to instantiate the former. However,

with the distinctions and nuances we highlighted in this paper, the issue can be reframed as an issue of whether social media friendships can count as friendships that merely contribute to either (or both) moral virtue or/and intellectual virtue; or as friendships that can be an instance of either (or both) moral virtue or/and intellectual virtue. Another implication of our distinctions and nuances to the literature can be found in our emphasis on friendship as a state of character in one of our discussions earlier. If friendship is a state of character, then just like any state of character there are conditions for it to be acquired, maintained, and dissolved. As such, scholars may explore the implications of this construal of friendship on the issue of whether or not virtue friendship is possible online given that friendship as a state of character takes some time and depth to acquire and maintain.

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