

Aristotle: nicomachaen ethics

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



Aristotle: Nicomachaen Ethics 1a. The definition given by Aristotle on the brave person is, “ Whoever stands firm against the right things and fears the right things, for the right end, in the right way, at the right time, and is correspondingly confident, is the brave person; for the brave person’s actions and feelings accord with what something is worth, and follow what reason prescribes (Aristotle, p. 41). ” So in looking at the definition by Aristotle, we come to realize that the brave person is one who is not without fear, but in fact understands what things are worthy of fear and to what extent. Also, this person understands the dangers that are present in facing these fears, and are able to act in a way that is not cowardly but is not unnecessarily confident and reckless. b. When Aristotle refers to virtue, he is actually referring to excellence of the soul and self in a human being. Virtue is a state of being in which you possess the right feelings at the right time. You must not only possess the right feelings, but you must also use the knowledge of these emotions to act correctly. When referring to bravery as a virtue Aristotle says, “ The brave person is unperturbed, as far as a human being can be. Hence, though he will fear even the sorts of things that are not irresistible, he will stand firm against them, in the right way, as reason prescribes for the sake of the fine, since this is the end aimed at by virtue (p. 41). ” Essentially bravery is a virtue because it part of being an excellent human being. You must understand the correct feelings involved with being brave, and how to act on these feelings in the right way. Through this you can understand how bravery is a virtue and how you are able to be virtuous. c. According to Aristotle the doctrine of the mean refers to being able to hit the right spot on the emotional spectrum. You must have the perfect balance

of feelings and emotions in order to be a virtuous person. The mean is not an arithmetical number, but rather based on the amount of each emotion that is relative to each person. According to Aristotle the mean is, " Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, a mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the reason by reference to which the prudent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency (p. 25). " In terms of bravery and the doctrine of the mean it is important to discern which emotions are involved in deciding the bravery of a person. At one of the spectrum is fear and cowardice; while at the other end is rash and recklessness. And, as Aristotle says, " What is frightening, but not irresistible for a human being, varies in seriousness and degree; and the same is true for what inspires confidence (p. 41). " So when discussing the mean of bravery, each person has a specific balance of fear and confidence that is their mean, and therefore in finding this perfect balance, is able to find the virtue of bravery. d. The connection to bravery and the emotions is similar to that of the connection of bravery and the mean. The emotions that are tied to bravery are mainly the balance of confidence and fear, with cowardice and rashness lying at the opposite ends of the spectrum. In finding the right amount of each, a person is able to become virtuously brave. A person must not be in fear of things that most men would not fear and in the wrong way, a result of these actions and feelings is being a coward in the eyes of his peers. But also " The person who is excessively confident about frightening things is rash. The rash person also seems to be a boaster, and a pretender to bravery (p. 42). " With this statement Aristotle explains that a brave person does not live without

fear, and in fact those that claim to do this are in fact cowards when it comes to standing against things that are frightening, while the brave person is ready for action. Overall a brave person must understand what is to be feared, to what extent, and when. And in this fear he must be confident against it to a degree that is not cowardly or rash. e. Overall the analysis given by Aristotle about bravery is one that is very clear in helping to define what a person with virtue would do if he was brave. The explanation of the virtuous person being able to find the perfect balance of fear and confidence that is relative to them is a very interesting concept. While it allows for each person to have their own specific degrees of fear, it still leaves a specific outline for what constitutes being brave. It seems that being brave in the sense of the virtue would be very difficult though for the fact that the virtuously brave person must know what is right and fearful at all times and to what degree, and then act accordingly against it. While I understand the book is supposed to be this definition of the perfect virtuous person, it seems that being this person would be nearly impossible. Fear in all people is different and thus being fearful of the right things to you might be considered cowardly to other people, in turn upsetting the necessary praise you are to receive for being a virtuous person. So, while the basis for the outline of the brave person is one that is concise and accurate, it is seemingly an extremely difficult and almost impossible task for someone to be perfectly and virtuous brave. 2a. Friendship is an ethical topic for Aristotle, “ for it is a virtue, or involves virtue (p. 119)” Because friendship is part of being happy, and arguably the most important part, it is an obvious part of virtue for happiness is virtues ultimate outcome. The ethical aspect of

friendship is not the utilitarian or pleasurable relationships with share with others, but rather the ethically good and virtuous relationships that we share with other human beings. Virtuous friendships are ones in which people admire and love one another for the virtuous and ethical characteristics that one another possess. Friendship to Aristotle is a good, noble, and present throughout human life, and because of this fact it is essential for being an ethical and virtuous person. b. Aristotle defines friendship in three different relationships, the ethical good and virtuous, the pleasant, and the utilitarian. A pleasurable friendship is one that both people create in order to receive pleasure, usually in terms of erotic relationships. This relationship is very easily formed and once it is no longer useful can easily be dissolved. In a pleasurable relationship there is no need for a person to love the true self in someone else. In a utilitarian relationship, the two parties use one another to gain some sort of advantage, usually in terms of business. It is very similar to pleasurable relationship in that it can easily be formed when it is a need of both parties, and then easily dissolved once one party no longer needs the help of the other. Again there is no need for you to know the true self of the other person, for the relationship is purely based on usage as apposed to love. The most important aspect of friendship is the virtuous one. A virtuous friendship is one in which two virtuous people love one another because they are able to admire the excellence and qualities that the other person possesses because they share these with you. This relationship is one that takes time to grow and become whole, and once in place it is very difficult to be dissolved. The few ways that it can be dissolved are through one person losing or changing their virtue, or the relationship fading over time because

of a moving away in time or distance. Friendships in general are very important parts of communities and families because they help to keep them strong and together. If you have a true friendship with the members of your community and family, you are able to see the good in one another, and thus love each other for these qualities. A person is able to learn how to be a virtuous person by observing those in their community and family, and in doing so, become a valuable and loved member. For Aristotle, Friendship, “Is the most necessary for our life. For no one would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other goods (p. 119).” Friendship to Aristotle is the most important part of being happy and virtuous. c. In examining Aristotle’s analysis of the relation between self-love, selfishness, and friendship, we are able to see how each one is related to the other. According to Aristotle self-love and selfishness are very similar to one another; in fact selfishness can be seen as a form of bad self-love. Both types of people are those that desire what is good and best for them. The problem is in what they deem to be good and desirable, for the selfish person is one that thinks money, honors, and pleasures are most important, and “overreach for these goods gratify their appetites and in general their feelings and the nonrational part of the soul (p. 147)” In doing so they become a vicious person in which the right actions go against what they are doing, and in doing harm to himself and his neighbors, he is in fact without self-love. A self-loving person is one who is eager to achieve and receive ethically good things because they are deserving of them, “and when everyone strains to achieve what is fine and concentrates on the finest actions, everything that is right will be done for the common good, and each

person individually will receive the greatest of goods (p. 147). " Since self-love is part of being virtuous, it is an essential part of the virtuous friendship, for in order to have friendship you must first have self-love. A selfish person cares too much about themselves and lacks the self-love involved in order to actually have love for another, and in turn share a friendship with that person. A person that has self-love on the other hand is able to love another person and have friendship with them because they admire the excellent qualities that the other has. You have love for these qualities because in having self-love you have a friendship with yourself, and therefore can see the good that you share with this other person. This is how Aristotle can explain that a person's friend is " another himself (p. 142). " In being a self-loving person you can love both being by yourself and being with your friends who possess the same good and virtuous qualities as you. If you are selfish person and not a good friend to yourself, then it is impossible to be a friend to another. d. A magnanimous person is one that is a morally perfect person. They possess all the virtues and the correct mean for all of their emotions, and are able to achieve the ultimate goal of being happy. The magnanimous person is guided by truth, not opinion, and is one deserving of great things. They know they deserve great things, and are highly merited, but are not vain. The magnanimous person, " cannot let anyone else, except a friend, determine his life (p. 59). " The reason that the magnanimous person is able to have such trust in their friend is because this refers to a virtuous friend, and a virtuous friend is one who shares similar virtue and qualities of the person. Therefore, a magnanimous person is in fact friends with other magnanimous people. Through this friendship and love for one

another they are able to lead a good life as members of society. Friendship is vital even to the magnanimous person because it is the most important virtue that is involved in leading them to the ultimate goal of being happy. e. Before reading Aristotle's analysis of friendship, I never thought of it as having anything to do with virtue. After analyzing his work myself, I came to realize how important friendship can be to a human being. Friendship is definitely a key aspect of being happy in your life, and the only way that you can truly be a good friend is by first loving yourself. Also how he brings up the different types of friend is very interesting and understandable. In my lifetime I have had classmates that have been utilitarian friends, people who have helped with work, but never gotten to know the real them. I also have had friends that have been nothing more than pleasurable friends, which have served in nearly the same capacity. But, I realize that the true virtuous friend is one of your best friends, and the relationship has grown overtime to one in which I share similar interests and qualities with. The relationship is one that is nearly impossible to dissolve, for after being in college for a few years, I still share the friendships with my friends back home and in nearly the same capacity. Finally, his explanation of the difference between self-love and selfishness is very impressive. In looking at the analysis you can see why being selfish makes it nearly impossible to be a true friend because you are too concerned with yourself, while possessing self-love actually is what allows you to be a good friend and recognize the good qualities that others have to offer.