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## Love and Virtue in Aristotle's *Ethics*

**ABSTRACT:** In the scholarship on Aristotle, much of the discussion on love has come in the context of friendship and especially self-love's relation to friendship<sup>1</sup>. Yet very little attention has been devoted to the role of love in virtue itself, which, as I hope to show, is more basic to Aristotle's ethical enterprise<sup>2</sup>. To this end, I will discuss the nature, kinds and objects of love for Aristotle, and how these are integral to the harmony that is the virtuous individual. Finally, if I am right about the importance of love in virtue for Aristotle, then many central aspects of his thought need to be reconsidered, as I will be briefly show.

**KEY WORDS:** Love • Virtue • Aristotle • Action Theory • Friendship

### I

**O**ur task is to determine the role of love in virtue for Aristotle, and to this end, therefore, it is appropriate to begin by examining his conception of love. Love and friendship have the same root in the Greek, but [T.] distinguishes them clearly:

<sup>1</sup> Important discussions include R. Kraut, *The Importance of Love in Aristotle's Ethics*, "Philosophy Research Archives" 1 (1975), pp. 300–322; C.H. Kahn, *Aristotle and Altruism*, "Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy" 90 (1981), pp. 20–40; J. Annas, *Self-Love in Aristotle*, "Southern Journal of Philosophy Supp." 27 (1988), pp. 1–18; A.W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, New York 1989; A.-M. Dziob, *Aristotelian Friendship: Self-Love and Moral Rivalry*, "Review of Metaphysics" 46 (1993), pp. 781–801; M. Pakaluk (transl.), Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics: Books VIII and IX*, New York 1998; L.S. Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, Cambridge 2003; L.A. Kosman, *Aristotle on the Desirability of Friends*, "Ancient Philosophy" 24 (2004), pp. 135–154; R. Jones, *Self-Love and Friendship: Re-Examining the Argument of Nicomachean Ethics IX.4*, "Newsletters for the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy" 6 (2005), pp. 3–11.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. Burnyeat, *Aristotle on Learning to be Good*, in: *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. Rorty, Berkeley 1980, pp. 69–92, see especially p. 76, and A. Lännström, *Loving the Fine: Virtue and Happiness in Aristotle's Ethics*, Notre Dame 2006, pp. 16–17, emphasize the importance of love in virtue, but are not concerned with the task of exploring its nature (as I am here) aside from saying that it is a kind of desire in too stark a contrast with reason. M. Homiak, *Virtue and Self-Love in Aristotle's Ethics*, "Canadian Journal of Philosophy" 16 (1981), pp. 633–652, does begin with passages that I will discuss that are concerned with love and virtue, but her main interest is in showing how the life of virtue (as opposed to non-virtue) is more pleasurable because it includes the widest variety of rational and non-rational pleasures.

[T<sub>1</sub>] Now it looks like as if love (*philēsis*) were a feeling (*pathei*), friendship (*philia*) a state of character; for love may be felt just as much towards lifeless things, but mutual love involves choice and choice involves a state of character; and men wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of feeling but as a result of a state of character (1157b28–31)<sup>3</sup>.

‘Love’ translates ‘*philia*’, whose broadest sense ranges in intensity from ‘affection’ or ‘fondness’ to ‘love’, for everything from people and activities to objects. Aristotle’s use of the language of feeling or passion (*pathos*) does not mean that love is simply emotional, as in the case of loving a pet<sup>4</sup>. For example, it can be of food, sex or drink, which are objects of appetitive love (and which are also classed as feelings), just as much as knowledge, which is the concern of rational love. But that there are these notions of appetitive and rational love in Aristotle’s *Ethics* is not obvious, and some work needs to be done to make it so.

We may begin by looking at the narrower sense of ‘*philia*’ suggested in [T<sub>1</sub>], which is translated as ‘friendship’. Friendship for Aristotle is the acknowledged reciprocal relation of varying intention and degrees of affection that is found between friends, lovers and even family members. So it is impossible to be friends with a bottle of wine, for friendship is a mutual

<sup>3</sup> All translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are from Aristotle and others, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle includes appetites (*epithumia*) along with anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation and pity as examples of what he means by feelings or passions (*pathē*) (1105b21–23). I have classed all the non-appetitive *pathē* (represented by *thumos*) as emotions, even though translators usually use ‘feeling’ and ‘emotion’ synonymously to translate *pathē*. The exception is Irwin’s first edition of *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985 which translates *thumos* as emotion, though he reverts to the more explicitly Platonic language of ‘spirit’ in the second edition. Aristotle’s standard example of a non-appetitive passion is *thumos* or anger, but it seems to me that what applies to it also applies to all the other non-appetitive passions or emotions (cf. J.M. Cooper, *An Aristotelian Theory of the Emotions*, Aldershot 2003, pp. 85–102, 421). My own suggestion above is in line with the spirit, if not the letter, of what is said in S. Leighton, *Aristotle and the Emotions*, “Phronesis: A Journal of Ancient Philosophy” 27 (1982), pp. 144–174. For he translates ‘*pathē*’ as ‘emotion’, especially in the *Rhetoric* where it excludes the appetites even while recognizing that this is not so in the above context of the *NE* (where the *pathē* include the appetites). W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics and Ethics*, London 1975, p. 31; p. 86 footnote 1, suggests that the tripartite distinction is an earlier Platonic one and that Aristotle is working with a more advanced bipartite distinction between logical and alogical aspects of the soul in the *NE* that can also be found in the *Laws*. But then he is forced into the unsatisfactory position of saying that those substantial portions of the *NE* that do rely on tripartition are from the Platonic period of Aristotle’s thought.

relation of affection where friends wish each other good things. Moreover, it is not enough that the relation is mutual, but that there is an awareness in each of the other's affection (1155b28–1156a5). Friendships, then, involve more than love — they entail mutually recognized love, and their motivation and hence differentiae for Aristotle are threefold. A friend is loved because he is a source of pleasure (say, as a drinking or travel companion), or is useful (in political alliances or as an emotional support) or because of rational considerations of who she is (i.e., a good person) (1156a10–18). Moreover, if a friend is a source of pleasure, then she is loved — that is, the good that is wished for her is precisely in terms of pleasure (1156a7–10). Similarly, then, if a person is loved because she is a fine human being, the good that is wished for her is the real and not the apparent good (like pleasure) (1156a3–5)<sup>5</sup>.

It follows from all this that since at least some forms of pleasure friendship (between, say, drinking as opposed to a travel companions) are appetitive, that there is such a thing as appetitive even erotic love, as opposed to merely appetitive desire (as might be the basis of a fleeting dalliance). In the same way, there can be emotional love for a friend because she is a pillar of strength. For even though this relationship is based on utilitarian considerations, the friend is still loved in ways, for instance, one's psychiatrist (often also a source of support) is not. Finally, loving a friend for who s/he is (i.e., because s/he is kind, brave, good, *etc.*) in a way that is not driven primarily by hedonistic or utilitarian considerations is rational love.

While it may be granted that there are these three kinds of love corresponding to appetitive, emotional and rational types of desire and friendship in Aristotle, the basic distinction between desire and love could be clearer. Love in friendship involves wishing good things for our friends, as we saw above. So one possible way in which love can be understood as a special subset of desire, then, is in terms of such wishing. But since love can be of non-living things as well, it is hard to see how such definition might be enough. Love is obviously a desire, but a special kind of desire, so what sets it apart? A hint is forthcoming in *NE* I.5 when Aristotle says that pleasure and honour are ends precisely because they are loved for themselves, even though to love them this

<sup>5</sup> That the good, as it is variously conceived above, is wished for one's friends goes some distance in mitigating the discomfort that a reader might feel when Aristotle says that utilitarian relations between individuals can be called friendship. Additional help comes from R. Hursthouse, *Aristotle on Women Who Love Too Much*, "Ethics" 117 (2007), pp. 327–334, who points out that we often like and do things for people because of who they are (for example, colleagues or accidental travel companions) but not for their own sake. Hence it is unsurprising that we don't keep our connections up with them when that colleague moves on or the holiday ends.

way is a mistake: “And so one might take the aforementioned objects [i.e., pleasure and honour] as ends; for they are loved for themselves” (1096a6–8; emphasis mine). It is, for instance, virtue that should be pursued as an end, not honours, thinks Aristotle. Honours are simply the recognition and confirmation of virtue by others (1095b25–30). The point, of course, is that honours and pleasure can and are often desired as ends, and what it means to do so is to love them for themselves. This seems plausible; for while I may desire to undergo a painful procedure so I can eventually regain my health, I wouldn’t say I would love to do so (unless I am a masochist). Health, then, is loved for its own sake whereas medical procedures are merely desirable because they are for the sake of something else; i.e., health. Note it follows that what is loved and pursued for its own sake can be in the realm of the rational, emotional or appetitive, and this is consistent with the suggestion that there are these three kinds of love, which then are the basis of the three kinds of friendship.

Loving something means pursuing it for its own sake, or to make the thing pursued an end. That is to say, love is the finitization of desire, or is a desire with a terminus, as opposed to desiring something for the sake of something else. But is not simply enough that there be objects of desire that are capable of being termini, such as happiness; humans have to have the capacity of loving these potential termini so that they become termini for us. What considerations are at play in such termination of desire? Can we love anything? Aristotle’s response is that “Surely it is impossible, since not everything can be loved, but only what is good. What is evil neither can nor should be loved” (1165b14–17). If we think about what this quote implies, then his answer, contrary to appearances, is yes, anything can be loved so long as it is perceived as a good. If I think that virtue is a necessary evil then it impossible for me to love it, just as much as it is impossible for Thrasymachus to love vice if he thinks it is bad. The point is that the object of desire must appear good to be capable of being loved or desired for its own sake, and what appears good to individuals is not always what is truly good (1113a25–27). This explains the seeming inconsistency with an earlier part of the text where Aristotle says that the pleasant and the useful are capable of being loved just as much as the good (1155b17–19); after all, pleasant things (e.g., chocolate) and useful things (e.g., money) can be loved. For Aristotle is saying that even pleasant and useful things are loved because they appear good, i.e., they are loved *as* good even if they aren’t always so (1157a34)<sup>6</sup>. It is

<sup>6</sup> While there is agreement that the three objects of choice (goodness, utility and pleasure) are unified in virtuous action, there is disagreement on how this happens. As Lännström,

therefore unsurprising that, in friendship, the reciprocation of what is loved as good in a friend (i.e., what we wish for them) is also in terms of the same good, as mentioned previously.

It might, therefore, be appropriate to discuss wish, since it seems to be connected to love in a substantial way. If only the good is lovable, this is so because what is meant by 'good' is mainly that it is not primarily a means to something else; a good is an end, and hence capable of being desired or loved for its own sake. Apprehending the end as good<sup>7</sup> for Aristotle is the task of rational desire, or what he calls wish (*boulēsis*), whereas choice — which is deliberative desire (*bouleutike orexis*; 1113a12) — is concerned with the means to such ends (1112b12–14). I suggest, therefore, that the conceptual or rational aspect of wish is concerned with the forming of the end, which essentially consists of conceiving it as a good. After all, anything can be conceived as good, as we have just seen. The desiderative aspect of wish desires the end, i.e., loves it as an end; after all, love is desire for the good. Wish or rational love is a distinctively human capacity, for only humans can wish to be educated, to be moral, to be healthy, because only humans can conceive and love these as good ends. Of course, humans can also wish for bodily pleasure as the end, but this too requires that bodily pleasure be conceived as a good.

Such a view of wish also sheds light on Aristotle's controversial claim that ends, which are the objects of wish, are never deliberated upon (1111b26–30; 1112b12–35); for rationality in wish is concerned with carving out the end in a way that book-ends the deliberative reasoning that leads up to choice and, ideally, to action; whereas deliberation is an analytical process that takes all aspects of the situation into consideration before it determines the means to the end set by wish. Moreover, since rationality is involved in both, we are culpable when there is a failure of reason in either. We can, for instance, deliberate wrongly by not considering all that needs to be considered (1142b17ff), just as we can be held accountable for having wrong ends due to ignorance (1114b4–5). So vice can be rationally conceived as an end under the influence of the appetites, which is not to say that vice

*op. cit.*, p. 13, points out, Burnyeat thinks they are irreducibly distinct though ultimately commensurable in terms of pleasure and pain and not reason; McDowell thinks the relation is one of 'silencing', whereas Lännström herself thinks the unification is a result of transformative harmony. What I suggest above, concerning what appears good, begins to lay the foundation for how virtue as harmony is attained, at least formally. I flesh out the details in what follows.

<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere I have shown just how the good is apprehended in an act of rational intuition or *nous*. For details, see R. Majithia, 'Function, intuition and ends in Aristotle's ethics, "Ethical Theory and Moral Practice" 9 (2006), pp. 187–200.

is a product of knowledge; and because it is not, it gives Aristotle one of several reasons to ultimately agree with Socrates that knowledge (as opposed to reason) is never dragged about like a slave by the non-rational aspects of the soul (1147b13–18).

Aristotle's discussion of the approximations of courage in III.8 throws further light on the nature of ends. In some varieties, the perceived good is shaped by fear—be it of social repercussions of cowardice or primal animal distress—and is therefore driven by emotion (1116a30–b3; 1116b30–37). In others, courageous action is based on ends which in turn are conceived on inadequate knowledge due to over-confidence that comes with experience (as of the mercenary) (1116b5–10). The so-called 'courageous actions' of an adulterer are motivated by ends shaped by appetite (1117a1–2). It is only when the action is based on the end which is fine or noble (*to kalon*) that the action is truly courageous for Aristotle (1115b21–24). The noble action is precisely that which is most appropriate or fitting in that circumstance, based on reason's impartial claim on the good—impartial precisely because it is not driven by emotional or appetitive considerations. Hence, in contrast, Aristotle thinks the closest approximation of true courage—civic courage—is motivated both by the fine and by the emotion of shame (1116a26–28). The language of *to kalon* brings with it an aesthetic element that harkens back to Plato; for the fine is also beautiful because it is proportionate<sup>8</sup>, and it is Plato who first makes the connection between beauty and goodness. In Aristotle, such beauty of the fine that is good is, ideally, the object of love in wish.

We can now begin to see the role of love in virtue. The virtuous person wishes to act well in all her endeavours, which means she not only conceives her ends finely but loves them, for wish is rational love. Such wishing is crucial for the undertaking of virtuous action, since Aristotle says that for an action to be virtuous it must be chosen and chosen for its own sake, i.e., as virtuous (1105a32–33). We have seen above that choice for Aristotle is usually of a means to the end set by wish. So the only way in which choice of an action can be an end in itself is if its end requires this of choice, which it does only in the case of the good person whose wish (and hence end) is to act virtuously in every situation. Thus choice in virtuous action is the particular instantiation of wish, but this is not so for all action. Usually, actions in moral contexts are not undertaken for their own sake but to provide some kind of material advantage (construed broadly) to the agent. In fact, the opportunity for such advantage is what usually makes the situation a moral one in the first place. In the same context, actions undertaken for their own sake by the

<sup>8</sup> For a full discussion of the nature and role of the *kalon* in the *NE*, see K. Rogers, *Aristotle's Conception of to Kalon*, "Ancient Philosophy" 13 (1993), pp. 355–371.

good person are not primarily undertaken for material advantage, which is precisely why they are fine or noble. Thus virtuous action is primarily driven by a rational response to the needs of a situation, rather than by the gain it can bring to the agent. Such a response is only possible if the agent wishes appropriately, wish being rational love.

The desire that is love in wish is certainly necessary to move the good person; for, as Aristotle notes, reason by itself cannot move us (1139a37). Yet these considerations are not complete, for we have yet to consider emotional and appetitive desire and their transformation into love before we have the entire picture before us. To finish our task, then, we have to see how choice—which is the complement of wish in human action—works, for choice brings together deliberation and the remaining aspects of desire. We often act in ways that are contrary to our decisions or choices. For instance, a student may go out to the local pub even though she has previously decided to stay home and work. According to Aristotle's analysis, this is because her appetitive desire overrides her choice to study that is made in light of her wish to be a good student (1111b14–15). But acting in accordance with choice would have required that his appetitive desire not be out of sync with the conclusions reached by his deliberation. We have therefore to determine what such a synchronization of deliberative reason and non-rational desire presupposes and how it is brought about.

The transformation of desire into love, we have seen, requires that the object desired be perceived as a good. But unlike rational desire, emotion does not have the capacity to conceive the good though it has the capacity to heed it (1149a25ff). Such goodness in particular situations is determined by deliberation (1112a8), as it attempts to forward the perceived general good set by wish. Thus the good-tempered person for Aristotle is in general undisturbed, but this does not mean that it is never appropriate for her to be angry. Yet to know when to be angry, towards whom, for how long, etc., depends on the contextual prescriptions of deliberation (1125b32–1126a2). Aristotle's valuable insight here is that reason can prescribe to the emotions in terms of goodness; for example, my anger can drain away if I see that an insult was unintentional and that an angry response would therefore not be good in such a situation. In the case of the ill-tempered, the good conceived by wish is not primarily influenced by reason but by emotion, and is therefore only the apparent good. The difficult process of aligning emotion with virtuous ends begins with habituation, for Aristotle thinks that if we are left to ourselves as children, we are more likely to follow our inclinations than reason (1109b7ff). One aspect of habituation therefore is the training imposed on the young to act well, as is rationally conceived by the moral tutor. Acting

in certain ways in turn makes the child feel in certain ways. Thus by being directed to stand his ground in difficult situations — because it is noble or good to do so — the tutee begins to feel the appropriate type (i.e., fear and confidence) and amount (i.e., the mean amount) of emotions associated with courage<sup>9</sup>. Being so disposed to feel habitually in turn ensures that he will be disposed to act courageously when the occasion arises (1105b5–b12). The gap between emotion (in the child) and reason (in the tutor) allows the room that is eventually necessary for the tutee’s own reason to lead autonomously and therefore virtuously<sup>10</sup>. Central to the concept of habituation, then, is familiarity with the good; for the emotions can love reason’s prescriptions because they become familiar with them over time, as we can only love what we know (1166b34–35). Moreover, because emotions are always accompanied by pleasure or pain (1105b23), the familiarity is the basis of the pleasure that the well-habituated person feels when acting virtuously<sup>11</sup>.

Like emotion, appetite cannot conceive its own good or end since it is not rational. Moreover, appetitive desire is distinguishable from emotion in that it cannot follow the good as good. Rather, it is led by pleasure and pain, where these are good and bad respectively (1111a34; 1111b17). Thus appetite cannot apprehend the good as good, but only as pleasure, for pleasure is an end. After all, no one asks why we pursue pleasure, for the answer obviously is because pleasure is a good in itself. So rational habituation is about training the child to take pleasure in good things—for example, in fruits as opposed to sweets—by regular exposure and by reinforcing such behavior with pleasurable rewards, and by employing painful punishments in instances of aberration (1104b10–13). Consequently, correcting bad habits of the appetites when we are older involves moving away from what we find pleasurable (1109b2ff). Appetitive love, then, is a result of rational habituation such that we only enjoy the objects of appetite—food, sex and drink—as reason dictates (1148aa22–a31). But because the appetites apprehend their end not as good (i.e., not as rational *per se*) but as pleasurable or painful, the process of rational habituation of the appetites can only be mediated by rewards and punishments of this type. Excessive appetites that result from

<sup>9</sup> Cf. L.A. Kosman, *Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle’s Ethics*, [in:] *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. A. Rorty, Berkley 1980, pp. 103–116.

<sup>10</sup> The distinction between emotion and reason in habituation is an artificial, exegetical one; for a good upbringing involves habituating both, where the latter is usually called ‘education’. See R. Sorabji, *Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue*, “Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society” 74 (1974), pp. 107–129 (especially section 3), and N. Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle’s Theory of Virtue*, Oxford 1989, for more on this issue.

<sup>11</sup> Burnyeat, *op. cit.*, p. 76, makes the important point learning to enjoy an activity such as virtue is not sharply distinct from learning that it is inherently enjoyable.

a poor upbringing can influence wish and hence corrupt the ends pursued. Aristotle thinks this is most damning because such corruption means that we love and live mainly from our animal nature (1118a25–1118b3). But what this ultimately means is that the good conceived by wish in these circumstances is influenced by a faculty that cannot even apprehend the good as good.

Several claims that Aristotle makes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* become clearer if we agree that love has a central role in virtue. Aristotle requires that virtuous action stems from a firm and unchanging virtuous character or disposition (*hexis*) (1105a33). Virtuous action must therefore be consistently produced to qualify as virtuous, and the dispositions that produce them must be the product of good habituation; more specifically, habituation that what appears good to the emotions and appetites is not out of sync with what reason sees as the real good (1113a25–1113b3). Such habituation, therefore, cannot be the mere coercion of the appetites and emotions but must involve teaching them to love what reason loves. After all, Aristotle agrees with Plato in thinking that virtue (and hence virtuous action) is a harmony because the non-rational but desiderative aspects of the soul speak in one voice with reason (1102b28; cf. 1119b15ff). Moreover, such a harmony is as tenuous as it might be were it the product of coercion; for Aristotle rightly thinks that virtue endures even under great duress, as is evident in the life of Priam (1105a6ff).

Perhaps the single most important passage that is illuminated by and, in turn, supports the suggestion that love has a central role in virtue is [T<sub>2</sub>] below:

[T<sub>2</sub>] (a) Their [i.e., the virtuous person's] life is also in itself pleasant. For pleasure is a state of soul, and to each man that which he is said to be a lover of is pleasant; e.g. not only is a horse pleasant to the lover of horses, and a spectacle to the lover of sights, but also in the same way just acts are pleasant to the lover of justice (*philodikaiō*) and in general virtuous acts to the lover of virtue (*philarētō*).

(b) Now for most men their pleasures are in conflict with one another because these are not by nature pleasant, but the lovers of what is noble find pleasant the things that are by nature pleasant; and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well as in their own nature.

(c) Their life, therefore, has no further need of pleasure as a sort of adventitious charm, but has its pleasure in itself. For, besides what we have said, the man who does not rejoice (*chaironta*) in noble actions is not even good; since no one would call a man just who did not enjoy acting justly, nor any man liberal who did not enjoy liberal actions; and similarly in all other cases. (1099a7–a20).

This is an exceptional passage in at least two ways. It expresses the Aristotelian optimism that virtuous action is not – as it is for the popular morality of his and our time – an onerous burden. More importantly, it states that virtuous action is pleasurable for the virtuous person since she is a lover of virtue, for we all find pleasure in doing what we love. The text in (a) is quite clear in stating that the virtuous person is a lover of virtue, though an explicit case for this relation is made nowhere in the *Ethics*. In fact since one who does not enjoy virtue is not even virtuous as (c) suggests, and since such pleasure presupposes a love of virtue, it seems that virtue itself is impossible without love. Thus love must be essential to virtue, which it is on the view that I have developed here; for love is essential in the conceiving and desiring of virtue as an end in itself. Such desire itself is multiplex but its harmony is indicated in (b) by the consensus of pleasures (and pains) in the life of a virtuous individual.

## II

Virtue is at the very heart of the *Ethics*, and if love is central to its development then this has implications for most of the topics discussed in the text, such as pleasure, friendship, contemplation, happiness, incontinence, etc. It might be appropriate, therefore, to indicate some of these implications (that I hope to pursue more fully elsewhere) ‘broadly and in outline’ before I conclude.

[T<sub>2</sub>] tells us that love relates virtue and pleasure, for the love of virtue is what makes virtuous action pleasurable. It is important that virtuous action be pleasurable since virtuous activity essentially constitutes happiness on Aristotle’s view (*NE* I.7). To exclude pleasure from happiness would not sit well with Aristotle’s insistence on paying attention to the phenomena, or to widely held views on the nature of happiness which he thinks cannot be entirely misguided (1098b27ff). But Aristotle’s views on these issues are not hastily put together and in fact are deeply integrated. We have seen that virtuous action must be chosen and chosen for its own sake — i.e., it must be chosen as an end in itself — for which love is essential. Pleasure for Aristotle, on the other hand, completes activity (1174b32ff), for pleasure never occurs by itself. Pleasure always occurs in the context of an activity such as seeing, thinking, eating, etc. That is, pleasure doesn’t occur in isolation and is always inextricably bound up to the activity that it is a pleasure of. Moreover, he thinks there are different kinds of pleasure, as different as the activities they are related to. Thus the pleasures of eating might distract one from the pleasures of thinking, which can only happen, Aristotle thinks, if in fact they are different kinds of pleasure (1175b2–12). The upshot for virtuous activity

is that without the accompanying pleasure, virtuous activity would not be complete as an end in itself. This connection between virtue and pleasure, we have seen, is brought about by love. For it is love that is essential for conceiving and undertaking virtue as an end, and it is love that is the basis of the pleasure of virtue.

Similarly, the role of love in virtue explains why Aristotle thinks that the virtuous person is a self-lover, which in turn illuminates how she is an other-lover or friend of the best kind. The right kind of self-love and hence self — what we might call a selfless as opposed to selfish person — basically instantiates the harmony of the different desiderative aspects of the soul: thus a virtuous person wishes to live and to live well, desires and takes pleasure in the same things with all aspects of his soul and is therefore able to live with himself and his choices (1166a14–30). Such a harmonization, and even construction of the self is the work of love, and it is love therefore, that is key to understanding how the good person relates to his friend; after all, the friend is nothing but another self (1166a33). 

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