

Self-Love and Self-Sufficiency in the Aristotelian Ethics

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Presented to the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy at its meeting with the Society for Classical Studies in New Orleans, December 2014

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to compare two of the most vexing passages in Aristotle's ethical works, *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) IX.9 and *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) VII.12. Both chapters discuss the same topic, whether the self-sufficient person will have friends, and both answer 'yes'. So it is natural to see same argument in both chapters.¹ But this, I argue, is mistaken. The *NE* and *EE* differ in a crucial way. The *NE*'s argument for the inclusion of friends in the happy life operates by extending the value of the self to one's friends, who are described as "other selves". The *EE* uses a different argument without this premise, and indeed rejects the notion that a friend is another self.² This is part of a broader trend of the *EE*'s disagreement with the *NE* over the role of self-love.³ These differences, I will suggest at the end of this paper, give us important clues as to the relationship between Aristotle's two ethical treatises. I argue that the most plausible way of making sense of this change in doctrine between the *NE* and *EE* is that the *EE* is later and is meant to fix problems in the *NE* treatment.

§1. Friendship and Self-Sufficiency in the NE

The *NE* devotes a full chapter (IX.9) to the issue of whether and why a happy person would need friends. The chapter begins with an *aporia* generated by two apparently equally plausible arguments. On the one hand, happy people are self-sufficient, and therefore need nothing from others, and therefore need no friends (1169^b3-8). On the other, common sense suggests happiness includes friendship, because friends are the best external goods, and are needed as recipients for virtuous action, and because no one would choose to live alone (1169^b8-22).

As usual, Aristotle sees good and bad in both sides of the argument, though it is clear from the outset that he sides with common sense (1169^b28). He concedes that the self-sufficient person will not need utility or pleasure friendships, because she will already have the relevant external goods and pleasures (1169^b22-28). But character friendships are importantly different, and so cannot infer that the self-sufficient person won't need character friendships just because

¹ A clear example of this reading is Stern-Gillet (1995), p.132.

² Another notable difference between *NE* IX.9 and *EE* VII.12 is the way humanity and divinity figure in Aristotle's conception of self-sufficiency and *eudaimonia*. I cannot address this issue here, but the short version is this: in the *EE* Aristotle explicitly rejects the notion that human happiness is similar to divine happiness, or that we can infer facts about the former from the latter. This issue is only hinted at in *NE* IX.9, but it is explicit in *NE* X.7-8 where Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* is the activity of *nous*, the divine part of the soul which operates as the gods do. This argument in turn relies on *NE* IX.8, which explains in what way the good person is friend to herself, for the premise that a person is her *nous* most of all (1168b34-1169a3; cf. IX.4, 1166^a16-17). We can run an argument about these issues structurally similar to the argument of this paper, which I hope to do in more detail elsewhere.

³ I've discussed other aspects of this topic in my "Self-Love in the Aristotelian Ethics", presented to the SAGP in March 2011 and the American Philosophical Association in April 2011.

they won't need the other kinds.⁴ The value of character friendship lies in activity rather than a possession or state (1169^b28-30), and in particular in the observation (*theōrein*) of virtuous actions; this observation is both appropriate (*epieikeis*) and one's own (*oikeias*) (1170^a2-3). This activity is naturally pleasant to the good man (1169^b32, 1170^a1), and so we can expect the happy person to engage in it.

Aristotle quickly adds a second consideration in favor of the need for friends, which also appeals to the pleasure of a happy life. It is more pleasant, Aristotle argues, to live with others than to live alone, because other people make it easier for activity to be continuous, and continuous activity is intrinsically pleasant (1170^a7). Aristotle then reiterates the pleasure good people take in observing virtuous activity, and adds that good friends help increase or preserve one's own virtue (1170^a8-13).

As developed so far, Aristotle's argument is curious. Aristotle begins by claiming that the happy person will not need utility or pleasure friendships, but then immediately grounds the friendships of the happy person in its utility and pleasantness, which not only fails to accord with character friendship, but suggests that the self-sufficient person would not be valuing friends for their own sakes rather than his own.⁵ In addition, there are two undefended and not particularly persuasive premises in the argument: (i) we can observe others more easily than we can observe ourselves, and (ii) a friend's actions are *oikeion*. The first premise is especially problematic, because it cannot ground a need for friends. For friends to be required, Aristotle's argument would need to say that it is impossible, or at least quite difficult, to contemplate one's own actions. But Aristotle appears to claim the opposite when arguing in IX.4 that the good person is most a friend to himself. There he writes that for the good person "memories of what he has done are enjoyable (*epiterpeis*), and his hopes for the future are good. Also, he is well provisioned in thought with observables" (1166^a24-27). If this is the case, then the good person will be able to observe virtuous action in his own case without any need for friends.⁶ Additional friends to observe might be nice, and it may be easier to observe others, but this is a far cry from showing that a self-sufficient person must have friends.⁷ The second premise, on the other hand, is undefended and obscure. But it most likely anticipates Aristotle's later argument, to which we now turn.

Perhaps noticing the weakness of his first argument, Aristotle supplies another, one which expands on some of the concepts we've seen so far, one which is apparent "to those looking more into the nature of things" (*phusikōteron d' episkopousin*, 1170^a13).⁸ This argument

⁴ Kosman (2004), p. 135 puts the point well: "The question Aristotle poses is why require friends even when we are happy, rather than the similar but distinct question of whether we require friends in order to be happy".

⁵ This should remind us of earlier claim, from VIII.6, where Aristotle asserts that "Happy people have no need of useful friends, but they do need pleasant friends" (1158^a22). As noted in Annas (1977), p. 548, it is important that Aristotle's argument respect the constraint that primary friendship is based on virtue rather than utility or pleasure. See Cooper (1977a), pp. 632-34 for the importance of wishing friends well for their sakes.

⁶ *pace* Cooper (1977b), 299-301, where Cooper argues that Aristotle thinks, in both the *MM* and *NE*, that self-knowledge requires another person to observe. Stern-Gillet (1995), pp. 134-5 endorses something like Cooper's view.

⁷ Cf. McCabe (2012), p. 51*f.*, Whiting (2012) argues that Aristotle's "general strategy is to deny the inference... from a subject's *not needing* some thing to the subject's *not having* that thing" (p. 90, original emphasis). However, we should keep clear the important difference between 'must have' because one needs to fill a lack, and 'must have' because it follows from the "logic" of virtue and value. See Whiting (2006), pp. 296-7. To justify friendship, Aristotle must appeal to the second sense.

⁸ It is important to note that this new argument is not simply a rehash of the preceding considerations. Kenny (1992), for instance, asserts that the new argument "does not add anything to the very first argument of the chapter, other

purports to show not only that friendship is pleasant to the good person, but also choiceworthy (*aireton*) and intrinsically good (1170^a14-16). The gist of this argument is reasonably straightforward, as Aristotle shows in concluding the chapter:

If, then, existence is in itself choiceworthy to the happy person (*tōi makariōi*), because it is both good and pleasant by nature, and the existence of a friend is equivalent (*paraplēsion*), then a friend would also be among the choiceworthy things. And that which is choiceworthy, it is necessary for him to have, or he will be lacking in this respect. Therefore there will be a need for good friends (*philōn spoudaiōn*) to the happy person. (1170^b14-19)

But how Aristotle arrives at this conclusion is not clear. This argument, as several commentators have noted, is rather convoluted; it often repeats itself in such a way that makes it difficult to distinguish old premises from new premises from interim conclusions.⁹ It also makes use of several obscure concepts, in particular the determinacy and indeterminacy of the good and bad life respectively (1170^a20-24). But we can nevertheless construct a rough reconstruction.

In essence, Aristotle's argument for the inclusion of friends in a happy life is based on a claim about the role of goods in a good life:

- 1) If *x* is choiceworthy, the happy life will include *x*
- 2) Friends are choiceworthy
- 3) The happy life will include friends

The argument of 1170^a13-^b14 is really two supporting arguments defending premises (1) and (2). Before looking at these supporting arguments in detail, however, it is worth saying something about the logic of value that Aristotle makes use of here (and elsewhere in the *NE*). The *aporia* with which Aristotle begins IX.9 turns on an equivocation on 'need'. In one sense, *A* needs *B* just in case *A* has a lack or deficit which *B* satisfies. But in another sense, *A* needs *B* just in case *B* is part of what constitutes being *A*. Aristotle is concerned here with the second sense, not the first. The happy, self-sufficient person is by definition not defective, and so cannot need friends to fix this non-existent defect. But it is still an open question whether friendship is required in order to be happy or self-sufficient in the first place. In other words, when Aristotle discusses whether the good person needs friends, he is asking whether the good life is one that is partly constituted by friendship, not whether any particular good person is made better by friendship.

Now on to the reconstruction of the argument. When Aristotle argues that the choiceworthy life includes friends, he has a specific and somewhat narrow conception of choiceworthiness in mind. This is clear from the first sentence of the argument, where Aristotle says that looking deeper into the nature of things will reveal that "a good friend (*spoudaios philos*) is naturally choiceworthy (*tēi phusei hairetos*) to the good person" (1170^a13-14). This formulation requires us to get clearer on what it means to be naturally choiceworthy, which is itself conceptually connected to what it means to be a good person. So already we must modify the argument we are after, replacing it with

- 1*) If *x* is naturally choiceworthy to the good person, the happy life will include *x*

than the introduction of the dictum that a friend is another self" (p. 46). But it is clear from context that Aristotle considers the new argument his main case for the value of friendship to the self-sufficient person, over and above what he has already mentioned.

⁹ Annas (1977) calls it a "strange-sounding argument" supported by an "interesting and obscure discussion" (p. 550); Kenny (1992), p. 45-6 says it is "unnecessarily complex and obscure", and later "cramped and confusing"; his earlier comments are even more critical, arguing that the argument is "intolerably obscure" and "whose construction is impermeable" (1978, p. 227). Stern-Gillet calls it "compressed, highly complex, somewhat jagged (1995, p. 137).

- 2*) Friends are naturally choiceworthy to the good person
- 3) The happy life will include friends

Aristotle only asserts (1*) in *NE* IX.9 (1170^a14-16), but here he alludes to the fact that he has discussed this principle before in *NE* I.8 (1099^a7-11) and in more detail in III.4 (1113^a25-33). But even if we grant that the happy life will include what is naturally choiceworthy, we still need to know what being naturally choiceworthy consists in. Apparently, the answer is in two other properties, goodness and pleasure: we are told that that which is most choiceworthy (or perhaps most chosen) to good people is what is both good and pleasant (1170^a25-28).

We would expect at this point for Aristotle to argue that friends are naturally good and naturally pleasant. But he doesn't quite do so, at least not directly. Rather, he starts off by talking about something else that is good and pleasant by nature, the activity of living. Life, Aristotle argues, is good and pleasant by nature. He gives two arguments for this claim. One is inductive: everyone, and especially happy people, desire living, and in particular it is the fact that happy people desire their lives which shows that their kind of living is naturally good and pleasant (1170^a25-28). This doesn't prove that life is good and pleasant by nature, as Aristotle notes by his use of *eoike* (probable) at 1170^a26, but it is good evidence.

The second argument is conceptual, and it is part of what causes this passage of *NE* IX.9 to be so inscrutable. We are told that

Life is among the things that are intrinsically good and pleasant, for it is determinate (*hōrismenon*), and the determinate has as its object what is naturally good. And what is good by nature is also good to the good person (*tōi epieikei*) (probably it is pleasant to all on account of this). But we must not take this to the wicked and corrupt life, nor the life spent in pain; for this sort of life is indeterminate, as are its properties. (1170^a19-24)

The notion of determinacy used here is left unexplained in the chapter, and indeed only hinted at elsewhere in the *NE*. Aristotle probably alludes to the view in II.6, where he cites the Pythagoreans as precedent for the claim that goodness is unified and badness is multiform, though here he uses the terms limited and unlimited (*peperasmēnos* and *apeiros*) rather than determinate and indeterminate (1106^b28-25). But this passage occurs in the context of discussing the doctrine of the mean, which does make use of the term *hōrismenon* when defining virtue (1106^b36-07^a2). In any case, whatever Aristotle means by determinacy here, he is using it in service of the claim that living is naturally good and pleasant, and this conclusion is all we really need.

So grant that living is naturally good and pleasant to the good person, and so naturally choiceworthy to the good person. Again, we expect Aristotle to argue here that friendship is an important part of the good life for humans, perhaps on account of our social needs and physical frailty. But Aristotle does not make this argument. Rather, he advocates a rather narrow conception of precisely what kind of life is naturally choiceworthy. Human life, we are told, is in essence the activity of perception or thought (1170^a18-19). This activity also explains the connection between goodness and perception, since according to Aristotle “life is naturally good, and it is pleasant to perceive what is good in oneself” (1170^b1-3).

This point reveals a critical step in Aristotle's argument. On Aristotle's view perception and thought are reflexive. That is, the observational activity that constitutes life observes itself when observing other objects. One is aware of one's sight when one sees, aware of one's hearing when one hears, and so on, and in particular one is aware of one's own existence when engaging

in these activities (1170^a29-33). In other words, human life is essentially self-aware, and the goodness and pleasantness of human life involves being aware of oneself.

It is here, finally, that Aristotle can extend this argument to account for the value of friendship. He does so by importing a premise defending earlier in his discussion of friendship, primarily in *NE* IX.4 and IX.8, that a friend is another self and that the value of friendship is derived from the value of one's relation to oneself. In IX.9 Aristotle argues that "As the good person is disposed toward himself, he is also disposed toward his friend (for a friend is another self) (1170^b5-7). It follows, Aristotle argues, that "Insofar as one's his existence in choiceworthy for each person, equally so is the existence of his of his friend, or nearly so" (1170^b7-8). In other words, the value of friendship stems from the value of the self: the self is valuable, a friend is another self, so a friend is also valuable. The rest of the argument proceeds quickly, as we've already seen: "that which is choiceworthy, it is necessary for him to have, or he will be lacking in this respect. Therefore there will be a need for good friends (*philōn spoudaiōn*) to the happy person" (1170^b17-19).

Now that we have gotten through Aristotle's argument, it may be helpful to summarize it as follows:

- 1) Life is naturally good and pleasant to the good person
- 2) What is naturally good and pleasant is naturally choiceworthy
- 3) Life is naturally choiceworthy to the good person (1,2)
- 4) Life is observational activity
- 5) Observational activity is naturally choiceworthy to the good person (3,4)
- 6) Observational activity is equivalent to self-observation
- 7) Self-observation is naturally choiceworthy to the good person (5,6)
- 8) A friend is another self
- 9) Observing a friend is equivalent to self-observation (7,8)
- 10) Observing a friend is naturally choiceworthy to the good person (7,9)
- 11) Observing a friend is equivalent to having friends
- 12) Having friends is naturally choiceworthy to the good person (10, 11)
- 13) The happy life includes whatever is naturally choiceworthy to the good person
- 14) The happy includes friends (12, 13)

Aristotle's second argument justifying friendship for happy people is better than his first insofar as its conclusion concerns the choice-worthiness of friendship rather than only its utility and pleasure. But there are problems with this argument nonetheless. As I will argue in the next section, the conjunction of (8) and (13) creates problems for Aristotle's argument. In short, Aristotle cannot secure the inclusion of friends in the happy life by appeal to the premise that a friend is another self.

§2. Problems with the NE Argument

There are, I think, two problems with Aristotle's argument that the happy life must include friends. I argue that if we ground a friend's value in the self's values, then (i) every good person trivially has a friend by having a self, and (ii) the good life is not deficient in virtue of lacking a second instance of a good one already has. But if the friend differs in value from the self, then Aristotle's argument fails.

This notion that a friend is another self is a crucial part of Aristotle's strategy in his discussion of friendship in general.¹⁰ Aristotle's argument in *NE* IX.9 is another instance where the connection between self-love and others selves plays a crucial role.¹¹ Premise (8) of the argument is that the friend is another self, from which we infer that the friend is valuable in the same way the self is.¹² The value of the self is an obvious and necessary part of the happy life, Aristotle argues, and the value of a friend is grounded in this value of the self. As we've seen, the text here is unambiguous: "As the good person is toward himself, he is also toward the friend (for the friend is another self)" 1170^b5-7; cf. 1170^b15-16).

This understanding of the relationship between self and friend generates two problems for Aristotle's account. First, it trivializes the problem at issue. Aristotle is clearly concerned to show that the happy life includes friends, and he sees the threat that self-sufficiency poses to this position. But if one is friend to oneself, then any good person will obviously have a friend. This is too easy a solution, and obviously not the solution that Aristotle was concerned to demonstrate.

What Aristotle needs to show instead is that the happy person will have external friends, in addition to the self. But this position is also problematic, which brings us to the second problem in the argument.¹³ For on Aristotle's view, the value of a friend is equivalent to, and dependent on, the value of the self.¹⁴ This means that the friend does not supply anything that one cannot supply oneself, a problem familiar from Plato's discussion in the *Lysis*.¹⁵ This raises the worry that the friend's value is redundant, that it only gives more of the same kind of value the good person already has. But just like other external goods, we cannot infer how much of a good the good life needs from the mere fact that the good life needs some of it. There is a minimum amount required for happiness, but it is a low amount, only enough to make the relevant virtuous action possible (cf. 1178^b33-79^a17).¹⁶ In other words, showing that friends are valuable does not entail that the good life must include, especially if that same kind of value is also generated elsewhere.

What Aristotle needs to show is that the value of friends exceeds or differs from the value of the self in some crucial way, such that an external friend adds something to the happy life which cannot be achieved by oneself alone. In other words, we would justify the value of friends by arguing that the self is not self-sufficient in the relevant sense. Of course, we know that there is some sense in which the self is not self-sufficient, as Aristotle notes when he first introduces

¹⁰ *NE* IX.4 argues that self-love is the paradigm form of friendship, on the grounds that the five marks or criteria are most exemplified in one's relationship with oneself. Friendship with others is an extension of self-love, because friends are other selves and therefore possible *relata* for the same relationship one bears to oneself (1166^a29-33). *NE* IX.8 defends this position against the objection that self-love is unseemly (in Greek *philautos* is an insult) by distinguishing by the good kind of self-love, exhibited toward one's *nous* (1168^b29-35, 1169^a11), and the bad kind of self-love exhibited toward other parts of the soul. Aristotle also cites the extension of self-love to others to explain filial affection: children are part of the selves of parents (1161^b21, 28) and brothers are the same self physically separated (1161^b33).

¹¹ See Stern-Gillet (1995), pp. 140-2 for an explication and defense of this premise in the argument.

¹² Cooper (1977b), p. 295.

¹³ McCabe (2012) also raises some problems, or at least pointed questions, with the *NE* argument (pp. 51-3).

¹⁴ Actually, Aristotle suggests that an external friend only approximates (*paraplēsiōs*) that value of the self. This would make the argument even worse.

¹⁵ Annas (1977), p. 544-46

¹⁶ Cf. Cooper (1977b), p. 293 n. 5 and p. 312-3.

and clarifies the term in I.7 (cf. 1168^b16-20).¹⁷ But we are interested in self-sufficiency understood in a specific way: is whatever activity that by itself makes the good life choiceworthy and lacking in nothing require external friends? In other words, can the self alone provide whatever valuable activity helps constitute the good life, or do we need external friends for that activity? This is a crucially different question from ‘Does the good life require external friends in any respect?’, for instance the way the good life needs food or oxygen. And the answer to our question, at least given what we are told in *NE IX*, appears to be that the self alone can suffice. The good person has a self, and is, as we’ve seen, already well-provisioned with virtuous actions to observe. So at least according to the argument of *NE IX.9* there is nothing that the good person lacks in her own person that is required for the happy life, and nothing the external friend provides that one cannot achieve for oneself. The additional value of external friends may be nice, or it may make achieving a certain value easier, but it is not required, any more than extra money or extra honor would be required for happiness. If this is right, then *NE IX.9* fails at its task of justifying friendship for the self-sufficient person.¹⁸

§3. *Self-Love and Self-Sufficiency in the EE*

Like the *NE*, the *EE* is concerned to show that the happy person will have friends. And like the *NE*, the *EE* justifies this position by appeal to the connection between life and observation. But despite these similarities, the *EE*’s argument is crucially different from the *NE*’s.¹⁹ Any reconstruction of Aristotle’s argument is controversial for a number of reasons, not least of which because the text itself is a mess.²⁰ A full defense of any reading would require going line by line, repeatedly deciding which of two or more sufficiently plausible options is preferable. So I will instead simply suggest the following reconstruction, which coincidentally has the same number of steps as the *NE*’s argument.²¹

- 1) Human life is, by definition, observational activity. (1244^b23-24)
- 2) Life is intrinsically choiceworthy. (1244^b26-28)
- 3) Observational activity is intrinsically choiceworthy.
- 4) The good is also intrinsically choiceworthy. (1244^b35-36)
- 5) Intrinsically choiceworthy activity is determinate. (1245^a1-3)
- 6) Being determinate entails being observed as good. (1245^a4-5)²²

¹⁷ Cf. Annas (1977), p. 551. Pace Annas, I do not think it would be enough to take it for granted as a “fact of life” that humans need friends; Aristotle needs to prove the stronger claim that humans need friends as part of the intellectual activity which constitutes *eudaimonia*.

¹⁸ Cf. Cooper (1977b), p. 296f, who reaches the same conclusion on different grounds. Hardie (1980), p. 332 also rejects the argument of *NE IX.9* because the weakness of the *allos autos* premise, though he reads the premise differently (and, to my mind, uncharitably strictly).

¹⁹ Kosman (2004), McCabe (2012), and Whiting (2012) also see important differences between the *NE* and *EE* arguments, though they each have a different reading from what I will propose below (and from each other).

²⁰ See Whiting (2012) p. 82 and section IV *passim*

²¹ Following Whiting (2012) and Kosman (2004) against McCabe (2012), I take *EE VII.12* to contain a single argument in response to aporetic *endoxa*, rather than two supplementary arguments, one uses references to God and one without them. See Whiting (2012), pp. 77-79. However, *contra* Whiting (e.g. pp.83-4, 89-90) on my reading pleasure is not especially important in the argument, but is rather only an aspect of choiceworthiness, largely for the reasons Whiting canvasses on p.81f. Discussing the relationship between pleasure and choiceworthiness would, unfortunately, take us far outside the scope of this paper.

²² The Greek *aisthētos* can be taken either as ‘perceptible’ or as ‘perceived’, on which see Whiting (2012), p. 100-1, 120). Many commentators, following *De Anima III.2*, use the former reading, and take Aristotle’s argument to be that the activity of perception actualizes oneself as both perceiver and perceived: e.g., Kenny (1992), p. 50; Kosman (2004), p. 141-5, McCabe (2012), pp. 58-9; Osborne (2009), pp. 11-14. McCabe, however, goes on to argue that

- 7) Observing the good and being observed as good are both intrinsically choiceworthy.
- 8) One cannot be observed as good by oneself. (1245^a5)
- 9) One cannot be determinate by oneself.
- 10) One can be determinate by sharing observation with others. (1245^a5-9)
- 11) Shared life is shared observation. (1244^b25-26)
- 12) Shared life is intrinsically choiceworthy.
- 13) Friendship is shared life (1245^a22-24, cf. 1244^a39-45^a5)
- 14) Friendship is intrinsically choiceworthy.

On this reading, the *EE* grounds the value of friendship is a kind of activity which cannot be performed alone. Life involves not simply observing, but also the desire to be observed by others, and moreover, to be perceived as having certain specific qualities. If one cannot observe oneself in this way, then one requires other people to achieve this good, hence the proliferation of *sun*-compounds (e.g. *sunaiasthaneshai*, *sungnōrizein*, *sunēdesthai*, *suzēn*, *sunergein*, *suntheōreign*, *suneuōcheisthai*). But, crucially, this inability is not a defect which would mar one's self-sufficiency, because the inability resides not in a person or her powers, but in the activity itself. Is this reading is right, the *EE* is able to accomplish something the *NE* fails to do, namely to show that friendship is valuable without trivializing the issue or impugning the happy person's self-sufficiency. I take it that this advantage is sufficient to earn this interpretation of the argument further consideration.

What is important here, however, is the conspicuous absence of self-love in the *EE* argument, an absence which holds regardless of which reconstruction of the argument is the correct one. Unlike the *NE* treatment, the *EE* justifies friendship for self-sufficient people without appealing to self-love and friends other selves. This is a trend throughout the treatise. The *EE*'s position is that self-love is not actually friendship, but is rather only analogous to it in certain respects (1240^a13-14).²³ And unlike the *NE*, the *EE* does not appeal to self-love and other selves in explaining the various phenomena of friendship. The argument of VII.12 is but one instance of this trend.

This may be surprising, as most editions of the *EE* print an appeal to self-love in justifying friendship for the self-sufficient person, insofar as the friend is another self (1245^a30).²⁴ But this passage is not central to the *EE*'s main argument, and more importantly, this reading is based on an emendation, one which incorrectly assumes that the *EE* must be following the *NE*. As Whiting astutely observes, the manuscripts are unanimous in recording *allos houtos* rather than *allos autos*.²⁵ That this emendation is unfounded is clear from the fact that the *EE* explicitly

being perceptible and being perceived are closely linked, and she stresses the need for a friend to perceive oneself for the process of self-perception to be completed (p. 69).

²³ Cf. Whiting (2012), pp. 135-6

²⁴ Both the Loeb and OCT texts, for instance, print the emendation.

²⁵ Whiting (2012), p. 123, 132-3. See also Kosman (2004), p. 147 n. 6. The OCT *apparatus criticus* directs us to *NE* 1166^a31. McCabe (2012) objects to Whiting's reading on the grounds that the *MM* also mentions another Hercules, and does use the phrase *allos autos* (p. 59 n. 68). But this is not convincing, because the argument in the *MM* is quite distinct from that of the *EE* or *NE*, as McCabe ably shows (pp. 45-53, 72-3). Moreover, Aristotle goes to some length here to make clear that friends are only similar to one another in limited ways. This makes *allos houtos* the more natural reading: to adopt the Heracleian metaphor, a friend is another such person, i.e. another person with the strength of Hercules. The friend is not another self, similar to the self in all or most respects, but rather only another person who shares certain important properties. Aristotle likely has in mind here the story of Heracles and Iolaus slaying the Hydra, as mentioned in Plato's *Euthydemus* 297c.

rejects the line of argument used in the *NE*, that a friend is another self and therefore equal in value to oneself. Aristotle argues that

So if one were to abstract away and make knowledge itself in itself and not of oneself ... then there would be no difference in knowing another instead of oneself. And there would be no difference in another living instead of oneself. But it is well-said that to perceive and to know oneself is more choiceworthy. (1244^b29-34)

In making this argument, the *EE* emphasizes that another self is not an equally choiceworthy object of observation. This constitutes a rejection of a crucial premise in the *NE* argument.²⁶

Though Aristotle does not rely on the friend's being another self, he does make an apparently similar claim after giving his argument, namely that "Nonetheless, the friend wishes to be a separate self in this way" (1245^a44-45). But the context and import of this quote is significantly different from the *NE*. As we've already seen, the *EE* denies that a friend is another self in the relevant sense. The lines proceeding this quote reflect this difference in doctrine. Aristotle first tells us that

The friend wishes to be, as the proverb says, 'another Herakles', another this guy (*houtos*). But he is scattered, and it is difficult to bring everything into one. Rather, according to the nature to which he is most akin, he is similar to one other in body, another in soul, and of these he is similar to one in one part, another in another. (1245^a29-34)

The argument here is compressed, as it is throughout the chapter, but the underlying point is clear: people have many different properties, and so any pair of people will only be similar in limited respects. This dissimilarity makes it highly unlikely to find an actual 'other self', to which one is similar in most or all relevant respects. Instead, the friend wishes to be like another in specific ways, i.e. another such person. Aristotle's use of the phrase 'separate self' rather than 'other self' (*autos diairetos* rather than *allos autos*) is significant. The friend is another person in whom the same qualities one finds in oneself, or wishes to find in oneself, have been scattered.²⁷ This explains Aristotle's qualified claim that observation of a friend is "in a way" (*pōs*) observation of oneself (1245^a35-36).²⁸ One does not literally perceive oneself in another, because others are not identical to oneself, but one can see oneself in a way by seeing a part of oneself in another. In particular, one will see the good character of a friend, and so see the same good character one exhibits oneself.²⁹

§4. Interpreting Self-Love and Self-Sufficiency in the Aristotelian Ethics

I've argued so far that the *NE*'s attempt to ground the need for friendship in self-love is flawed, because the friend's value is derivative of the value of the self, and is therefore redundant. The *EE* gives a different argument, which grounds friendship in shared activity rather than self-love, and thereby avoids the problems of the *NE*. Moreover, the *EE* explicitly criticizes

²⁶ Cf. Whiting (2012), p. 92. However, Whiting goes on to read the instances of *autou* in this passage as subject rather than object (i.e. 'oneself observing' vs. 'observation of oneself'), where I read them the opposite way. Whiting's mistake, I think, is to take 1244^a33-34 as beginning of a new argument rather than concluding the preceding argument, a move she defends on pp.110-11, but which strikes me as an abrupt non sequitur. For a defense of reading ^a33-34 as part of the preceding argument, see Kosman (2004) pp. 137-39. For a short discussion of the history of this passage, see Whiting (2012), pp. 103-5.

²⁷ For more on this issue, see Kosman (2004), pp. 147-9

²⁸ Cf. McCabe (2012), p. 70.

²⁹ Cf. Whiting (2012), pp.133-34, though Whiting does not connect the passage about another Herakles to the earlier argument about being perceived as good. This topic is also discussed by Jost (unpublished).

the idea that observing a friend is equivalent to observing the self, the very premise which cause the problem for the *NE* argument. So already we've learned something interesting, that the *EE* is superior to the *NE* on this one issue at least.

This raises an important interpretive question: what is the relation between Aristotle's two discussions of friendship?³⁰ The standard view, of course, is that the *EE* is the work of an early, immature Aristotle, which was eventually supplanted by the *NE*, his ethical *magnum opus*.³¹ This reading is difficult to square with what we've seen of Aristotle's treatment of friendship and self-sufficiency in the two works. If the standard view is correct, then Aristotle must have first written a chapter which criticizes a certain approach to friendship, and then later written a new chapter which adopts those very problems he had raised, all the while giving no indication of how to solve these problems, or even that he was aware of them in the first place. While even Aristotle makes mistakes, the thought that he knowingly adopted a position he had already shown to be unsuccessful without even attempting to fix it, or even flag the problems, is implausible and uncharitable.

The alternative is that *EE* VII was written to replace *NE* VIII and IX. This view is much simpler: Aristotle wrote the *NE* treatment, came to realize that it had problems, and later adapted his view to avoid them. In particular, Aristotle realized that the premise that a friend is another self is not as powerful as he originally thought, and in fact causes more problems than it solves.

To be fair, even if I'm right about the relationship between Aristotle's two discussions of friendship, it would be too quick to draw any inferences about the *EE* and *NE* on the whole. One pair of rather convoluted arguments in two long and complex treatises is meager evidence for upending the received view of the chronology of Aristotle's ethical thinking. But it should make us at least reexamine the received view, not to mention make us inquire how Aristotle's treatment of friendship fits into the rest of his treatises.³²

There is one advantage of the alternative view that I want to raise in closing. The *EE* frequently singles out for criticism another specific text which also deals with friendship and self-sufficiency.³³ Neither the text nor its author is explicitly identified, so we can only guess based on the content described. But if the *EE* is later, and is correcting the faulty argument of the *NE*, then we have a promising candidate for what this text is, namely the *NE* itself.³⁴ After all,

³⁰ I assume here that *NE* and *EE* chapters on friendship are not supplementary, i.e. that one set was written to replace the other. In addition to the substantive issues I discuss below, there are literary reasons for so doing. Given how similar the two treatises are, it is hard to see how or why they could be used for different purposes or directed toward different audiences. It is also unlikely that either set of chapters would be continually updated after the other had been written. For these reasons, the *NE* and *EE*, at least regarding friendship, are importantly different from, say, the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*.

³¹ See Jaeger (1934), Rowe (1971)

³² My own view, for what it's worth, is that *NE* IX is indispensable to Aristotle's argument in the *NE*, because it provides the key premise for the *NE*'s climax in X.6-8 that *eudaimonia* is the contemplative life on the grounds that it is what each person truly is. I cannot go into the details of this argument here.

³³ See 1244^a30-31, 1244^b35, 1245^a26-29, 1245^b12-13. All the passages refer to a specific *logos*, which in context must mean 'text' rather than just 'argument'. There is one more occurrence of *logos* at 1245^b16 which does seem to mean 'argument'; it refers to a *reductio* just given rather than the text in which the *reductio*'s target is found. Whiting (2012) pp. 106-7 argues instead that *logos* here is an internal reference to 1244^b21, which I find rather unpersuasive. This passage is not a suitable object of several of the reference to a *logos* in the chapter, and, with the one exception just mentioned, it appears that *logos* has the same referent throughout.

³⁴ Kenny (1979), pp. 225-30 raises this possibility, but rejects it in (1992), p. 48 n.6 for reasons that remain obscure (he only says that "as will be seen from my exposition of the text, I do not now think that this conjecture is defensible"). However, his claim in the notes of his (2013) translation of the *EE* suggest that he may have changed his mind again (p. 183).

the *NE* has exactly the same features, and the same problems, that the *EE* complains about, and it is notable that the *EE*'s discussion of friendship rejects the *NE*'s central premise that the friend is another self.³⁵

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³⁵ Having the *EE* responding to the *NE* might also explain why the *EE* does not provide any *endoxa* for why the self-sufficient person has friends, but rather only focuses on the negative case. The positive case would be unnecessary if it had already been canvassed in the earlier work.