

ARISTOTLE

Aristoteles

THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

Translated with Commentaries and Glossary by

HIPPOCRATES G. APOSTLE



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BOOK Θ

1

140-180

1155a 3 After what has just been said, a discussion of friendship would follow, for
friendship is a virtue or something with virtue,¹ and, besides, it is most
5 necessary to life;² for no one would choose to live without friends, though
he were to have all the other goods. Also those who possess wealth or
have acquired authority or power are thought to need friends most of all;
for of what benefit is the possession of such goods without the opportuni-
10 ty of beneficence, which is most exercised towards friends and most praised
when so exercised, or how can such goods be guarded and be preserved
without friends? For the greater these goods, the more insecure they are.
In poverty and other misfortunes, too, we regard our friends as our only
refuge. Friends help the young in guarding them from error,³ and they
15 help the old who, because of their weakness, need attention or additional
support for their *actions*, and they help those in their prime of life to do
noble *actions*, as in the saying: "And the two are coming together",⁴ for
with friends men are more able to think and to *act*.

Again, it seems that by nature parents show a friendly feeling towards
their offspring, and the offspring towards their parents, and this is the case
not only among men but also among birds and most animals; and the
same feeling is shown among members of the same race towards one
20 another, and especially among men, in view of which we praise those who
are friendly towards other men. In travels, too, one may observe how
close and dear every man is to another man. Friendship seems to hold a
state together, too, and lawgivers seem to pay more attention to friendship
25 than to justice; for concord seems to be somewhat akin to friendship, and
this they aim at most of all and try their utmost to drive out faction, which
is inimical to the state. And when men are friends, they have no need of
justice at all,⁵ but when they are just, they still need friendship; and a
thing which is most just is thought to be done in a friendly way.⁶

Friendship is not only necessary, but also noble. For we praise those

who like their friends, and to have many friends is considered as one of the noble things in life;⁷ and some men regard good men and friends to be the same.⁸ 30

2

The disagreements concerning friendship are not few. Some posit friendship as being a likeness of some sort and friends to be men who are alike; hence the sayings 'like as like',¹ 'birds of a feather flock together',² and other such. Others take the contrary position and say 'two of a trade never agree'.³ Still others seek causes for these things which are higher and more physical,⁴ like Euripides, who says, "parched earth loves rain, and lofty heaven filled with rain loves to fall to earth",⁵ and Heraclitus, who says "it is opposites that help each other", and "sweetest harmonies from different tones arise", and "all things from *Strife* arise";⁶ and contrary to these are others and also Empedocles, who says, "like aims at like".⁷ 35 1155b 5

Now problems which belong to physics⁸ may be left aside (for they are not proper to the present inquiry); so we shall examine just those which pertain to men and are proper to character and feelings, e.g., whether friendship can be formed between any two men or whether those who are evil cannot be friends, and whether there is only one kind of friendship or many. For those who think that there is only one, using as a reason the fact that friendship admits of degree, have based their conviction on insufficient evidence; for things which differ in kind, too, admit of degree.⁹ This has already been discussed.¹⁰ 10 15

Perhaps these matters will become evident after we come to know what the likeable object is;¹¹ for it seems that not every object is liked but only the likeable, and this is the good or the pleasant or the useful.¹² But it would seem that the useful is that through which some good¹³ or pleasure is produced; so what is likeable as an end would be the good or the pleasurable. But do men like the good [without qualification] or that which is good for themselves? Sometimes these kinds of goods clash; and the same applies to the pleasurable. Now it is thought that each man likes what is good for himself, and that, although the likeable is the good without qualification, what each man likes is what is good for himself. Yet each man likes not what is good for himself but what appears to him to be good for himself. But it makes no difference, for what is likeable will be what appears to be so.¹⁴ 20 25

There are three kinds of things because of which one may like something, but when one likes an inanimate object, men do not call this 'friendship'; for the object liked does not like in return, and [a man or animal] does not wish that object's good (for it would perhaps be ridiculous for a man to wish the wine's good, though he might, if at all, wish that it be preserved so as to be available to himself). In speaking of a friend, on the other hand, we say that we should wish the things that are good for his own sake. But we call 'well-disposed' those who wish in this manner someone's good, if the latter does not also return the same wish; for there is friendship when good will is reciprocal. Should we not, then, add also 'provided that good will does not escape their notice'? For many people are well-disposed towards those whom they have not seen but whom they regard as *good* or useful to others, and one of these might have the same reciprocal feeling. Two such persons, then, appear to be well-disposed towards each other; but how could one call them friends if they are unaware of each other's dispositions? To be friends, then, two men should be well-disposed towards each other and wish each other's good without being unaware of this, and for one of the *reasons*¹⁵ already stated.

3

Now these *reasons* differ in kind; so the likings and the friendships, too, differ in kind. Hence there are three kinds of friendship, equal in number to the kinds of likeable things; for with respect to each kind there is a reciprocal liking of which both parties are not unaware. Now those who like each other wish each other's good exactly in the respect in which they like each other. So those who like each other because of their usefulness to each other do so not for the sake of the person liked but insofar as some good may be obtained from each other. It is likewise with those who like each other for the sake of pleasure; for men like the witty not for their character but for the pleasure received. Thus he who likes another for the sake of usefulness or of pleasure does so, respectively, for the sake of what is good or pleasurable for himself, and so he likes another not for what the latter is but insofar as the latter is useful or can give pleasure to him. These kinds of friendship, then, exist in virtue of an attribute,¹ for a man is liked not in virtue of what he is but insofar as he gives some good or pleasure. Accordingly, such friendships are easily dissolved, since the

parties do not long continue to be similarly disposed; for if they are no longer pleasant or useful to each other, they stop liking each other.

Now the useful does not persist long but changes from time to time.² So when the cause of men's friendship is broken, their friendship too is dissolved, since friendship exists in relation to that cause. Such friendship is thought to occur especially between old people – for men at that age tend to pursue what is beneficial and not what is pleasurable – and to occur between those who are young or in their prime of life but who tend to pursue what is expedient. Such friends do not live together much, for sometimes they are not even pleasant to each other; nor indeed do they have a need for such social relation unless they are beneficial to each other, for they are pleasant to each other only as long as they expect some good from each other. Under such friendships come also those between hosts and guests. 25 30

Friendship between young men is thought to exist for the sake of receiving pleasure, for they live by their passions and pursue mostly what is pleasurable to themselves and what exists at the moment;³ but with increasing age what is pleasant to them changes also. Hence young men become friends quickly and stop being friends quickly; for friendship changes along with that which is pleasurable, and such pleasure changes quickly. Young men are also amorous, for the greater part of amorous friendship occurs by passion and for the sake of pleasure; and it is in view of this that they become friendly and soon end that friendship, and often do these the same day. But they do wish to spend their days and live together, for what friendship means to them is living in this manner. 35 1156b 5

4

Perfect friendship exists between men who are good and are alike with respect to virtue;¹ for, insofar as they are good, it is in a similar manner that they wish each other's goods, and such men are good in themselves. Now those who wish the good of their friends for the sake of their friends are friends in the highest degree; for they are so disposed because of what they are and not in virtue of an attribute.² Accordingly, their friendship lasts as long as they are good, and virtue is something stable.³ And each friend is good without qualification and also good to his friend; for good 10

men are good without qualification as well as beneficial to each other.⁴
 15 And they are likewise pleasant, since good men are pleasant without
 qualification and also pleasant to each other; for a man's own *actions* and
 the *actions* which are similar to them are pleasant to himself, and the
actions of good men are the same or similar.⁵ And there is good reason for
 such a friendship to be stable, for in it all the things that should belong
 20 to friends come together. For all friendship is for the sake of good or of
 pleasure, whether without qualification or for the one who feels friendly,
 and it exists in virtue of a similarity; and all the things named belong to
 this kind of friendship in virtue of each⁶ such friend, for in that friendship
 the other things are similar also, and the unqualified good is pleasurable
 without qualification also. Now it is these⁷ that are liked most, and in
 these both the friendly feeling and friendship exist in the highest degree
 25 and are best. Such friendships are likely to be rare indeed, for few men
 can be such friends.⁸ Further, such friendships require time and familiari-
 ty; for, as the proverb says, it is impossible for men to know each other
 well until 'they have consumed together much salt', nor can they accept
 each other and be friends till each has shown himself dear and trustworthy
 30 to the other. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship towards
 each other wish to be friends indeed but are not, unless both are dear to
 each other and also have come to know this; for while a wish for friend-
 ship may arise quickly, friendship itself is not formed quickly.

5

This kind of friendship, then, is perfect both in duration and in the other
 35 respects,¹ and in all respects each gets from the other the same or similar
 goods, those which should indeed belong to friends. As to the friendship
 1157a for the sake of pleasure, it bears some likeness to this, for good men are
 also pleasant to each other; and it is likewise with the one for the sake of
 usefulness, for good men are also such [i.e., useful] to each other.² Among
 friendships for pleasure or the useful, too, those are most enduring in
 which friends continue to get the same thing from each other, e.g.,
 5 pleasure, and not only thus but also in which they get pleasure of the same
 kind, as between two witty persons and not as between a lover and his be-
 loved. For the latter are not pleased by the same thing, but the lover is
 pleased by beholding his beloved, and the beloved is pleased by receiving

attention from the lover; and when the prime of youth fades away, sometimes this friendship fades away, too, for the view of the beloved is not pleasant to the lover and so the beloved gets no attention. Many of these who are alike in character, on the other hand, retain their friendship, if familiarity makes them satisfied with each other's character. But those who exchange not what is pleasant but what is useful in their love-affairs are friends to a lesser extent and their friendship is less enduring. And those who are friends for the sake of usefulness stop being friends when the exchange of what is expedient terminates; for what they came to like in their friendship was not each other but what was profitable. Accordingly, for the sake of pleasure or of usefulness even bad men may be friends to each other, or one of them may be *good* and the other bad, or one of them may be neither good nor bad and the other may be anyone [bad or good or neither]; but it is clear that only good men can be friends for the sake of each other, for bad men do not enjoy each other's company unless some benefit is exchanged. 10 15 20

Again, only the friendship of good men cannot be harmed by slander; for it is not easy for a good man to believe what anyone says about his good friend who has stood the test of time. And it is among good men that trust and unwillingness to *act* unjustly and whatever else belongs to true friendship are expected without question, while in the other kinds of friendship nothing prevents the contraries of these from taking place. 25

Now since men call 'friends' also those who associate with each other for the sake of usefulness, as states do (for the alliances between states are thought to be formed for the sake of expediency), and also those who like each other for the sake of pleasure, as boys do, perhaps we too should call these 'friends' but add that there are many kinds of friendship.³ But friendship in the primary and principal sense⁴ will be that between good men just because they are good, while those between the rest will be in virtue of some similarity; for men in the latter friendships will be friends insofar as they exchange only a part of what is good or is similar to it, for the pleasurable too is a part of what is good in the case of those who are friends because they like the pleasurable. These friendships, however, do not often go together, nor is it often that men become friends for the sake of both the useful and the pleasurable; for it is not often that accidents are joined together. 30 35

6

1157b These being the kinds into which friendship is divided, bad men will be friends for the sake of pleasure or what is useful, as this is the way in which they are similar, while good men will be friends for the sake of each other, for they will be friends just because they are good. The latter, then, will be friends without qualification, while the former will be friends
5 in virtue of some attribute and by resemblance to these.¹

Just as in the case of virtues some men are called 'good' in virtue of their habits while others in virtue of their activities, so too in the case of friendship; for some enjoy living with each other and giving goods to each other, while those who are asleep or are separated by distances, though
10 not actually present with each other, are so disposed as to *act* as friends towards each other when they meet, for distances do not break up a friendship entirely but only the exercise of it. But if friends are apart from each other for a long time, this seems to make them forget their friendship; hence the saying

Lack of discourse has broken many a friendship.²

15 Neither old nor sour men appear disposed to make friends, for they are disposed to give but little pleasure; and no one is inclined to spend his days with one who causes pain or gives no pleasure, for nature³ appears to avoid pain most of all and to aim at pleasure.

Those who accept each other but are not living together appear to be well-disposed men rather than friends; for nothing stands out among
20 friends so much as living together. For while the needy desire benefits, the blessed desire to spend their days with others also, for solitude befits these least of all.⁴ But it is impossible for men to pass the time together unless they are pleasant and enjoy the same things, and comrades are thought to have these attributes.

7

25 Friendship in the highest degree exists between good men, as we have often stated. For it is the good or pleasurable without qualification which is thought to be likeable and choiceworthy, while it is that which is good or pleasant to each man that is thought to be such [i.e., likeable and choiceworthy] by him; and a good man [is likeable and choiceworthy] by a good man for both these *reasons*.¹ Now liking resembles a feeling, while friend-

ship resembles a disposition. For liking is directed no less towards in- 30
 animate things; but to like in return requires intention, and intention
 proceeds from a disposition.² Again, good men wish what is good for
 those whom they like for the latter's sake, not by feeling but by disposi-
 tion. And in liking a friend, they like what is good for themselves; for a
 good man, in becoming a friend, becomes a good thing to his friend.³ Ac-
 cordingly, each of two such friends both likes what is good for himself 35
 and returns as much as he receives in [good] wishes and in pleasure;⁴ for,
 as is said, 'friendship is equality', and indeed these [liking and returning] 1158a
 belong to good men most of all.

Among sour and older men, on the other hand, friendship is less likely
 to be formed, and this to the extent that they are harder to get along with
 and enjoy less being in company with others, for these things [getting
 along easily and enjoying company] most of all are thought to be marks
 and causes of friendship. It is in view of this that young men become 5
 friends quickly; but not so in the case of old men, for these do not become
 friends with those whose company they do not enjoy, and similarly with
 sour people. But such men may still be well disposed towards each other;
 for they want good things and meet each others's needs, but they are
 hardly friends because they neither spend their days together nor enjoy
 each other's company, and these things most of all are thought to be 10
 marks of friendship.

It is impossible to be a friend to many men in a perfect friendship, just
 as it is impossible to be in love with many persons at the same time; for
 love is like an excess,⁵ and such excess is by its nature felt towards one
 person only, and it is not easy for many people to satisfy very much the
 same person at the same time,⁶ or perhaps for many persons to be good⁷
 at the same time. Besides, one must also acquire experience and become 15
 familiar with many persons, and this is extremely difficult. But it is pos-
 sible to satisfy many persons by means of⁸ what is useful or pleasurable,
 for there are many such who seek the useful or the pleasurable, and the
 services required take little time. Of these two friendships, the one for
 the sake of what is pleasurable seems to be a friendship to a higher
 degree,⁹ whenever both parties receive the same things and enjoy each
 other or the same things, like the friendships of the young; for in these 20
 generosity is shown to a higher degree, whereas friendship for the sake of
 what is useful belongs to the commercially-minded.

As for the prosperous, they have no need of the useful, but they do need what is pleasurable; for they wish to live with others, and though they can bear what is painful for a short time, no one can endure it continuously, not even if this be the *Good Itself*,¹⁰ if it were painful to him. So they seek friends who are pleasant; and perhaps these should be also good, and good for them too, for thus they will have all that friends should have. As for those in positions of authority, they appear to use different kinds of friends separately; for some friends are useful and others are pleasant, and the same men are not frequently both useful and pleasant. For men in authority in general do not seek pleasant friends who are also virtuous, nor useful men who have noble ends; they seek witty friends if they aim at pleasure, and shrewd friends to carry out orders, and these [i.e., wit and shrewdness] are not frequently found in the same man. We have already stated that a virtuous man is at the same time pleasant and useful; but such a man does not become a friend of a superior man unless he, in turn, is superior to him in virtue, otherwise there is no proportional equality when he is surpassed.¹¹ But such men rarely become friends.¹²

8

1158*b* Now the friendships which have been discussed depend on equality of exchange.¹ For friends receive the same things from each other and wish the same things for each other; or else one thing is exchanged for a different thing, e.g., pleasure for benefit. But these are friendships to a lesser degree and are less permanent, as already stated. And they are thought to be and not to be friendships because of likeness and unlikeness, respectively, to the same thing (e.g., pleasure, or usefulness); for, on the one hand, they appear to be friendships on account of their likeness to the friendship according to virtue (for one friend has pleasure as an end while the other has usefulness, and these ends belong to the friendship according to virtue also), but, on the other, they appear not to be friendships because of their unlikeness to the friendship according to virtue, for this friendship is unshaken by outside slander and is enduring, while the others are quickly dissolved and differ in many other respects.

There is another kind of friendship in which one of the parties is superior, e.g., that of a father to his son and, in general, of an elder to a younger person, as well as that of a husband to his wife and of every ruler to his

subject. These friendships differ also from each other; for that between 15
 parents and children is not the same as that between rulers and subjects,²
 nor is that of a father towards his son the same as that of a son towards
 his father, or that of a husband towards his wife the same as that of a wife
 towards her husband. For the virtue and function of a friend in each of
 these friendships is different, and the *reasons* why friends like each other
 in each of them are different also. Accordingly, both the affections of these
 friends for each other and their friendships are different. Certainly, each 20
 such friend neither receives from the other the same as he gives to the
 other, nor should he seek to do so; but when children give to their
 parents what they should to those who brought them into the world, and
 when parents give to their children what should be given to one's offspring,
 the friendship of such persons will be enduring and *good*. So, too, the
 feeling of affection in all friendships which exist according to superiority
 should be proportional, e.g., the better party should be liked more than 25
 he likes, and so should the party which bestows greater benefits; and
 similarly in each of the other cases. For whenever the feeling of affection
 is shown according to merit, then in a certain sense there arises an equali-
 ty,³ which is indeed regarded as belonging to a friendship.

9

Equality in what is just does not appear to be similar to equality in friend- 30
 ship; for the equal¹ in what is just is primarily according to merit but
 secondarily according to quantity, while in friendship the equal according
 to quantity is primary but that according to merit is secondary.² This be-
 comes clear if there is a great interval between the virtues or vices or
 wealth or whatever else exists in the parties to an association; for then
 they are no longer friends, nor do they expect to be.³ And this is most evi- 35
 dent in the case of the gods; for their superiority in all the goods is the
 greatest. This is also clear in the case of kings, for those who are far in- 1159a
 ferior to them do not expect to be their friends; nor do those of no account
 expect to be friends with the best or wisest of men. In such cases, of course,
 an accurate definition cannot be given of the extent to which men can
 differ and still become friends; for the differences between friends may 5
 be widened but their friendship may still remain, but if the interval is
 great, as between a man and God, there can be no friendship at all.

It is in view of this that the problem arises whether men wish for their friends the greatest of goods, e.g., that of being gods, for then these will be neither friends to them any longer nor goods to them; for a friend is a good to his friend. So if it was well stated that a man wishes good for his friend for the latter's sake, the latter will have to remain such as he is; and the former will wish the greatest goods for the sake of the latter while the latter is still a man, though perhaps not all the greatest goods, for a man wishes the goods for himself most of all.⁴

Most people, because of their ambition, seem to wish to be liked rather than to like, and in view of this most people like flatterers; for a flatterer is a friend in an inferior position, or a man who pretends to be such a friend and to like rather than to be liked. But being liked by someone is thought to be close to being honored by him, and indeed this⁵ is what most people aim at. And they seem to choose honor not for its own sake but for something else; for most people enjoy being honored by men of means because of expectation, since they think that they will obtain from them whatever they might need, and so they enjoy honor as a sign of future favors. As for those who desire honor from *good* men or from men of knowledge, their aim is to assure their own high opinion of themselves; and so, basing their conviction on the judgment of those men, they enjoy thinking that they are good men.⁶ But it is for its own sake that people enjoy being liked; so it would seem that being liked is better than being honored and that friendship is chosen for its own sake. On the other hand, friendship is thought to depend on liking more than on being liked. A sign of this is the fact that mothers enjoy loving their children more than being loved by them; for some of them who give their children to others to bring them up love and know their children but do not seek to be loved in return (whenever both are not possible) but are satisfied in seeing them do well, and they love their children even if the children, because of ignorance, give back nothing that is due to their mothers.

10

Since friendship depends more on loving than on being loved, and since it is those who love their friends who are praised, loving rather than being loved seems to be the virtue of a friend, and so it is those showing this [feeling or disposition] according to merit who endure as friends and who

have an enduring friendship. And such is the manner in which unequals can be friends in the highest degree, for in this way they can be equalized.¹ But it is equality and likeness that is more conducive to friendship, and especially likeness in virtue.² For the virtuous, being steadfast in themselves [in view of their virtue], remain steadfast towards each other also, and they neither ask others to do what is bad nor do they themselves do such things for others, but one might say that they even prevent such things from being done; for good men as such neither err nor allow their friends to fall into error. Wicked men, on the other hand, have nothing to be certain about, for they do not even remain alike [in their feelings and *actions*];³ they become friends but for a short time, enjoying each other's evil habits. 5 10

As for those who are useful or pleasant, they remain friends for a longer time, that is, for as long as they give each other pleasures or benefits. Friendship for the sake of usefulness seems to arise mostly between men with contrary needs, e.g., between the poor and the rich or between the ignorant and the learned, for a man aims at something which he happens to need, offering something else in exchange; and we might bring in under this the lover and his beloved and also the beautiful and the ugly. And it is in view of this⁴ that lovers sometimes appear ridiculous when they demand to be loved as they themselves love; if indeed they are just as lovable, perhaps their claim is reasonable, but if they are not such at all, it is ridiculous. But perhaps a contrary as such does not even aim at the other contrary, except indirectly, since desire is for the intermediate; for this is what is good, e.g., for that which is dry it is to arrive at the intermediate state and not to become wet, and similarly for that which is hot and the others.⁵ But let us leave these problems aside, for they are rather foreign to the present inquiry. 15 20

11

As stated at the start of this discussion,¹ both friendship and what is just seem to be concerned with the same things and to belong to the same persons; for in every association there seems to be both something which is just and also a friendship.² At least, men address their fellow-voyagers and fellow-soldiers as friends also, and similarly with those in any of the other associations. Friendship goes as far as the members associate with 25 30

each other; for what is just extends as far also. And it has been rightly said, "to friends all things are common"; for friendship exists in an association. Now brothers and comrades have all things in common, but other people have only certain things in common, some more, some fewer; for
 35 of friendships, too, some are to a higher degree but others to a lower de-
 1160a gree. Just things, too, differ; for the things that are just for parents towards their children are not the same as those between brothers, nor are those between comrades the same as those between citizens, and similarly with the other kinds of friendships. Accordingly, unjust things towards men are different also; and they become more unjust by being directed to-
 5 wards the more friendly, e.g., it is more abominable to defraud a comrade than a citizen, or to refuse help to a brother than to a stranger, or to strike a father than any one else. What is just, too, increases by nature along with friendship, since they depend on the same kind of things and extend equally to them.

Now all other kinds of associations are like parts of the political asso-
 10 ciation; for people come together for the sake of something expedient and bring along something which contributes to their life. The political association itself is thought to have originated and to continue to exist for the sake of expediency; for the lawgivers, too, are aiming at this and say that what is commonly expedient is just. Each of the other associations,
 15 then, is aiming at some part of what is expedient; e.g., sailors undertake a voyage for the sake of making money or some other such thing, fellow-soldiers go to war for the sake of spoils or victory or capturing a city, and similarly for the members of a tribe or of a town. Again, some associations
 20 seem to be formed for the sake of pleasure, e.g., religious associations and social clubs, for these are formed for the sake of sacrifice and company, respectively. All these, however, seem to come under the political associa-
 25 tion, for the aim of a political association seems not to be limited to the expediency of the moment but to extend to life as a whole; and they make sacrifices and arrange gatherings for these, pay honours to the gods, or provide pleasant relaxations for their members. For the ancient sacrifices and gatherings appear to have occurred after the harvest as a sort of first-fruits, since it is at that time that men had most leisure.

All other associations, then, appear to be parts of the political associa-
 30 tion; and the kinds of friendships will correspond to the kinds of associa-
 tions.