

STUDIES IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY:
ETHICS, POLITICS AND THE ORIGINS
OF PHILOSOPHY ON RHODES



ATHENS 2018

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Ineta Kivle

Aristotle's Concept of Friendship and Plato's Structure of Human Soul

ABSTRACT: The present study analyses Aristotle's concept of friendship in comparison with Plato's structure of human soul (psyche) where friendship and soul are concerned with proper virtue, harmony and justice, and shows kinds of friendship of Aristotle's ethics in connection with Derrida's interpretation of political friendship. The current study views cognitions of Aristotle and Plato from several points of view: Aristotle's characterization of friendship as "a single soul dwelling in two bodies" shows correlations between utility that is directed to utility, pleasure that is directed to pleasure, good that is directed to goodness. On the basis of these correlations Aristotle develops three main kinds of friendship in society: a) in friendship of utility people derive benefit from each other and such communication can develop between opposite people; b) in friendship of pleasure friends are motivated by their own pleasure; c) in friendship of goodness friends enjoy each other's virtues and help one another reach goodness. The third is friendship based on goodness, where both people admire the other's goodness and help one another strive for goodness. Plato's division of human soul (psyche) into rational, spiritual and appetitive shows how the determinative part of the soul forms qualities of human lives, the value of definite actions and adherence to the proper part of society: a) the appetitive component of soul represents a myriad desires for various pleasures and physical satisfactions; b) the spiritual component of soul loves victory, challenges, winning and honour; c) the rational component of soul thinks and measures what is the best and truest overall. Comparing Aristotle's kinds of friendship and Plato's components of psyche we see that in friendship of utility and pleasure the appetite and tendency to victory and sensuality are essential, however, friendship that is directed to goodness and activities of rational component of soul is characterised by wise life, justice and harmony. The subject matter of the study is concerned with the above-mentioned philosophical standpoints and confirms the following: interconnectedness of individual and social; correlations between harmony of soul and justice in society; connectedness of rational action and wise life. The study shows kinds of friendship in Aristotle's ethics in connection with Derrida's interpretation of political friendship. These well-known cognitions obtain different modifications and interpretations and give ground for mutual understanding of communicative processes in the current society.

KEYWORDS: friendship, soul, politics, Aristotle, Plato, Derrida

Ancient philosophy shows that friendship justifies conformity between two or more congenial souls that can be called understanding of each other. True friendship

is directed to others - it opens uniqueness of human's activities and souls. Aristotle sees friendship as development of character, in which relations between friends make critical interdependence. Such virtues as justice and goodness are reached by education and choice of the right medium - the right choice encourages virtue and develops good life where the main end and function of life determine human activity and virtue. Plato's view on soul concerns the notion of justice in several modifications - inner justice between parts of soul encourages virtue and gives guarantee for harmonic relations; justice in society is grounded on acceptance of a dominant part of soul of any citizen and gives guarantee for good order in the state. Derrida refers to cognitions of Plato and Aristotle and shows consequences of political friendship.

1. Structure of Soul and Kinds of Friendship

Soul has different kinds of activities - from transcendental to limited - soul is between unchanging forms and various particulars. In the context of friendship the notion of soul concerns human nature and life. Three parts of soul - appetitive, spiritual and rational - determine human activity and organize the dynamic composition of human's life where one of the parts is dominant: the appetitive part includes desires of pleasure and comfort, these appetites can be in conflict with each other; the spiritual part of the soul is full of power and energy; the rational part of soul thinks and maintains balance between all the parts of soul, takes the moral implications and represents true self that connects forms and particulars, transcendental and limited. Particulars (desire, emotion, perception and reason) develop in relations with activities of human - soul is altered by the life it lives. Soul becomes bearer of such moral qualities as temperance and justice that are the highest virtues and harmony of human soul, soul is also responsible for practical activities and cognitions.

How to reach justice in friendship? Plato's solution is that justice is an educated quality - for realization of justice it is necessary to know the role and meaning of one's own *epitedeuma* - natural aptitude. Justice is good in itself as well as justice has its own particular consequences - the life of a just man is happier than that of an unjust man. Each part of the soul of a just man is doing its own excellent activity - *epitedeuma*: the wisdom of philosophical part of the soul is led by reason, the philosophical part seeks knowledge and thinks for the best good of the whole persons; the spiritual part of the soul corresponds to the courage and seeks honour and success; the appetitive part of soul is directed to pleasure and satisfactions, desires material gains and physical pleasure. *Epitedeuma* can be compared to *ergon* - a characteristic function of a thing that determines its end - *telos*. *Telos* and *ergon* determine the chief good for human - the *telos* as a final cause of a thing refers to the final good of that thing. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of *telos* - one that concerns things beyond the activities for itself, and the other concerning for activities themselves for their own sake. The activity for its own sake is a life with no further end. A life of virtue for Aristotle is such a life that constitutes chief human good - *eudaimonia*. Goodness differs; it

depends on *ergon* - the main function of man: the end of a sculptor is sculpting; the end of a flute player is to play the flute excellently.

Both Plato and Aristotle agree in the position that friendship develops between humans of an equal kind of souls or between souls with the same *ergon* and *telos*. Aristotle characterizes friendship as "a single soul dwelling in two bodies"; he shows correlations between utility that is directed to utility, pleasure that is directed to pleasure, and goodness that is directed to goodness. Aristotle writes that human exhibits nutritive capacities for reproductive and metabolic processes; it is similar to the appetitive part of soul in Plato's philosophy; perceptive capacities resound with the spiritual part of the soul, and rational capacities determine thinking, understanding and knowing. Rational activity distinguishes human from all other animals, and good life is lived with excellent rational activity. In accordance with Aristotle good life requires not only excellent rational activity, but also excellent activity of reproductive and perceptive capacities. Any excellent activities - rational, reproductive or perceptive - are kinds of *epitedeuma*. Emotions and desires are aspects of soul that give responses to what is perceived - if emotions listen to reason they belong to reason. In such a case rational activity concerns not only the intellectual virtue, but the moral virtue as well. Natural capacities as well as human *ergon* (function), *energeia* (activities) and *telos* (the end) determine the kind of life and facilitate development of mutual relations between friends. If the *energeia* of two or more humans is of the same kind, then relations between them confirm mutual understanding and congenial *telos*. The highest *telos* of human life is *eudaimonia* - life of excellent activity. *Eudaimonia* is the good for the sake of which all other goods are chosen. Humans choose such goods as pleasure, beauty and honour both for themselves and for the sake of *eudaimonia*, but *eudaimonia* is never chosen for anything else. *Eudaimonia* as a complete life that flourishes rational *energeia* and self-sufficiency. However, self-sufficiency cannot be realised in isolation; human requires to live in polis that is natural and prior to the individual and makes human self-sufficiency possible. In *Politics* Aristotle writes that anyone who is incapable of membership in a community, or who has no need for it because he is self-sufficient, is no part of a city, and so is either a beast or a god.

How does the *telos* of human life concern relations between friends?

A life that in principle does not allow human to actualize natural capacities is a life that makes flourishing and good life impossible. The same can be said about relations between friends - friendship is possible if friends allow realizing their natural capacities and interacting with each other. It concerns all kinds of humans: rational animal, political animal, and biological animal. Human as a biological animal requires practical necessities - food, drinks, and clothes. In this situation the flourishing of friendship as intellectual *energeia* is absent; the soul of a biological animal seeks cooperation with others for survival and satisfactions. Humans, differently from other living bodies, not only communicate but also make dialogue using rational speech and concepts. Through

speech humans clarify what is goodness, the truth and justice, linger in one another's company and converse. Friendship is more referable to intellectual activities and rationality than to practical needs. Intellectual *energeia* determines the highest form of friendship as life of excellent rational activity.

Aristotle's concept of friendship unites private and social characterizing of various aspects of human nature - emotional, rational and political. Friendship unites the realm of individuality with social activities - being enclosed in both of them humans know themselves and others better.

True friendship is directed to others - it opens uniqueness of human's activities and souls. Plato suggests that friendship is an exclusive privilege for the most virtuous individuals; it means that rational component of soul thinks and measures what is the best and truest overall. Aristotle is in the same position - friendship performs rational actions and creates valuable interpersonal relations. Forms of friendship are dependent on intentions of soul. Friendship is not given like parts of souls - capability of true friendship is a result of self-flourishing, self-education and self-love that is directed to others. Need for a friend is directly related to the rational-political nature of human. In *Lysis* Socrates says that no one would choose to live without friends, even if he had all the other good things. These philosophical approaches show that relations between friends vary from everyday style of life to complicated attentions, and friendship comprehends individuality and self-understanding as well as social and political experience.

2. Friendship: "a single soul dwelling in two bodies" - "Oh my friends, there is no friend"

Aristotle's expression that friendship is "a single soul dwelling in two bodies" essentially differs from the slogan "Oh, my friends, there is no friend" that is used in philosophies of Montaigne, Nietzsche and Derrida. "Oh, my friends, there is no friend" is modified from Diogenes Laertius expression addressed to Aristotle's philosophy - He, who has many friends, does not have friends. These expressions open possibility for various interpretations and analysis in context of ancient philosophy as well as of contemporary philosophy. Friendship so significant in ancient culture no more plays the decisive role in postmodernity where true friendship is of rare occurrence. Aristotle and Plato seek true friendship that flourishes in human and gives rational enjoyment. Friendship as a self-contained value loses validity today and is subjected to politics and economics where pragmatic relations become more popular - there is no friendship that Plato and Aristotle believed and wrote about. The slogan "Oh my friends, there is no friend!" seems to mean not only that having many friends is impossible by the excellence of relations, but also that friendship in the ancient culture took a remarkable space and time for flourishing in oneself and the other.

Derrida analyses political consequences of friendship, views concepts of democracy and rethinks friendship as a special kind of hospitality. Derrida speaks of politics that

cannot be an object of theory, but a type of experience - something that is given. In an interview at *The Centre of Modern French Thought* Derrida said that as soon as we read canonical texts in political theory starting with Plato and Aristotle, we discover that friendship plays an organizing role in the definition of justice, and democracy even. Derrida quotes many texts of Plato and Aristotle in which friendship is defined as essential virtue - the higher friendship is based on virtue and it has nothing to do with politics. It is a friendship between two virtuous men. Derrida suggests that the friendship grounded on utility and usefulness is political friendship and comes to the conclusion that friendship plays an organizing role in the definition of the political experience. Derrida seeks for a prevailing canonical model of friendship which has been in our culture from the Greeks to the present day. The canonical model of friendship that comes from Greece, he sees in democracy and brotherhood. Derrida speaks about fraternity as a special kind of brotherhood that is very respectable, but raises questions. What is common between fraternity of the deconstructed world and friendship in Aristotle's philosophy? Concepts of friendship, democracy, and politics are transformed today. Derrida uses the concept of hospitality that means welcome of the Other without asking name and documents - to open house, language, nation, culture. Derrida writes about deconstructive conditions that developed after the First World War and continue until today - they stimulate hospitality as a special kind of unconditional welcoming the Other, as democracy which would be cosmopolitical. Cosmopolitan ideas come from the Stoics, who have a concept of the 'citizen of the world'. Christian tradition also calls that we are brothers - sons of God, we belong to the world as citizens of the world. Derrida says that hospitality is that I should try to open my space, without trying to include the Other in my space:

Friendship is based on likeness of moral excellence. Plato wrote that the good man is a friend to the good man only. Friendship is also modified in accordance with social and political situations. Derrida writes about a special kind of friendship - hospitality (welcoming without asking) that developed in the 20th century and was not topical in ancient times. Likeness characterizes friendship from several points of view: 1) likeness in characterization of human soul - Aristotle's division of soul in vegetative, sensitive and rational refers to Plato's division of soul in rational, spiritual and appetitive; 2) likeness between soul and the kind of friendship - the dominant part of soul determines the corresponding kind of friendship; 3) likeness between politics and friendship - sociality and politics modify kinds of friendship in accordance with the current political situation - relations between friends form politics, and politics is given experience for friendship; 4) likeness between the opposites - friendship is possible between an opposite human as well, but it means that the same part of soul (appetitive, spiritual or rational) is dominant for all of them; 5) likeness between self-love that is directed to others and the mutual response. In any case true friendship embraces fragility and requires empathy, equality and mutual responsibility.

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