

The moral value of Aristotelian friendships for utility, with an online example

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ABSTRACT: Can (Aristotelian) friendships for utility have moral value? There is an assumption in much of the literature on Aristotelian friendships that his 'lower forms' of friendship, especially friendship for utility, do not merit the label 'genuine friendship' and thus do not 'qualify as morally valuable'. Rather, friendships for utility are just considered to be about taking advantage of one another in amoral or immoral ways. I offer counter-arguments, going beyond the letter if not necessarily the spirit of Aristotle's own texts, based on delineating two different levels of utility friendships and showing that the higher one (with non-instrumental while extrinsic value) can have moral worth in combatting moral despondency, incontinence and even vice. A personal illustration is given from the moral utility value of friendships in Facebook support groups for patients with a rare disorder.

Keywords: Aristotle; friendships for utility versus character; extrinsically valuable but non-instrumental friendships; continence; online support groups

1. Contexts and questionable assumptions

This article aims to explore one fairly specific question: can so-called *friendships for utility* have moral value? I take Aristotle's account of utility friendships – with respect to his other friendship types – as my starting point because of its historical importance and logical nuance. In a sense, then, this is an essay in Aristotelian retrieval. However, 'retrieval' must be taken here to mean 'reconstruction' rather than 'exegesis'. My ultimate answer goes beyond anything Aristotle says explicitly, although its main ingredients are extracted from his texts. In any case, in order to situate my question and elicit its relevance, both for the moral discourses on friendship and on Aristotelian virtue ethics, some context-setting is in order.

Complaints are still being raised about the relative paucity of discussions of the role of friendship in an Aristotelian conception of virtue ethics, or of 'living well' more generally (Kristjánsson, 2019). These complaints may seem misplaced given that reams of scholarship have been written about the concept of friendship in Aristotle, stretching back into the early days of virtue ethics (see e.g. Cooper, 1977), and that his famous tripartite

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substantive and normative classification of friendships (into those for utility, pleasure and character/virtue) has set the terms of most philosophical friendship discourses for 2300 years. However, there is a grain of truth in those complaints.

The grain of truth is that the philosophical debate about Aristotelian friendships is typically fairly narrow and exegetical. Whereas other key virtue concepts in Aristotle tend to be reconstructed quite liberally by neo-Aristotelians in order to be more relatable to modern practical (e.g. educational) concerns – and typically brought to bear on the ultimate aim of the good life as *eudaimonia* (Kristjánsson, 2020a) – the discussion of friendship has remained mostly textual and theoretical (yet see Brewer, 2005, for a notable exception). Even when the aim of the proposed inquiry is moral rather than historical or exegetical, large questions about the relative weight of friendship in the good life tend to be elided. For example, there is a scarcity of papers on friendship and *phronesis*, offering clues about how Aristotle's intellectual meta-virtue of *phronesis* (Darnell et al., 2019) ideally adjudicates the value of friendship vis-à-vis other Aristotelian values and virtues in everyday practical contexts, especially in cases of conflict within different friendships or between friendship and competing virtues (Kristjánsson, 2020b; yet see Salkever, 2008, on the role of friendship in 'the *prohairetic* life': the life of overall wise choices).

There is one area of discourse, however, where Aristotelian friendships are being discussed in ways that are non-exegetical and highly practical: the discourse on the merits and demerits of *online friendships*. While many of the participants in this discourse are in fact academic philosophers, it seems to have largely escaped the attention of mainstream philosophy, being mostly confined to specialised journals. Much of the current debate refers to a special issue of *Ethics and Information Technology* from 2012. Some of the relevant participants claim that online friendships in general and Facebook ones in particular have turned human friendship into a 'toxic substance leading to isolation' (Fröding & Peterson, 2012, p. 201; Deresiewicz, 2009). The quality of argumentation in this ongoing debate is measured, well informed (with respect to Aristotelian theory) and rigorous (see e.g. Vallor, 2012; Kaliarnta, 2016). This debate deserves recognition and development in mainstream philosophy outlets, and although my intention is not to reset its terms here, I acknowledge it by deriving my illustrative examples in the fourth section of this article from an online context.

The reason I choose not to enter this specific debate directly here is that its main bone of contention is the question whether online friendships, in any shape or form, can qualify as genuine Aristotelian character friendships. While I have a distinct view on this topic, as I reveal briefly at the close of the fourth section, my current focus is a different one: namely on utility friendships. However, as my focus was motivated by reading the recent literature on cyberfriendships, it is instructive for present purposes to identify an assumption that tends to be taken for granted in that literature, both by friends and foes of online friendships *qua* character friendships (see further in Kristjánsson, 2020c): that the lower forms of friendship (with respect to character friendship), especially utility friendship, do not 'merit the label "genuine friendship"' and thus do not 'qualify as morally

valuable' (Fröding & Peterson, 2012, p. 201). Rather, friendships for utility are just about taking advantage of one another in amoral or immoral ways (Bülow & Felix, 2016, p. 27).

This assumption, which I consider largely misplaced, is tricky to identify with respect to provenance. The standard interpretation, not only in the recent discourse on Aristotelian online friendship but in the general friendship scholarship, is that this assumption is actually Aristotle's own reasoned view (Fröding & Peterson, 2012; Millgram, 1987; see rejoinders to the standard literature in Cooper, 1977). While that interpretation has surface credibility at least, given various unsympathetic and dismissive things that Aristotle says about friendships for utility, I do believe there are potential resources within Aristotelian theory to reconsider and reject this assumption, but that those resources remain hidden (even to Aristotle himself) for various reasons that I explain in the following section.

In all events, my motivation for writing this paper is substantive rather than exegetical. I propose to offer counterweight to the above assumption and do so in a way that is at least not fully alien to the spirit – as distinct from the letter – of Aristotle's account. Aristotle aside, I go against the grain of ruling friendships for utility out of moral court. I have only found one article that proposes to do anything similar to what I aim for. Thus, I agree with James Grunebaum's contention that utility-based friendships 'have been unjustly undervalued by philosophers' (2005, p. 203). However, I propose to go beyond Grunebaum's argument and offer a different take on the value of (Aristotelian) friendships for utility.

Apart from Grunebaum's thorough treatment of this topic, the literature on it is actually quite meagre. It tends to be dealt with fleetingly in the context of fleshing out Aristotle's concept of character friendship – or, more specifically, offered as a foil to such 'complete' friendship in line with the assumption identified earlier. The exception is the literature on Aristotelian civic or political friendships. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle maintains that civic friendship 'is constituted in the fullest degree on the principle of utility' (1935, p. 415 [1242a5–8; cf. p. 421 [1242b22–23]]) and that it is 'more necessary' than character friendship, although the latter is 'nobler' (1935, p. 427 [1243a32–36]). This view of civic friendship as a form of utility friendship grounds, for example, Irrera's (2005) interpretation. However, even against the backdrop of Aristotle's own words to the contrary, there are those who argue that Aristotelian civic friendship must be 'based in virtue and not merely utility' (Curren, 2000, p. 133). The (implicit) undervaluation of utility friendships, which Grunebaum refers to, is here once again in evidence. In any case, I leave the literature on civic friendships out of consideration in this article to focus on the more fundamental question about the moral value of utility friendships in general.

Upsetting the applecart is always an exciting prospect for a philosophical article. However, my aim is not so much to achieve a conceptual reshuffle of standard friendship classifications as it is to open up new avenues of thought. Prior to the ultimate analysis of utility friendships in the third section, I therefore need to ask readers to bear with me for a while. To motivate a moral defence of utility friendship from an Aristotelian or quasi-

Aristotelian perspective, it must be shown first that it has a role to play in an Aristotelian account of moral development. I do so in the following section. Moreover, Aristotle's own account of the different kinds of friendships requires a brief rehearsal for readers without a ready knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy. I do so in the first part of the third section. A full comparison and contrast of my defence of utility friendship with Grunebaum's thus awaits the second part of the third section, after I have spelled out my own account – to be followed, in the fourth section, with an illustrative example from an online context.

2. Some Aristotelian concepts and complexities regarding moral development

The very question about the potential *moral* value of utility friendships may seem like a non-starter from an Aristotelian perspective, as Aristotle had no concept of 'the moral' at his disposal (Kraut, 2006). Not only is there no distinction in Aristotle's vocabulary between the 'moral' and 'non-moral', there is no distinction to be drawn from his works between (moral) character and (non-moral) personality; ancient Greek had no specific word for 'personality' (Reiner, 1991). Aristotelian developmental theory thus lacks the relevant conceptual resources to engage in some of the elementary debates about issues that divide contemporary moral psychologists (cf. Darnell et al., 2019).

For present purposes I propose to stipulate a meaning of 'moral' that accommodates contemporary conceptions but still has some reasonable place within an Aristotelian (or at least a reconstructed neo-Aristotelian) system. Let us try this: consider a trait or quality 'moral' if it at least aims at mitigating vice or incontinence in people, for their own sake, without *necessarily* making them virtuous. While this a fairly broad definition, which obviously includes a wide range of traits in addition to the standard character virtues, it does not make the claim that friendships for utility have moral value trivially true, because it is still open to sceptics to argue that friendships for utility simply do not have this aim. Indeed, that is what most of them seem to want to argue, given their understanding of the concept of 'friendship for utility' as amoral, typically taken to be derived from Aristotle (see e.g. Fröding & Peterson, 2012). This definition also gives me leverage to argue – as I propose to do – that friendships for utility have moral value insofar as they help turn vice into (at least) incontinence, and incontinence into (at least) continence, although they may not produce virtue.

In spite of Aristotle's inability to avail himself of the word 'moral', he could have made this point about friendship for utility if he had wanted to by using terms that were available to him, for example by talking about it as a relationship that is, at its best, 'characteristic of people striving towards goodness or flourishing'. The reasons why he choose not do so are, I would argue, somewhat complex and have to do both with the intended readership of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aristotle's lack of focus on non-virtue-routed developmental paths leading to less than full *phronesis*. I need to say something about both those reasons before proceeding further.

General readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics* may easily get the impression that it was written as a self-help manual for ordinary people who want to learn to flourish – much

like, say, Martin Seligman's (2011) contemporary bestseller on flourishing – and that the two extensive chapters on friendship are meant to help people 'like us' make and sustain healthy friendships. This impression is erroneous, however. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is specifically written for a discrete and fairly small group of people: aristocratic young men, 'brought up in good habits' (Aristotle, 1985, p. 6 [1095b4–5]) and already (being) habituated into virtue. Even more specifically, the message of the book is geared towards readers who are later to become statesmen or entrusted with the moral education of the young. While these points have been made repeatedly by Aristotelian scholars (see e.g. Curren, 2000; Pangle, 2003), they seem to become swept under the carpet when the overall ethical message of Aristotle's work gets distilled and analysed.

I am claiming that the *Nicomachean Ethics* plots a unique and somewhat 'idealised' (Curzer, 2017) developmental path for young men blessed with constitutive 'moral luck'. After the habituation process, which presumably requires considerable systematic guidance by a parent/mentor/educator, a process of *phronesis* development follows, in which the budding virtues mature into fully fledged *phronetic* (*phronesis*-guided or *phronesis*-infused) moral virtues with the help of character friends. We later learn in Book 10 that not even this suffices for the fully flourishing life; complete moral virtue complemented by the wherewithal of abundant worldly resources to do good (as in the case of the notoriously blasé but supremely good *megalopsychoi*) leaves people unfulfilled unless they can practise the somewhat esoteric activity of pure contemplation (see Kristjánsson, 2020a, chap. 4).

From the point of view of contemporary developmental psychology, even this main (idealised) path plotted in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for its prospective elite readers, remains curiously underdeveloped. The standard Burnyeat (1980) interpretation of two distinct developmental phases, habituation qua mindless conditioning, followed by critical and reflective *phronesis* development, turns the whole process into the famous 'paradox of moral education' (of learning uncritically and heteronomously to become critical and autonomous, see Kristjánsson, 2007, chap. 3). Even if one opts for a more rhapsodic interpretation of the habituation process as being reason-guided and critically stimulated from the word go, there remain urgent questions about *when* (namely at what age) and *how* the external guide becomes overtaken by character friends and what the powerful intellectual virtue of *phronesis* really assumes and incorporates by way of intellectual and moral faculties – leading to a plethora of conflicting contemporary interpretations (Darnell et al., 2019).

Why does Aristotle not expand on this developmental story? For one thing, he simply may not consider it necessary to retell the obvious; after all, this is the way good young men in Athens are being brought up so you just need to look around yourself for example. Or he wants to defer to 'the natural scientists' the psychological details of the story (cf. Aristotle, 1985, p. 181 [1147b5–9]): a naturalistic remark that is somewhat ironic, given the fact that Aristotle himself was probably the leading natural scientist of his day. I have grappled with many of those puzzles before (Kristjánsson, 2007, chap. 3; 2015, chap.

4) and will not dwell further on them here except to observe that I have concerns about the extent to which current writers on the qualities of friendship types in Aristotle typically do not acknowledge that, in his account of friendship, Aristotle is guided by his mission to give advice to a privileged group of moral learners and moral educators, and that this account may thus bear the marks of a unique developmental project – a project from which most ordinary people are actually barred (see below).

There are two other developmental paths described in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I omit here the subhuman and superhuman paths that are just mentioned in passing). One is for those brought up in bad habits and habituated into vice. It must be admitted that Aristotle is not optimistic about the possibility of their moral reform. Aristotle's cohort of badly brought up, vicious people are most likely to end up as a basket of deplorables, simply because they will not understand the need for character reform or comprehend the terms in which such a need would be formulated (Aristotle, 1985, p. 292 [1179b11–31]). Their only hope lies in being constrained by law and punishment. They might therefore progress, at least intermittently, up to the superior levels of the incontinent or continent, driven by the intellectual virtue of calculation (*deinotēs*). What holds the vicious back is not only their lack of virtue literacy, so to speak, enabling them to grasp what is being said to them, but also the fact that they are unable to form mutual character friendships, according to Aristotle (1985, p. 215 [1157a18–20]), because of their arrested development. Aristotle does not allow for any sort of belated transcendent epiphanies – where you grasp moral truths in a flash – eliciting moral reform (Kristjánsson, 2020a, chap. 6).

If the *Nicomachean Ethics* had been written as a handbook for the general public on living well, Aristotle would have needed to spend more space on the developmental levels of incontinence and continence, as those happen to be the levels most ordinary people are at, in his estimation (Aristotle, 1985, p. 190 [1150a15]). He would also have had to initiate a discussion of the best kinds of friendships suited to those levels – and their further development. The disparity between Aristotle's acknowledgement of the preponderance of incontinence and continence, together with his lack of interest in helping those people become better, can only be explained, as before, by the specific group for whom the *Nicomachean Ethics* was written.

Notice that incontinence and continence are not natural developmental levels between habituated virtue and *phronetic* virtue; Aristotle's is not a Kohlbergian stage theory where all stages need to be traversed in the same order. Incontinence and continence are rather aberrations or second-best tacks for those who, for some reason, take a wrong turn in the developmental trajectory towards *phronetic* virtue, perhaps because, while enjoying a decent upbringing, they are not exposed to quite good enough moral exemplars or quite systematic enough habituation (or they are born with unusually unruly passions), but still retain a vision of the right moral ends, ingrained in their moral identity. They, then, try to force themselves, unsuccessfully (the incontinent) or successfully (the continent), to comply with the right moral ends. Continence can be a relatively stable state; it is not destined to degenerate into vice, although every lapse may

enfeeble the mind (cf. Stern-Gillet, 1995, p. 95); nor is it likely to mature into virtue, although it may do so in the case of some individuals. In all events, contra Kant, Aristotle clearly did not think that the best way to become virtuous was to fight temptations.

Retaining continence in the face of temptations, at least with 'limber elegance' rather than 'crude effort' (Steutel, 1999, p. 133), is a rickety ladder to climb, and Aristotle fails to tell us which intellectual virtue the continent draw upon in their delicate balancing acts. In any case, continence seems to be a seriously underexplored and undervalued trait of character, as long as we study the *Nicomachean Ethics* out of its proposed reading context, and that gives us considerable leverage to complement Aristotle's discussion with insights – especially, in the present context, insights about friendships – that do not breach the general drift of his account, be those insights that, as Pangle puts it, Aristotle saw no reason to 'broadcast to his noble-minded readers' (2003, p. 150).

Before setting out my case for the moral value of Aristotelian utility friendships for the weak-kneed and those fighting temptations, a couple of new but instructive conceptual distinctions are in order. Some Aristotelian goods, such as health and friendship, are at the same time instrumentally and non-instrumentally valuable *vis-à-vis* the good life. Aristotle's focus is, as we see later, on the non-instrumental value of (solely) one type of friendship, namely character friendship, for *eudaimonia*, and this is often couched in terms of the intrinsic value of that kind of friendship versus the mere extrinsic and instrumental value of others. However, I believe there is good reason to distinguish between intrinsic and non-instrumental value and also between extrinsic and instrumental value. An illustrative example can be drawn from an unlikely source, namely Mill's type of utilitarianism, according to which some 'higher' goods (for instance desert and freedom) are non-instrumentally related to the greatest good of happiness. They are contingent *parts of* happiness rather than just *instrumentally conducive to* it. However, since in Mill's simple view happiness is the only intrinsic good, even those non-instrumental parts are extrinsic to it and may, in dire dilemmatic circumstances, have to be sacrificed for the greater good, albeit at considerable pain to the agent. We can call those non-instrumental but extrinsically valuable goods 'painfully expendable', in contrast to mere instrumental 'lower' goods – say bars of chocolate – that are non-painfully expendable when competing with more essential goods. We can further call the latter non-painfully expendable goods 'fungible': we may easily substitute them with something else. So if a good is purely instrumental, it is *ex hypothesi* fungible, but if a good is non-instrumentally related to the intrinsic good, it is only painfully expendable even when extrinsic to that good.

Aristotle's theory of the nature of *eudaimonia* is obviously much more complex than Mill's account of happiness, but I would argue that the some of the same conceptual distinctions would be equally at home there – although those are not made by Aristotle himself. *Eudaimonia* has many intrinsic and non-replaceable goods attached to it: say, love of character friends. It also has many instrumental goods that are conducive to it but which are pretty painlessly replaceable (i.e. fungible); I would, for instance, not mind

replacing all the chicken I eat for my nourishment with fish. However, some goods are part of who I am now and would only be painfully replaceable (i.e. not fungible). For example, I can imagine myself giving up my love of Liverpool football club; being a Liverpool fan is not an intrinsic part of who I am, or who I would potentially be as a fully flourishing agent. However, being a Liverpool fan is more than instrumentally related to my current self-identity; *it is part of who I am here and now*, albeit an extrinsic one, and giving up on it, even for some good reason, would not be easy at all.

The fundamental point made here is that it is in the interest of conceptual clarity not to understand 'non-instrumental' as synonymous with 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' as synonymous with 'extrinsic', and that there is also a helpful distinction to be made between painfully 'expendable/replaceable' goods, on the one hand, and 'fungible' goods on the other.

3. Levels of friendships beneficial for flourishing, including friendships for utility

Let us begin with some very brief rehearsals. Friendship for Aristotle is conscious 'reciprocated goodwill' (1985, p. 210 [1155b32–35]). It assumes three main types, where the first two (friendships for pleasure and utility) are 'incomplete' – because of their essentially extrinsically valuable and transitory natures – but the most developed type (character friendships) is 'complete' because of its unique intrinsic and enduring nature (1985, pp. 211ff [1156a6ff]). The two inferior types are not mere *ersatz* versions of character friendship, however. Pleasure and utility friendships have clear uses and are necessary for smooth human association, and they will continue even among those who have formed character friendships. While 'base' people can actualise them, but not the complete type, 'good' (namely virtuous) people enjoy all three types in different contexts but most specifically the complete type (1985, pp. 212 and 216 [1156b6–8 and 1157b1–4]).

It is common practice to conceptualise blithely the distinction between the complete type of friendship and the two incomplete types as that between '*noninstrumental* or end friendships' versus '*instrumental* and *means* friendships' (e.g. Kapur, 1991, p. 483). While there is some truth to this distinction, we miss something important by repeating it too often. The matter of fact is that Aristotle does not seem to be entirely consistent on this point. He begins by making it an explicit necessary conceptual condition of *all* the three (genuine) types of friendship that to 'a friend [...] you must wish good for his own sake' (1985, p. 210 [1155b31–32]) – which seems to indicate that you must not only value the friend as a means to an end. Shortly later he says, however, that those 'who love each other for utility love the other not in himself, but in so far as they gain some good for themselves from him' (1985, p. 211 [1156a11–12]), and that such friendships can be easily dissolved once the benefit has been depleted (1985, p. 243 [1165b1–2]).

As it was not Aristotle's wont to indulge in self-contradictions, exegetes have tried to save his face. It could be pointed out that Aristotle introduces the view that (in all friendships) you must wish good for the friend's own sake simply as the received view without endorsing it explicitly; perhaps he wanted to overrule or revise it? However, unless he notes otherwise, Aristotle is usually in the business of 'saving the appearance' (*endoxa*), namely rescuing somehow the views of 'the many'. I take him to be doing exactly that here. I am therefore in broad agreement with Cooper's contention that Aristotle must be focusing on different parts of the utility-friendship trajectory with his apparently inconsistent remarks: its necessary instrumental formation versus its more noble development and maintenance. More precisely, Cooper takes Aristotle to be making the psychological claim that those who 'have been mutually benefited through their common association will, as a result of the benefits [...] tend to wish for and be willing to act in the interest of the other person's good, independently of considerations of their *own* welfare' (1977, pp. 633–634). Whiting (2006, p. 286) bolsters this interpretation with the general observation that 'we cannot move immediately from the claim that a relationship *comes to be* for the sake of some end to the conclusion that the relationship *continues to exist* for the sake of that end'. I will be making use of these exegetical manoeuvres in what follows when I argue that *some* types of utility friendships at least may be sustained on the grounds of non-instrumental (as distinct from intrinsic) value, no matter how their formation may originally have been motivated.

To complicate matters, there is another *philia*-type virtue in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* that lies outside of the tripartite typology elaborated upon in the sections on friendship. This is the social-glue virtue of friendliness in casual social encounters (1985, pp. 107–109 [1126b11–1127a12]; cf. Kristjánsson, 2007, chap. 10). Although this 'virtue' fits the architectonic of an Aristotelian quantitative mean, with excesses of ingratiation or fawningness *qua* extreme and cantankerousness *qua* deficiency, it is somewhat remarkable that it makes the grade as a virtue, because it fails to satisfy the standard Aristotelian condition of a moral virtue of being underwritten by a discrete emotional component (as a golden mean of feeling). Indeed, it requires no 'special feeling' or 'fondness' whatsoever (1985, p. 108 [1126b22–24]). To exercise this 'virtue', say, towards the janitor who opens the doors of the office building every morning, a friendly smile and a nod suffice – without any emotion-imbued 'reciprocated goodwill'; hence it does not qualify as a virtue of friendship. Friendliness thus appears as something of an anomaly in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (whereas one might possibly have expected it to be mentioned as a valuable civic trait of camaraderie or fellowship in the *Politics*). Its anomalous standing notwithstanding, friendliness does serve as a helpful reference point for an attempt to make sense of a more subtle account of levels of *philia*-type virtues than Aristotle accomplished himself, and I therefore include it in my below classification of friendship-or-friendship-related character traits that have benefits for human flourishing (although Aristotle makes no suggestion himself that it is related in any way to utility friendships).

A cursory reading of Aristotle's many but scattered references to utility friendships creates the initial impression of a relationship characterised by 'mean-spiritedness, manipulateness, and pettiness' (Stern-Gillet, 1985, p. 65). However, a more careful reading identifies *potential* layers of complexity in utility friendship and *potential* qualitative differences between them. Thus, Aristotle says that 'one type of friendship of utility would seem to depend on character, and the other on rules', with the latter being confined to 'mercenary'-type associations whereas the former is 'more generous' (1985, pp. 233–234) [1162b23–27]). Former types presumably include the relationships that Aristotle notes often form between 'fellow-voyagers and fellow-soldiers' (1985, p. 224 [1159b27–28]). Konstan interprets this as a clear distinction between 'two sorts of utilitarian *philia*' (1997, p. 78). While that is quite a bold exegetical claim, which I would hesitate to endorse, I propose below to *reconstruct* the Aristotelian notion of friendships for utility to tease out the notion of two different utility levels, one instrumental and the other non-instrumental (while both are extrinsically, rather than intrinsically, valuable).

More specifically, what I aim to do below is offer an account of five levels of friendship beneficial for human wellbeing as *eudaimonia*. I use the slightly ambiguous term 'beneficial for' here because I include in this classification, for the sake of comparisons and contrasts, one level beneath utility friendships, as Aristotle defines them, and two levels above them, namely levels of (complete) character friendships, explaining how those are beneficial for wellbeing in ways that go beyond the lower levels. In order not to open up a can of worms, I leave friendships for pleasure out of reckoning here. Those are problematic both because they include the category of erotic friendships, which have a well-known tendency to complicate non-erotic ones in various ways (Kristjánsson, 2019), and because the type of pleasures referred to in 'friendship for pleasure' will have to be distinguished clearly from the characteristic pleasures that supervene upon (all) virtuous activities – but there is no space to enter into that discussion here. In Table 1, I summarise the characteristics of the five posited levels. Each of them is also delineated in more detail in the text below.

Notice that 'level' is not meant to denote 'developmental stage' here. Just like continence is not a developmental stage in a trajectory toward virtue, but rather a level that well brought-up people can bypass (see above), so virtuous people do not typically 'move up' from Levels 0–2 to Levels 3 and 4, although they would be expected to move from Level 3 to Level 4 as their *phronesis* progresses. However, the difference from the general developmental story is that whereas the best educated virtuous people will, mostly or fully, eschew the levels of incontinence and continence, Aristotle assumes that even fully fledged *phronomoi* will still have the need for utility friendships with various people although they have got a supply of good character friends to rely on.

Table 1: Levels of Aristotelian friendships, beneficial for human flourishing

	L0: Friendliness	L1: Lower level of utility friendship	L2: Higher level of utility friendship	L3: Imperfect (developing) character friendship	L4: Perfect character friendship
Acquaintance-ship (A) or friendship (F)	A	F	F	F	F
Character friendship (C) or not (N)	N	N	N	C	C
Perfect (P) or non-perfect friendship (N)	N	N	N	N	P
Only instrumentally valuable (I) or not (N)	I	I	N	N	N
Extrinsically (E) or intrinsically valuable (I)	E	E	E	I	I
Fungible (F) or non-fungible (N)	F	F	N	N	N
Morally valuable (M) or not (N)	N	N	M	M	M

Level 0. I prefer to refer to the first level as Level 0 as it involves the potted or at least unusual ‘virtue’ of friendliness, as previously described, rather than genuine friendship. We could call the relationship involved ‘acquaintanceship’. X, who works in a big company, has janitor Y open the door for her every day, which is clearly conducive to X’s wellbeing. X exchanges niceties with Y every morning and kind of likes Y, but Y’s value to X is purely instrumental and Y, while useful, is fully fungible. X would simply transfer her friendly manner to the next agreeable janitor who came along. As Telfer notes, ‘being friends with’ is not the same as ‘being a friend of’ (1970–71, p. 223).

Level 1. This is what could be conceptualised as the lower level of friendship for utility. X and Y are colleagues in a company and work on projects together. They have developed reciprocated goodwill towards each other and quite like one another’s company. They enjoy a beneficial working relationship, which also includes the occasional social interactions outside of work, for example in the pub. However, with the practical ‘cause of their being friends removed’, the friendship would be ‘dissolved too’, on the assumption that the friendship aims merely at a practical end (Aristotle, 1985, pp. 211–212 [1156a19–23]). This friendship, which is simply instrumental and extrinsically valuable,

is what Aristotle calls 'mercenary' and what Grunebaum (2005) dubs as 'fair-weather friendship' and Vernon as friendship of 'convenience' (2010, p. 6). Moreover, what leaps to the fore here is that the reciprocated goodwill, while potentially wide-ranging, does not penetrate deep enough into X's and Y's psyches for it to be deemed morally valuable (in the earlier explained post-Aristotelian sense). It does not steer away from vice or incontinence, although the Level 1 utility friend might give me some virtue-relevant advice, such as not to throw my trash on the ground, in much the same way as a non-friend could. To be sure, X would miss Y if she suddenly changed her job, but without severe pain, and Y would be fairly soon forgotten if an equally competent and agreeable workmate came along; hence (the friendship with) Y must count as fungible.

Level 2. A straight, if by no means an uninterrupted, road leads from the first level of friendship for utility to the presumed second level. While Aristotle is nowhere explicit about this distinction, as I have repeatedly stressed, and some might claim it is out of its exegetical depth, I refer back to the suggestion that a higher level of utility friendships can be carved out of the material yielded to us by Aristotle's text. X and Y are workmates, as before, but in this scenario their friendship has been elevated to the level of sharing of 'distresses and pleasures' (Aristotle, 1985, p. 246 [1166a26–27]). X shares with Y some of the troubles she has with her spouse and relatives and receives helpful advice. Y also persuades X not to cut corners at work, which X is tempted to do. Neither X nor Y have been habituated into virtue and, hence, they cannot count as character friends in the 'complete friendship' sense, let alone as 'perfect' friends of that sort. However, they help each other stay on the straight and narrow. Gradually, they become as close as the best of fellow voyagers and their friendship is anything but mercenary. Rather, it is a utility friendship that 'depends on character' (1985, p. 233 [1162b24]), as Aristotle puts it, although (good) 'character' is here *ex hypothesi* used in a broader sense than the standard Aristotelian one of a repertoire of virtuous traits, probably referring more to the fact that an ethically relevant *choice* is being made rather than to a virtue being exhibited or enhanced. It could be objected that I have smuggled into my description above interactions that go beyond the examples that Aristotle himself takes of utility friendships (which tend to be about the exchange of goods and favours), in order to put an ethical spin on them, but it is almost impossible to envisage close workplace interactions between utility friends that pertain only to non-moral issues. Close workplace interactions tend to be permeated with moral concerns.

Because only character friends are intrinsically valuable and irreplaceable as parts of one's flourishing, Y's value to X cannot count as intrinsic. However, Y is not only instrumentally valuable to X in an out-of-sight-out-of-mind sort of way. The friendship with Y is constitutive of X's psycho-moral self-identity, as it is here and now, and a loss of that friendship (say, if Y suddenly passed away) would be accompanied by considerable pain and grief, although X might find a suitable replacement for Y in due course. X's friendship with Y is thus both non-instrumental and non-fungible; for, as Konstan (1997, p. 72) puts it, their 'affection is not reducible to the mutual appreciation of one another's serviceability'. 'Eudaimonic friendship', a term invoked by Walker, Curren and Jones (2016, p. 290), might helpfully describe the relationship in question: a term that straddles the

distinction between character friendships and Level 2 utility friendships – as would be seconded by those who believe that *eudaimonia* can actually be achieved without perfect virtue (e.g. Kristjánsson, 2020a). Moreover, having Y as a friend is clearly *morally valuable* to X in the sense given to that locution in the present article. It helps prevent X from lapsing into incontinence or vice, by reminding her of what she stands for and what her principles are. The friendship might even, little by little, shade subtly into one of character friendships (Level 3), at least if we are more optimistic than Aristotle himself was about the possibility of people unhabituated into virtue early on in life seeing the light at a later stage (Kristjánsson, 2015, chap. 5). Yet I would flatly reject the claim that Level 2 friendships are simply budding Level 3 friendships or Level 3 friendships in disguise. It is much too developmentally ‘optimistic’ to think that all morally relevant Level 2 interactions between utility friends will, at least if all goes well, progress towards a mutual interest in developing each other’s virtue. Some people are firmly stuck, their whole lives, at the levels of continence or incontinence. Indeed, as already noted, that is where Aristotle thought most people are at (1985, p. 190 [1150a15]).

That said, I hope to have shown that Level 2 utility friendships can meet the desiderata of a relationship that is ‘morally valuable’ in a sense that was not terminologically available to Aristotle but does matter significantly for any contemporary account of the moral value of friendships. It goes without saying that the overall credibility of the argument proposed in this article hinges, to a large extent, on the plausibility of Level 2 types of utility friendships, as described here, because Level 2 drives an exegetical and substantive wedge between the standardly acknowledged Aristotelian levels.

Level 3. Here we re-enter more mainstream Aristotelian territory. Level 3 marks the emergence of ‘complete’ (namely, character) friendships. Those can only develop between people habituated into virtue: who are cultivating or have cultivated a virtuous self-identity. X and Y are workmates and soulmates who are both concerned about growing as persons of good character and bolster each other’s efforts in that area by mutual contributions to the growth of *phronesis* (which turns merely habituated virtue into perfect *phronetic* virtue). While not yet having reached Level 4 of perfect virtue, ‘each moulds the other in what they approve of’, and this effect ‘increases the more often they meet’ (Aristotle, 1985, p. 266 [1172a11–14]; cf. Cooper, 1977; Brewer, 2005). Here, X has become ‘related to his friend as he is to himself, since the friend is another himself’ (1985, p. 246 [1166a30–33]). This is why, in character friendships, the friend is not only non-fungible but irreplaceable in the sense that because of Y’s unique blend of character and individual traits, no one can replace the part that Y plays in X’s character make-up. This then moves the nature of the friendship up from the extrinsic to the intrinsic level. It is precisely at this point that Aristotle’s theory becomes more ‘complex’ than Mill’s, as I put it earlier. While Levels 0–1 might seem to correspond to Mill’s ‘lower’ goods and Level 2 to his ‘higher’ goods, there is no space for other goods at Mill’s level of the intrinsically (as distinct from essentially) valuable than happiness itself. For Aristotle, however, character friendship belongs to a category of various intrinsically valuable goods, constitutive of *eudaimonia*.

It is worth mentioning here, in passing, that not everyone agrees that even true character friends are intrinsically valuable in Aristotle's axiological system. Hitz (2011), who subscribes to a hard intellectualist interpretation of *eudaimonia*, based on a literal reading of Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* according to which only contemplation has intrinsic value for the good life, argues that character friendships belong to a category of goods that she names 'integrated goods'. Those involve a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic value, but where the former (here resting on engagement with friends being constitutive of the good person's virtuous practical activities) is still not their key feature and diminishes with greater contemplative excellence. On Hitz's axiological interpretation of Aristotle's friendship theory, it may seem even easier to downplay the difference between Level 2 and Level 3 than I have made it out to be: namely, to see higher-level utility friends as functioning in much the same way as character friends since both would presumably fit into the same category of 'integrated goods'. However, I do worry that Hitz's interpretation throws the baby out with the bathwater. Inclusivist or intellectualist readings of *eudaimonia* aside, rejecting the pure intrinsic value of character friends and relegating them to the group of 'the replaceable', albeit painfully so, simply goes against the grain of the whole tenor of Aristotle's idealised discussion of character friendships both in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*. The final thing to note about Level 3 is that this is the level where *phronesis* begins to kick in. Understanding how people progress to Level 3, either directly from 'habituated virtue' or (possibly in some cases) via the developmental level of continence, will thus hold the key to solving the aforementioned 'paradox of moral education'.

Level 4. This is the final level of complete friendship which is also 'perfect' and on which a lot of Aristotle's somewhat idealised description of fully internally and externally unified character friendships is focused. X and Y and are soulmates and *phronimoi*. While X needs no encouragement from Y not to go astray (as X has no temptations in that direction) and X's virtuous make-up is already fully mature, what X gains from the relationship is to have her evaluative outlook affirmed 'unreservedly and unconditionally' (Brewer, 2005, p. 730) by Y and to rejoice in the 'collaboration' of 'two jointly produced sensibilities' (2005, p. 758). As Cicero – drawing heavily on Aristotle – put it: 'The reward of friendship is friendship itself' (2018, p. 63).

I have now tried to account satisfactorily for all the variances between the levels of friendships, beneficial to wellbeing, in Table 1. Neither ancient nor contemporary accounts of friendship acknowledge the moral value of what I have dubbed Level 2 utility friendships. I have explained already what the reason for that may be in the case of Aristotle-based accounts. As alluded to in the above comparisons with Mill, Aristotle has a complex and nuanced theory of utility or usefulness. There seems to be a tendency among scholars to read Aristotle as a Kantian, prioritising intrinsic goods over utility (as critiqued in O'Connor, 1990). However, there are many kinds of utility in Aristotle and although they differ in terms of instrumental versus non-instrumental and intrinsic versus extrinsic value, all are beneficial for the agent's own *eudaimonia*. The utility of friendliness and friendship at Levels 0 and 1 may refer solely to the agent's basic necessities and bodily goods. At Level 2, however, utility begins to benefit the goods of the agent's soul: her

moral development. That level still remains within the confines of what modern philosophy would define as 'enlightened self-interest'. Things get more complicated at Levels 3 and 4 because of Aristotle's theory of the character friend as 'another self' – an alter ego (1985, p. 246 [1166a30–33]; cf. pp. 260 and 265 [1170b6–7; 1172a32–34]) – obliterating any simple distinction between the self and the other. Nevertheless, although we here move into the realm of the intrinsically valuable and of intermingled selves, the concept of usefulness does not become redundant. Character friendship is useful because it is useful for the friends to become better people. Indeed, a character friend is, other things being equal, the most 'useful' friend of all. According to Aristotle, the best form of self-love is the love we have for the best part of ourselves, though not to the detriment of the 'lower' parts of us. So too the useful. The highest form of usefulness serves the 'highest' part of us (our intellectual and moral virtues), but not to the detriment of the lower, necessary, parts. Aristotle's discussion benefits here from being unpolluted by latter-day debates about narrow and exclusively instrumentalist forms of utilitarianism (and also by notions of a sharp line between selfishness and altruism, see Salkever, 2008, p. 66). He is neither shy of the notion of the useful nor sees it as antithetical to intrinsic value.

It is in order to end this section with a comparison to the only other article located that has explicitly proposed to defend the moral value of utility friendships. James Grunebaum (2005) very much follows the same strategy as I have, of crowbarring morally valuable utility friendships into Aristotle's system through a more modern understanding of 'moral' (rather than just sweeping the Aristotelian stables), by positing a distinction between two sorts of utility friendships, where the second one passes muster in this respect. However, he does this without invoking the extrinsic–intrinsic or instrumental–non-instrumental distinctions, or the one between friendships that are simply replaceable versus fully fungible. Whilst his article offers suggestive and astute forays into the subject, it fails in my view to make adequate use of available Aristotelian resources and instead invokes an under-motivated distinction. Grunebaum begins helpfully by distinguishing relationships of mere friendliness from what he calls fair-weather friendships which I attributed to Level 1. He also points out correctly that Aristotle's own 'unkind descriptions' of all utility friendships seem to be geared towards only the mercenary, exploitative and occasional kind (2005, p. 209).

The originality of Grunebaum's manoeuvre lies in distinguishing between utility friendships involving 'restricted and unrestricted goodwill' and in justifying the latter morally (2005, pp. 210ff). What I called Level 2 utility friendships involve, on Grunebaum's characterisation, friends who 'guard and preserve each other prosperity' in unrestricted ways and operate with a long-term perspective, much like character friends do (although the psycho-moral 'objects' being guarded and preserved are slightly different). He also notes, convincingly, that unrestricted utility friends may conceivably have 'an even higher degree of morality than virtue friends' (2005, p. 211), given a modern conception of morality, because what I called budding Level 3 character friendships, especially among young and merely habituated virtue learners, may actually be less morally demanding

than the continence-guarded, and more Kantian-like, moral commitments mutually reinforced at Level 2. An illustration of that point appears in Section 4. Grunebaum makes an additional positive observation about the possibility of entertaining mutually beneficial friendships relations with a much greater number of utility friends than character friends. It must be admitted, however, that Aristotle himself is not consistent on this point. On the one hand, he says that utility friendships enable us to 'please many people': on the other hand, he advises us that friends for utility should be limited 'since it is hard to return many people's services' (Aristotle, 1985, p. 218, [1158a17–18]; cf. p. 261 [1170b25–27]).

All in all, Grunebaum defines unrestricted utility friendships as being motivated by goodwill 'aimed at a friend's complete overall well-being' (just as in character friendships), whereas restricted well-being is aimed at only 'a portion of well-being' (2005, p. 208). Grunebaum is clearly onto something here, but I consider the terms 'restricted' and 'unrestricted' too imprecise and bloated to capture what is at stake in Level 1 versus Level 2 utility friendships. First of all, even Level 1 utility friendships may well be 'unrestricted' in the sense that X harbours *general goodwill* towards all aspects of Y's life. X would feel sad, for example, if Y lost his wife or was undeservedly sacked from her job. The fact that X would recover gradually even if the friendship with Y were lost does not mean that the *goodwill* itself is somehow necessarily restricted while the friendship lasts – although other aspects of the friendship could be said to be restricted (see my earlier characterisation of Level 1).

On the other hand, on another plausible understanding of 'unrestricted', the friendship between X and Y is also restricted at Level 2 in that it does not extend to the mutual appreciation, and polishing, of moral character *qua* virtues (cf. Salkever, 2008, on how all utility friendships are directed at 'partial aspects' of the friend's life, p. 64). Grunebaum goes too far when he contends that 'the unrestricted goodwill of [some] utility friendships enables friends to complete their individual characters by acting *virtuously* to each other' (2005, p. 213; my italics). Of course, a virtuous person will act virtuously towards anyone, friend or non-friend, and in that sense 'complete' her own character. However, since that is trivially true given the definition of a virtuous person, Grunebaum must mean that in some utility friendships friends act virtuously towards one another in order to help the friend cultivate or complete her character. This conflates an important and valid distinction between Level 2 (which still counts as 'incomplete' friendship) and Level 3, not to mention Level 4.

So while Grunebaum is quite right in that 'more value resides in utility friendships than Aristotle concedes' (2005, p. 213), he fails to avail himself of a more nuanced conceptual repertoire than simply a distinction between 'restricted' and 'unrestricted' goodwill. This complaint signifies more than a quibble about terminology. I have argued in this section that making use of distinctions between instrumental versus extrinsic, non-instrumental versus intrinsic, and fungible versus (painfully) replaceable carries more hope for making sense of the distinction between two qualitatively different levels of utility friendships in ways that are relevant to contemporary 'moral' concerns and remain at least minimally faithful to an Aristotelian system of ethical development.

4. A brief online example

As noted at the outset, I realised that something was not quite right about the contemporary discourse about Aristotle-inspired views of types of friendships when I delved into the growing literatures on online friendships (or lack thereof). It is therefore fitting to append to this theoretical discussion an illustrative example, derived from cyberspace, which I believe bolsters my above case about the nature of Level 2 utility friendships and their moral value. I hope I may be forgiven for relying here on a personal example that is close to my heart. There is nothing particularly unique about this example by virtue of it being based on my anecdotal experiences: I simply choose it because of my familiarity with it.

In August 2018, I suddenly developed overnight, and without any prior warning, a condition called sudden sensorineural hearing loss ('ssnhl'): a fairly rare but nasty syndrome that robs one spontaneously of hearing in one ear and can have various other unpleasant repercussions, including vertigo, an intrusive tinnitus sound in the affected ear and some persistent imbalance and co-ordination issues. As with many sufferers, an aggressive steroid treatment did not bring my hearing back, and I am also still left with some of the disabling side-issues. This is a little-known and badly understood condition, not only among the general public but also in the medical community where it is normally termed 'idiopathic' (i.e. without a known cause), although a virus infection of the inner ear is often suspected. Most people do not think that losing hearing in one ear is that serious; after all the other ear remains intact. What they do not realise is that this particular kind of hearing loss has serious consequences for one's functioning across various life domains. Sufferers often feel misunderstood, therefore, badly treated by the health system and in general more disenfranchised than many other patient groups.

Early on, I was lucky enough to be able to find and be admitted to two closed Facebook support groups for ssnhl sufferers. Those groups gave me a lifeline. As the sufferers often know more about the nature and repercussions of this syndrome than health-care professionals, those support groups provided me with invaluable information, not available to me elsewhere, and personal support. As I argue below, a lot of this support was of the *moral* kind. Although I have now turned into more of a giver than a receiver in these groups, paying back some of the care and attention that I was given at the outset, I still keep in Facebook contact with some of the people who encouraged me most at the beginning and consider them as my friends. I cannot say that I would have chosen to get to know them if the choice had been mine originally, but at the moment they form part of my self-identity as a ssnhl sufferer, and even if I were miraculously cured overnight, I think I would continue to participate in the support groups, since being disassociated from what I would call the Level 2 utility friends I have met there would cause me considerable pain. Being associated with them is not an intrinsic part of my *eudaimonia*, but it does not only have instrumental value either.

So what sort of friends are they? I would hesitate to call them 'character friends' for at least two reasons. One is that they just represent a random sample of the whole

population who happen to be hit by this illness, and as we know from Aristotle, were few people actually reach the level of character friends. The second reason is that virtue considerations are rarely referred to in the advice and support given. Words such as 'compassion', 'gratitude', even 'courage', seldom appear. Even when, in a spontaneous act of what we could call 'generosity', a rich sufferer decided to donate a hearing aid that was insufficient to him to an uninsured US patient, the exchange between them remained at the level of a mutual benefit discourse. I could not spot a sense of virtuous 'flow' in the benefactor, nor did the beneficiary utilise virtue terms in response. The most common terms used in these groups are for amoral performance skills such as persistence, resilience and grit. The most frequent phrase encountered is something like: 'This is tough, but please hang in there and do not give up, things will get better'. Notably this advice is not only meant to avert psychological surrender but a moral one too. Sufferers, especially those left with unbearable tinnitus and vertigo, have been known to commit suicide, and suicide is normally considered an act of moral despondency, not only a psychological one.

Notice that some support groups may aim higher than this by explicitly encouraging virtue development in their members and hence pave the way for true character friendships. In traditional non-online contexts there are support groups that are known to do this, most famously Alcoholics Anonymous. However, my point is simply that even in groups that do not have such a high-minded aim, moral support may be provided – and by 'moral support' here I do not only mean support of the 'morale' of the sufferer but support that strengthens the sufferer morally.

Here is a recent testimonial lifted from one of the support groups to which I belong:

One year ago today, I woke up violently ill with vertigo and no hearing in my right ear. Since then, the vertigo has mostly subsided, but I still have no hearing in my right ear. This past year was a rollercoaster and probably the hardest year of my life. I sincerely want to thank each one of you for helping me through this crazy ordeal. When things got bad, you all were always there to listen to me vent, answer my questions, let me cry, and even made me laugh. I don't know what I would have done without you! This group is amazing! Thank you all and if there is ever anything I can do to help you through this, please do not hesitate to ask.

In light of this testimonial and others, I find it difficult to identify with Fröding and Peterson's claim that although social network sites 'can sometimes be of mutual advantage to their users', they lead to false expectations about friendships in ways that are morally objectionable and even fail to qualify as examples of Aristotle's 'lesser friendships' (2012, p. 206). Of course social network sites *may* have this effect, but why *necessarily* so? I am not the first person to notice how online support groups, which tend to lurk at the outskirts of the web and only be accessible through invitation, help people deal with traumatic experiences (see e.g. Vallor, 2010; Vernon, 2010, p. 110). However, I believe mine is the first attempt to illustrate how the friendship enacted in Facebook support groups exemplifies neatly the sort of utility friendship that I have associated with Level 2 above: extrinsically but non-instrumentally valuable from a moral point of view.

Notice that although this argument makes a case for the moral value of (some) online friendships, much more is needed to demonstrate that online friends can make the

grade as character friends. For example, having an online character friend must satisfy the additional conditions of (a) loving the friend for her own sake in the special meaning of loving her moral character (as her set of virtues), (b) soulmateship in the strong sense of an alter ego, and (c) viewing the friendship as intrinsically valuable to the extent of seeing the friend as irreplaceable, not only painfully replaceable. Moreover, it stands to reason that even in the case of the characteristics they share with the two other types of true friendships, such as (d) spending time together in shared activities and (e) sharing joys and sorrows, those will assume new extended features in character friendship because of its necessary closeness, devotion and intimacy. Nothing I have said in this section suffices to underwrite the existence of online character friendships; it requires quite a different argumentative approach, as I have attempted to provide elsewhere (Kristjánsson, 2020c).

5. Concluding remarks

There is no doubt that Aristotle was right that many, perhaps most, utility friendships are of the mercenary kind, going for 'the quick wins and low hanging fruit' (Vernon, 2010, p. 233, citing Emerson). However, in this article I have argued for a higher form of utility friendships that binds up some of the psycho-moral lacerations inflicted upon us by life's exigencies. I have argued how the benefits of those (Level 2) utility friendships can count as *moral* in that they steer us away from moral despondency, incontinence and even vice. I have given an example from a domain (cyberspace) at which theorists often look askance precisely because of its potentially morally debilitating effects.

Utility friendships are (contra Millgram, 1987, p. 374) not just related to character friendships in the same way as toy ducks are related to real ducks. Rather, higher-level utility friendships partially blunt the force of a clear distinction between the benefits of utility and character friendship for ethical formation, although I would not want to go as far as Grunebaum in ascribing virtue cultivation to them. We humans are weak-kneed beings, and good utility friends are the morally unsung heroes of the friendship literature, harking back to Aristotle.

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