



Aristotelian Happiness as Achieved through Friendship

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Happiness Through Friendship

There is still a difference between myself and other people. But the difference is less. Other people are closer. I am less concerned about the rest of my own life, and more concerned about the lives of others.
-- Derek Parfit

The search for happiness has been the subject to many philosophical pursuits throughout the ages. This is not only a Western philosophical pursuit however; Eastern philosophies also concerned themselves with happiness. Happiness, for the purpose of this paper, would be having a fulfilling good life stemming from virtuous behavior. Both Aristotle and Confucius had methods of being happy, and, as it seems to me, both place a value on friendship. It is this examination of friendship and its relationship to happiness that is the subject of this paper. I posit that friendship is not merely an assisting force towards happiness, but a necessary one. Using the philosophies of both Aristotle and Confucius, one can see the importance of friendship in two different philosophies, and while these philosophies are similar in many regards their differences do not conflict in any substantial sense. I believe that in examining the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Analects*, one can see a stream of thought that not only values friendship in the search for happiness but places friendship as one, if not *the*, key factor for having a happy life.

Before proceeding onwards, there are some issues that need to be addressed in the comparative project. Aristotelian Virtue Ethics and Confucian Role Ethics are both ethical systems in the sense that they dictate the proper way to conduct oneself. However, it is here that a linguistic problem

is important to understanding friendship in the
Aristotelian sense. People

The key concept here is that of another self. The Aristotelian friend is another self, alike in virtue and allied in aims, therefore by being able to reflect in our other self and properly embody *philia*. If one treats a friend not as an other but as the same as himself; not as extrinsically related but intrinsically (this however will be explained in more depth after discussing Confucianism). So in perfect *philia* one will love oneself (meaning in this instance the other self) not out of a base egoist viewpoint but by virtue of the fact that a true friend is *another* self, one who shares the same virtues, desires, and wishes and who allows for one to metaphorically look in a mirror to see their own faults (1169a). Kahane correspond to a background picture of the good, even an exce

virtuous person. This being said, *junzi* have several qualities that involve friendship and *ren*. Confucius is quoted as saying to an

historically considered to be the best student of Confucius, and he often impressed his master with his qualities and intellect. Alongside Mencius, Xunzi took up the Confucian tradition yet has remained less popular to Western readers, perhaps by virtue of his views

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õEqphwekwu"uckf."õ [cp" J wk."y j cv"ku"vjg"y kug"rgtuqp"nkmgA" Y j cv"ku"the person of *ren* nkmgAø"
Yan Yuan [an alternative name for Yan Hui] cpu y gtgf."÷V j g" y kug" rgtuqp"mpq y u" j k o ugnh."
and the person of *ren* nqxgu" j k o ugnhø"Eqphwekwu"uckf."õ [cp" J wk"ecp"dg"ecmgf"cp"
enlightened gentleman [*junzi* ø* J wvqp"54: +0"K"hggn"vj cv"vj ku" gpecpsulates the meaning of
ren. In summary, friendships define one and being friends with someone entails that they
are, in a sense, part of you or, if we are to relate it back to Aristotle, another self. This
self-love is a feature of *ren* and it is through *ren* v j cv" qpg"ce j kgxgu" c" :-xktvwqwuo"nkhgø"Ukpeg"
this paper takes Happiness in an Aristotelian sense, I believe one could say that
Happiness is contingent on friendship and, therefore, *ren*.

When looking at the two philosophies one can see some similarities, but the point that I wish to make is that of friendship being in both a kind of self-love. Does this make one an egoist however? Ctkuvqvnng"fkuc i tgggu."uc {kp i."õv j g" wug"qh"vjg"vgt o "]g i qkuv_"ku"
derived from the fact that the most common form of self-love is base, and those who are
g i qkuv"kp"vj ku"ugpug"ctg"lwuvn{"etkveke| gfö*338: d+0"V j g"fkuvkpevkqp" j gtg"ku"dg v y ggp"people
who love only themselves. Opposing, there could also be someone who loves himself or
herself dwv."cu"uggp"kp"Ctkuvqvnngøu"r j knquqr j {"kp"rctvkeular, this other self ought be a
friend. So while *philia* would be historically vtcpuncvfgf"cu"õdtqv j gtn {"nqxgö"qt"õhtkpgfu j krö"
I would venture to say it is a special kind of love in which the same love that one has for
oneself is bestowed upon another as a separate friend, by virtue of their friendship and

likeness. In Confucian philosophy, however, this is not said outright. Rather,

the I, dwv. "kpuvpcf. ðvjg"nqxkpi "qh"qpgøu"htkcpf"hqt"jku"qyp"ucmg"pggf"pqv"ko rn{"vjg"
primacy of concetp"hqt"vjg"htkcpf"qxgt"eqpegtp"hqt"qpgugnh<"y jcv"ku"ko rnkf í ku"vjcv"vjg"
qvjgtøu"i qqf"ku"kvugnh"tgcuqp"gpqw i j í ö*Kahane 74). Others are still different, but they are
the same self, by virtue of their like goals and virtue, and one should not value concern
over one's close friend over themselves because they should be valued the same as

friends did not seem to be a factor of happiness, only of sociability. In interpreting their results the following is said: "having a friendship that is high in quality still adds something extra to our lives and has a positive effect on our happiness level. In other words, the relationship between friendship and happiness cannot be accounted for by personality factors alone." In such a way to account for personality

gzvtcö"cpf"rgtjcr"vjcv"ku"vtwg" J cr rkpguu+"dw"kv."gxgp" y kvj qvw"mpqy kpi "uq."uwr rqtvu"vjg" notion of self-love seen in Aristotle. The science of psychology provides much needed empirical evidence whke j "ecp" j gnr"gcug"qpgøu"umgrvkeku o "cdqvw"vjg"uwdlget of Friendship and Happiness. However, I must note that the psychologists were beaten to their conclusion by philosophers centuries ago, I still appreciate the supporting evidence, however.

Humans are undeniable social beings. From the moment we are born to the moment we die, people are part of our lives, and our memories, and these relations define and shape our lives in a substantial way. While family cannot be chosen, friends can. If happiness is contingent on proper Friendship, then the choice of friends may be the most important choice one ever makes. Aristotle and Confucius both recognized the importance of maximizing the virtues that govern relations, *philia* and *ren*. These concepts, although developed thousands of miles apart in cultures that did not interact, seem to be pointing to a singular idea that emphasizes friendship in the pursuit of happiness. To view another as a separate self and to treat them as such is to search for happiness in the best possible way. Contemporary psychological research supports this thesis and, in reinterpreting some definitions, one can see how the psychological and

Works Cited