

ARISTOTLE
Nicomachean Ethics

Translation, Glossary,
and Introductory Essay

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BOOK VIII

Chapter 1. ^(1155A)It would follow, after these things, to go through what concerns friendship, since it is a certain kind of virtue,²³⁰ or goes with virtue, and is also most necessary for life. For no one would choose to live without friends, despite having all the rest of the good things, since for rich people and those who rule and have power, there seems to be the greatest need for friends. For what benefit would there be from such abundance if one were deprived of the opportunity to do favors, which arises most of all and in the most praiseworthy way toward friends? And how could it be watched over ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ and kept safe without friends? For the greater it is, the shakier its foundation is. And in both poverty and other misfortunes people believe that friends are the only refuge. And they believe that friends are helps to the young for avoiding error and to the old for caring for them and for action in which they fall short on account of weakness, and to those at their peak for beautiful actions “when two go together,”²³¹ since they are more capable of thinking and acting.

And friendship seems to be present by nature in a parent for a child and in a child for a parent, not only in human beings but also in birds and most animals, and for animals alike in kind toward one another, ⁽¹²⁰⁾ and especially among human beings, which is why we praise those who are friends of humanity. And one might see among those who travel that every human being is akin and a friend to a human being. And friendship seems to hold cities together, and lawmakers seem to take it more seriously than justice, for like-mindedness seems to be something similar to friendship, and they aim at this most of all and banish faction most of all for being hostile to it. And when people are friends there is no need of justice, but when they are just there is still need of friendship, and among things that are just, what inclines toward friendship seems to be most just of all.²³² And friendship is not only necessary but also beautiful, for we praise ⁽¹³⁰⁾ those who love their friends, and an abundance of friends seems to be one of the beautiful things. Moreover, people believe that it is the same people who are good men and friends.

But there is dispute about it on no small matters. For some people set it down that it is a certain kind of likeness and that those who are alike are friends. Hence people say “like to like” and “birds of a feather” and that sort of thing.²³³ Others, on the contrary, say that all ^(1155B) such people are “potters” in relation to each other. And they look for a higher and more natural reason for these same things, Euripides saying “earth is in love with rain” when it is dried out, and “solemn heaven filled with rain loves to fall to earth,” and Heraclitus that “what

is opposed holds together, and the most beautiful harmony comes from things that pull apart” and “all things come about by strife,” while others, including Empedocles, are on the opposite side, for he says that like seeks its like.²⁴⁴ But let those things in the impasses that have to do with nature be set aside (since they are not at home in the present inquiry), and let us examine all those ⁽¹⁰⁾ that have to do with human things and pertain to character and feelings, such as whether friendship comes about in all people, or whether it is impossible for people who are vicious to be friends, and whether there is one or more than one species of friendship. For those who believe that it is one, because it admits of more and less, are convinced by an indication that is not sufficient, since even things that differ in species are capable of being related as more and less; but this has been discussed before.²⁴⁵

Chapter 2. Perhaps the things that have to do with this might become clear if what is loveable is discerned, for it seems that not everything is loved, but only what is loveable, and that this is what is good or pleasant or useful; and what is useful would ⁽²⁰⁾ seem to be that by means of which something good or a pleasure comes about, so that the good and the pleasant would be the things loved as ends.²⁴⁶ But do people love the good, or what is good for themselves? For sometimes these are discordant; and it is similar with what is pleasant. And it seems that each person loves what is good for himself, and that, while the good is loveable simply, the good for each is loveable to each. And each person loves not what is good for himself, but what appears to be, but this will make no difference, since it will be what appears loveable.

But while there are three things on account of which people love, it is not friendship that is meant in the case of loving inanimate things, since there is no loving in return, or wishing for the good of that thing. (For it would no doubt be ridiculous to wish for good things ⁽³⁰⁾ for wine, but if one wishes anything, it is that it be preserved in order that one may have it.) But people say that one ought to wish for good things for a friend for his own sake. However, they call people goodwill who wish for good things in that way when the same thing does not come from the other person, since they speak of goodwill in people who reciprocate it as being friendship. Or must one add, when they are not unaware of it? For many people are goodwill toward those they have not seen, but believe to be decent ^(1156A) or useful, and one of the latter might feel this same way toward the former. These people, then, are obviously goodwill to one another, but how could one say they were friends when they are unaware of how they stand toward each other? Therefore it is necessary to have goodwill and wish for good things for one another, not being unaware of it, on account of some one of the reasons mentioned.

Chapter 3. But these reasons differ from one another in species, and therefore the kinds of loving and the kinds of friendship do too. So there are three species of friendship, equal in number to the kinds of things that are loved; for in accordance with each, there is a reciprocal loving which one is not unaware of, and those who love one another wish for good things for one another ⁽¹⁰⁾ in the same sense in which they love. So those who love one another for what is useful do not love one another for themselves, but insofar as something good comes to them from one another. And it is similar with those who love on account of pleasure, since they are fond of charming people not for being people of a certain sort, but because they are pleasing to themselves. So those who love for what is useful have a liking based on what is good for themselves, and those who love for pleasure have a liking based on what is pleasant to themselves, and the other person is loved not for what he is, but insofar as he is useful or pleasant. Therefore, these are friendships of an incidental kind, since it is not insofar as the one loved is the very person he is that he is loved, but insofar as he provides, in the one case, something good, or in the other case, pleasure. Hence, such friendships ⁽²⁰⁾ are easily dissolved, when the people themselves do not stay the way they were, for when the others are no longer pleasant or useful they stop loving them. And what is useful does not stay the same, but becomes something different at a different time. So when that through which they were friends has departed, the friendship is dissolved, since the friendship was a consequence of that.

The sort of friendship that is for the useful seems to come about especially in the old (for those who are at such a time of life pursue not what is pleasant but what is beneficial), and in as many of those at their peak and of the young as pursue what is advantageous. Such people are not very likely to live together with one another, for sometimes they are not even pleasant to one another; so they have no additional need of such an association when the other person is not beneficial, since the other ⁽³⁰⁾ person is pleasant just so far as they have hopes of something good from him. And it is among these friendships that people place those with foreign guests. But the friendship of the young seems to be based on pleasure, since they live in accord with feeling, and pursue especially what is pleasant to themselves and present at hand; but when the time of life falls differently, the pleasures too become different. Hence they quickly become friends and quickly stop, since the friendship changes at the same time as what is pleasant, ^(1156B) and the turnover of this sort of pleasure is rapid. The young are also lustful, since the greater part of sexual love results from passion and is based on pleasure; this is why they love and stop loving quickly, often changing within the same day. And the young do wish to pass the time together and to live with one

another, since what they get out of friendship comes about in that way.

But the complete sort of friendship is that between people who are good and are alike in virtue, since they wish for good things for one another in the same way insofar as they are good, and they are good in themselves. And those who wish for good things ⁽¹⁰⁾ for their friends for their own sake are friends most of all, since they are that way for themselves and not incidentally; so the friendship of these people lasts as long as they are good, and virtue is enduring. And each of them is good simply and good for his friend, since good people are both good simply and beneficial to one another. And they are similarly pleasant, since the good are pleasant both simply and to one another, for to each person, actions that are his own and such as his own are according to his pleasure, while the actions of the good are the same or similar. And it is reasonable that such friendship is lasting, for all those things that ought to belong to friends are joined together in it. For every friendship is for something good ⁽²⁰⁾ or for pleasure, either simply or for the one who loves, and is from some sort of similarity, and in this sort all the things mentioned are present on account of themselves, since in this sort the people are alike, and all the rest of it; and what is good simply is also pleasant simply, and these things most of all are loved, and so the loving and the friendship among these people is the most intense and best.

But such friendships are likely to be rare, for such people are few.²⁷ Also, there is an additional need of time and intimate acquaintance, for according to the common saying, it is not possible for people to know one another until they use up the proverbial amount of salt together, and so it is not possible for them to accept one another before that, or to be friends until each shows himself to each as loveable and is trusted. Those who quickly ⁽³⁰⁾ make gestures of friendship toward one another want to be friends, but are not unless they are also loveable and know this, since wishing for friendship comes about as something quick, but friendship does not.

Chapter 4. This sort of friendship, then, is complete both in time and in the other respects, and in all of them, the same or similar things come to each person from the other, which is just what ought to belong to friends. And ^(1157A) friendship on account of what is pleasant has a resemblance to this sort, since the good are also pleasant to one another. And it is similar with friendship on account of what is useful, since the good are that way to one another also. And the friendships between those [who seek pleasure or use] are most enduring when the same thing comes to them from one another, such as pleasure, and not only that but also from the same thing, such as between charming people, and not as with a lover and a beloved. For the latter do not take pleasure in the same things, but the lover in looking at the beloved, and the beloved in being paid attention to by

the lover. And sometimes, when the bloom of youth fades, the friendship cools (since to the one the sight is not ⁽¹⁰⁾ pleasing, and to the other the attentiveness is not forthcoming). On the other hand, many lovers remain friends, if, as a result of their intimacy, they become fond of each other's characters, when these are alike. But people who are involved in sexual relations not in exchange for something pleasant but for something useful are friends less fully and remain so less.

Those who are friends on account of something useful break up at the same time the advantage comes to an end, since they were friends not of one another but of what they got out of one another. So it is possible even for base sorts of people to be friends to one another for pleasure or for use, and for decent people to be friends to base ones, and for people who are neither one nor the other to be friends to any sort whatever, but it is clear that only the good can be friends for themselves, since the bad do not enjoy their own kind ⁽²⁰⁾ unless some benefit comes from them. And only the friendship of the good is resistant to slander, since it is not easy to be persuaded by anyone about someone whose character has been proved by oneself over a long time; between these people there is a trusting, and a never doing each other wrong, and everything else people consider worthy of friendship in its true sense. But in the other friendships, nothing prevents such trouble from being stirred up.

Since people use the word "friends" for those who are allied on account of what is useful, just as with cities (for alliances between cities seem to come about for the sake of advantage), and for those who are fond of one another on account of pleasure, just as with children, perhaps it is necessary that we too call such people ⁽³⁰⁾ friends, but say there is more than one species of friendship, and that, while friendship in the primary and governing sense is between the good insofar as they are good, the remaining kinds are friendships only by a likeness, since the people are friends only in that respect in which there is something good and some likeness in them; for even the pleasant is good for people devoted to pleasure. But these other kinds are not very apt to be joined together, and the same people do not become friends on account of use as on account of pleasure, since, on the whole, incidental things are not linked up. ^(1157B) And since friendship is divided into these species, people of a low sort will be friends for pleasure or use, since they are alike in that respect, while the good will be friends for themselves, since they are friends insofar as they are good. The latter, then, are friends simply, but the former are friends incidentally and by resembling the latter.

Chapter 5. And just as in the case of the virtues, people are called good either with respect to an active condition or with respect to being at work, so too

is it with friendship. For those who live together take pleasure in one another and provide good things for one another, while others, when sleeping or when in separate places, are not at work at it but still are in such a condition as to ^[10] be at work in the manner of friends. For places do not dissolve friendship as such, but only the being-at-work of it; but if the absence becomes long-lasting, it seems to cause forgetfulness of the friendship, which is why it is said that “lack of communication breaks up many friendships.” And neither old people nor those with sour dispositions appear to be friendly, since the extent of pleasure is small in them, and no one is able to spend much time with what is painful or not pleasing; for nature appears to avoid what is painful most of all, and to aim at what is pleasant. But those who approve of one another but do not live together seem to be goodwilled rather than friends, since nothing is so characteristic of friends as living together; ^[20] for those in need crave benefits, while those who are blessed crave daily companionship, since it belongs to them least of all to be solitary. But it is impossible for people to spend time together who are not pleasing to one another, or who do not enjoy the same things, which is what a fraternal association ^[30] seems to involve. Friendship, then, belongs most of all to good people, as has been said repeatedly; for it seems that what is loveable and preferable is what is simply good or pleasant, while what is loved and preferred by each person is what is good or pleasing to that person, and to a good person, a good person is that way on both counts.

Affection seems like a feeling, but friendship seems like an active condition, for affection is no less ^[30] present for inanimate things, but loving in return involves choice, and choice comes from an active condition. And people wish for good things for those they love for those others’ own sake, not as a result of feeling but as a result of an active condition. And by loving the friend, they love what is good for themselves, for when a good person becomes a friend, he becomes good for the one to whom he is a friend. So each of them loves what is good for himself, and also gives back an equal amount in return in wishing as well as in what is pleasant; for it is said that “friendship is equal relationship,” ^[1158A] and this belongs most of all to the friendship of the good.

BOOK IX

Chapter 4. ^[1166A] Now the things involved in friendship toward those around us, and by which friendships are defined, seem to come from things related to oneself. ^[20] For people consider a friend to be someone who wishes for and does good things, or things that seem good, for the sake of the other person, or who wants the friend to be and to live, for the friend’s own sake, which is the very thing mothers feel toward their children, and which friends who are in conflict feel. Others consider a friend to be someone with whom one spends time and who prefers the same things, or someone who shares in pain and enjoyment with a friend. This too happens with mothers especially. And friendship is defined by any of ^[10] these things.

But each of them belongs to a decent person in relation to himself (and to everyone else, insofar as they assume that they are decent people, but it seems, as was said, ^[20] that virtue and the person of serious worth are the measure of each thing), since he is in agreement with himself and desires the same things with all his soul; and so he wants good things for himself, or those that seem so, and does them (since it belongs to a good person to work hard at good things), and for his own sake (since they are for the sake of his thinking part, which seems to *be* each person), and he wants himself to live and be preserved, and especially that in him by which he exercises judgment. For *being* is a good thing for a person of serious worth, and each person ^[20] wants good things for himself, and no one chooses to have all things by becoming someone else (for even now a god has what is good), but while being whoever he is, and each person would seem to *be* his activity of thinking, or that most of all. And such a person wants to spend time with himself, since he does it pleasantly, for his memories of things he has done are delightful and his expectations of things he is going to do are good, and such things are pleasing. And his thinking is well supplied with things to contemplate. And he most of all is at one with himself in pain and pleasure, since at all times it is the same thing that is painful or pleasant, and not one thing at one time and something else at another, since he is, so to speak, without regrets.

So it is ^[30] because each of these things is present in a decent person in relation to himself, and because he can be related to a friend as he is to himself (since the friend is another self), that friendship seems to be any of these things, and that friends seem to be those to whom they belong. But let the question whether there is friendship toward oneself or not be set aside for the present, though it would seem that there could be friendship in this respect, insofar as each person is two or more, ^[1166B] and because a surpassing instance of friendship

is like a friendship toward oneself. But it appears that the attributes mentioned are present in most people, even in those who are of low character. But is it insofar as they are pleased with themselves and assume themselves to be decent that they share in them?

Certainly these attributes are not present in any of those who are completely base and do ungodly things, nor do they even seem to be. And they are hardly present in people of low character, for they differ with themselves, and desire some things but wish for others, like unrestrained people; for they prefer things that are pleasant but harmful, instead of what seems to be good for ⁽¹⁰⁾ themselves, and they refrain from doing what they believe is best for themselves out of cowardice and laziness. And those by whom many terrible crimes have been committed, who are hated for their viciousness, even flee from living and do away with themselves. And corrupt people look for others to spend their days with, running away from themselves, for when they are by themselves they have many uncomfortable recollections, and anticipate other things of the same kind, but when they are with others they forget. And since they have nothing loveable about them, they feel no friendliness toward themselves. Such people do not even feel joy or pleasure along with themselves, since the soul within them is in a state of civil war, ⁽²⁰⁾ and one part, on account of vice, is pained at refraining from certain things when another part is pleased; one part drags them here and the other part there, as if tearing them apart. But if it is not possible to feel pain and pleasure at the same time, still, after a little while, they are pained because they were pleased, and wish these things had not become pleasant to them, since people of low character are full of regrets.

So it is apparent that a base person is not even disposed in a friendly way toward himself, on account of having nothing loveable about him. Then if being that way is too miserable, one ought to avoid vice with the utmost effort, and try to be a decent person, for in that way one can be in a friendly state with oneself, and also become a friend to someone else.



Chapter 8. But one might raise an impasse whether one ought to love oneself most, or someone else. For people criticize those who show the most fondness for themselves, ⁽³⁰⁾ and, as though they were in disgrace, disparage them as self-lovers; and it seems that a base person does everything for his own sake, and that someone is the more corrupt to the extent that he does so the more—so that people complain about him, for example, that he does nothing apart from his own interest—but a decent person acts on account of what is beautiful, and the better a person he is, the more on account of the beautiful, and for the sake of a friend, while he disregards his own interest. But the facts are not in harmony with these ⁽¹⁶⁰⁰⁾ claims, and this is not unreasonable. For people say that one ought to love one's best friend most, and a best friend is someone who wishes for good things for the sake of that person for whom he wishes them, even if no one is going to know he does; but this belongs most of all to oneself in relation to oneself, and so too do all the rest of the things by which a friend is defined, for it was said that all the things that have to do with friendship arise out of oneself and extend to others. ⁽²⁰⁾ And all the proverbs agree with this opinion, such as “one soul” and “the things of friends are common” and “friendship is equal relationship” and “the knee is closer than the shin,” ⁽²⁰⁾ since all these would apply most of all to oneself, for one is ⁽¹⁰⁾ a friend to oneself most of all, and so what he ought to love most is himself. So there is appropriately an impasse about which

side it is right to follow, since both have a certain credibility.

Now perhaps it is necessary to separate these sorts of arguments and to distinguish to what extent and in what way each of them is truthful. So if we were to grasp the sense in which each side means love of self, it would probably become clear. Now those who bring it into reproach call people self-lovers who distribute a greater amount to themselves in the way of money, honors, and bodily pleasures, since most people crave these and zealously chase after them as though they were the best things, so that they are also things that are fought over. Those, then, who are greedy for these things gratify ⁽²⁰⁾ their desires and their passions generally, and the irrational part of the soul, and most people are of this kind; hence, from its being bad for the most part, the name has become so as well, and people justly reproach those who love themselves in this way. And it is not unclear that most people are accustomed to mean by self-lovers those who distribute such things to themselves, for if someone were always eager to do what is just or what is temperate himself, most of all, or do anything else whatever that is in accord with the virtues, and in general were to save up for himself what is beautiful to do, no one would say he was a lover of self or blame him.

But it would seem rather that it is such a person who is a lover of self; at least he takes for himself the things that are most beautiful ⁽³⁰⁾ and most good, and gratifies what is most authoritative in himself, and obeys this in all things. And just as a city, or any other organization, seems to be, most of all, its most authoritative part, so too does a human being; and so the person who loves and gratifies this is most a lover of self. And people are called self-restrained and unrestrained according to whether intellect masters them or not, as though this were each person; and ^(1165A) the things people seem most of all to have done themselves and willingly are the things they have done with reason. That, then, this is each person, or is so most of all, is not unclear, nor that a decent person loves this most. Hence such a person would be a lover of self most of all, though in a different form from the one that is reproached, differing as much as living by reason does from living by passion, and as much as desiring either the beautiful or what seems advantageous.²⁰ Everyone, then, approves of and praises those who are exceptionally zealous about beautiful actions, and if they all competed for the beautiful, and strained to the utmost to perform the most beautiful actions, then for all ⁽¹⁰⁾ in common there would be what is needful, and for each in particular there would be the greatest of goods, if indeed virtue is that.

Therefore, a good person ought to be a lover of self, since he will both profit himself and benefit the others by performing beautiful actions, and a corrupt person ought not, since he will harm himself and those around him by

following base passions. So in a corrupt person, what he ought to do and what he does are out of harmony, but a decent person does what he ought, since every intellect chooses what is best for itself, and the decent person obeys his intellect. But it is also true of a person of serious worth that he does many things for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary, ⁽²⁰⁾ dies for them,²⁰ since he will give up money and honors, and all the goods people fight over, to gain what is beautiful; for he would choose to have an intense pleasure for a short time rather than a mild one for a long time, and to live in a beautiful way for a year rather than in a random way for many years, and to perform one great and beautiful action rather than many small ones. And this no doubt is what happens with those who die for others; they choose something great and beautiful for themselves. Such a person would also give up money in a case in which his friends would get more money, since there would be money for the friend, but a beautiful act for himself, so that he distributes the greater good to himself. And it is the same way with honors ⁽³⁰⁾ and offices, for he will give up all these things to a friend, since this is a beautiful thing for him, and something to be praised. And he seems appropriately to be someone of serious stature, since he prefers the beautiful above all things. And it is possible that he would even give up actions to a friend, and it would be a more beautiful thing to become responsible for the friend's performing them than to perform them himself.²¹ So in everything that is praised, a person of serious worth obviously distributes to himself the greater share of ^(1165B) the beautiful. In this way, then, one ought to be a lover of self, as was said, but one should not be so in the way most people are.

Chapter 9. It is also a matter of dispute whether someone who is happy needs friends or not. For people say there is no need of friends for those who are blessed and self-sufficient, since good things belong to them already; so since they are sufficient to themselves they lack nothing, while a friend, who is another self, supplies what someone is incapable of supplying by himself. Therefore, "when destiny provides well, why does one need friends?"²¹ But it seems absurd, when people assign all good things to the happy person, not to grant him friends, which ⁽¹⁰⁾ seem to be the greatest of external goods.²² And if it belongs to a friend to do good more than to receive it, and doing good for others belongs to a good person and to virtue, and it is a more beautiful thing to do good for friends than for strangers, a person of serious worth will need people to do good to. Hence it is inquired even whether one needs friends more in good fortune than in bad fortune, since the unfortunate person needs those who will do good for him, and those who are fortunate need people to do good for.

And perhaps it is absurd to make the blessed person solitary, since no one would choose to have all good things by himself, for a human being is meant for

a city and is of such a nature as to live with others. So this belongs to the happy person too, since ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾he has the things that are good by nature, and it is clear that it is a better thing to spend one's days with friends and decent people rather than with strangers and anyone at random. Therefore it is necessary for the happy person to have friends. What then is meant by the people referred to first, and in what sense are they right? Is it that most people think of friends as being for use? Of such friends, then, a blessed person will have no need, since the good things already belong to him. And he has no need of friends for pleasure either, or only to a small extent (for since his life is pleasant he does not need pleasure that is brought in from outside it), and since he has no need for friends of those kinds, he does not seem to need friends.

Nonetheless, this is not true. For it was said at the beginning that happiness is a certain way of being-at-work,²² and it is clear that being-at-work ⁽¹⁰¹⁾is something that happens, and not something that is present like some possession. But if being happy consists in living and being-at-work, and the being-at-work of a good person is serious and pleasant in itself, as was said at the beginning, and if what is one's own also belongs among things that are pleasant, and we are better able to contemplate those around us than ourselves, and their actions better than our own, and the actions of serious people who are their friends ^(117bA)are pleasant to those who are good (since they have both the attributes of things that are pleasant by nature), then a blessed person will have need of friends of this sort, if indeed he chooses to contemplate actions that are decent and his own, and the actions of a good person who is a friend are of that kind. And people believe that a happy person must live pleasantly. Well then, life is difficult for one who is alone, since it is not easy by oneself to be at work continuously, but it is easier to be so among and in relation to others; so the being-at-work, which is pleasant in itself, will be more continuous, which it needs to be in the case of a blessed person, since a person of serious stature, insofar as he is of serious stature, enjoys actions in accord with virtue and disdains those that result from vice, ⁽¹¹⁰⁾just as a musical person is pleased by beautiful melodies and pained by bad ones. And a certain training in virtue would come from living among good people, as Theognis also says.²³

And to those who examine it from a standpoint having more to do with nature, it appears that a serious friend is naturally choiceworthy to a serious person. For it was said that what is good by nature is good and pleasant in itself to a serious person. And living is defined, for animals, by the potency for sense-perception, and for human beings by the potencies for sense-perception and thinking; but a potency leads back to its being-at-work, and what governs it is in its being-at-work, so that living in its governing sense appears to be perceiving

and thinking. And living is among the ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾things that are good and pleasant in themselves, since it is determinate, and what is determinate belongs to the nature of the good; and what is good by nature is also good for a decent person, and consequently seems to everyone to be pleasant. And one ought not to take the case of a vicious and corrupt life, or a life spent in pain, since such a life is indeterminate, as are the attributes that belong to it.²⁴ In the next sections, what has to do with pain will be clearer.

Now if living itself is good and pleasant (and it seems to be so from the fact that all desire it, and those who are decent and blessed most of all, since the life they lead is the most choiceworthy and their living is most blessed), and if one who sees is aware that he sees, and one who hears is aware that he hears, ⁽¹³⁰⁾and one who walks is aware that he walks, and similarly in the other cases there is something in us that is aware that we are at-work, so that whenever we perceive we are aware that we perceive and whenever we think we are aware that we think, and if being aware that we are perceiving or thinking is being aware that we are (since our being is perceiving or ^(117bB)thinking), and being aware that we are alive is something pleasant in itself (since life is a good thing by nature, and it is pleasant to be aware of the good that is present in oneself), and if being alive is choiceworthy, and especially so for good people, because their being is good and pleasant for them (since people are pleased by being additionally aware of something that is good in itself), and if a serious person is the same way toward a friend as he is toward himself (since the friend is another self), then just as one's own being is choiceworthy for each person, so too, or very nearly so, is that of a friend. But one's being is choiceworthy on account of the awareness of oneself as being good, and such ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾an awareness is pleasant in itself. Therefore one also ought to share in a friend's awareness that he is, and this would come about through living together and sharing conversation and thinking; for this would seem to be what living together means in the case of human beings, not feeding in the same place like fatted cattle. So if being is choiceworthy in itself to a blessed person, since it is good and pleasant by nature, and that of one's friend is very nearly the same, then a friend would also be something choiceworthy. But that which is choiceworthy for him ought to be present to him, or he will be deficient in that respect. Therefore, for someone who is going to be happy, there will be a need for friends of serious worth.²⁵

Chapter 10. ⁽²⁰⁾Ought one then to make as many friends as possible? Or, as in the case of foreign guests, where "neither a host to many nor a host to none"²⁷ seems to have been harmoniously said, will it also be fitting in the case of friendship to be neither a friend of none nor yet a friend of excessively many? The saying seems to fit very well with those who are friends for use, since

helping out many people in return is wearisome, and a lifetime is not enough to do it. More such friends than are sufficient for one's own life are superfluous, and are obstacles to living beautifully, so there is no need for them. And also with those who are friends for pleasure, a few are enough, as is a little sweetening in one's food. But should friends of serious worth be greatest ⁽³⁰⁾ in number, or is there also some measure of a group that is conducive to friendship, as there is of a city?²⁹ For neither could there be a city made of ten people, nor would it still be a city when made of ten times ten thousand. The amount is perhaps not some one number, but anything between certain limits.

So too, ⁽¹¹⁷⁾⁽⁸¹⁾ the number of friends is limited, and is perhaps the most with whom one is able to share a life (since this seemed to be the thing most characteristic of friendship); it is not unclear that it is impossible to share a life with many people and spread oneself out among them. And it is also necessary for them to be friends of one another, if they are all going to spend their days in one another's company, and for this to be the case among many people is hard work. It also becomes difficult to share joy and pain intimately with many people, since it is likely to fall to one's lot at the same time to rejoice with one person and grieve with another. Perhaps, then, it is a good idea not to seek to be a friend to as many people as possible, but with however many people are ⁽¹⁰⁾ sufficient for sharing a life. It would not even seem possible to be much of a friend to many people, and for the same reason that it is impossible to be in love with more than one person, since that is meant to be an extreme form of friendship, directed toward one person; so to be very much of a friend is possible only toward a few.

And it also seems to be this way in fact, since there do not come to be many friends in the friendship of a fraternal association, and the celebrated friendships that are spoken of are pairs. People who are friendly toward many and fall into familiarity with everybody, seem to be friends to no one, except as fellow citizens—they are called obsequious. As fellow citizens, it is possible to be a friend of many people and not be obsequious, but decent in the true sense; but it is not possible to be a friend to many people on account of virtue and for ⁽²⁰⁾ themselves, and one should be well satisfied to find even a few such friends.

