

Similarity, Pleasure, and the Explanation of our Choices of Friends

Please do not cite without permission (paper under review)

Abstract:

In his recent work on friendship, Alexander Nehamas has argued that it is hard to explain systematically, or be precise, concerning the explanation of our attraction to our friends, especially because of the multifarious peculiarities that characterize them. I argue against this view, through an Aristotelian psychological mechanism that applies to friendship, too. Through this mechanism, agents detect similar attributes in each other, which are naturally pleasant to both, and can explain, at a fundamental level, their mutual attraction as friends. This mechanism has two key advantages: (1) it can help us explain, in lucid terms, all those general characteristics that we find attractive in our friends, avoiding in this fashion the imprecision that approaches like that of Nehamas may lead us to, and (2) through it, we may detect all those similar features that friends share which are fundamental, both at the beginning of their relationship and after it had developed. My thesis is also targeted against philosophers who are deeply suspicious of the idea that friendships are founded on similarity and point, instead, to the phenomenon of ‘opposites attract’ and complementarity as robust reasons of attraction between friends.

Keywords: friendship, similarity, pleasure, Aristotle, Nehamas

Introduction

When we are asked to explain our choices of friends, we are likely to find it challenging to be precise with regard to what characteristics we find attractive in them. A traditional approach to this issue can be found in Montaigne. He¹ has stated that if he were asked why he loves someone, he could only say, ‘Because it was you, because it was I.’ We find a similar approach in Nehamas (2010, 2016), who,

¹ Montaigne (1957).

also underscores the particularity and uniqueness of our friends that leave us befuddled-as Montaigne's^{2 3} celebrated phrase indicates-when we are asked to verbally express the reasons of our love and attraction towards them. And Nehamas, in particular, seems to derive this conclusion from the fact that it is really hard to explain systematically, or be precise, regarding why we are attracted to our friends, especially in view of the multifarious particularities and idiosyncrasies that characterize them.

Although the position of these two philosophers has been influential and thought-provoking, I will follow a different route in order to explain the roots of attraction between friends. Of significant note, is that the element that seems to be missing from their view is a fundamental psychological mechanism that could shed light on the deeper motives and reasons of attraction that drive us toward certain people in the first place, and, furthermore, why our attraction to them can stand the test of time. Now, exactly because their view lacks such a psychological mechanism, the outcome of their explanation turns out to be highly ambiguous.

I will argue that Aristotle can overcome this ambiguity through a natural mechanism that explains the cause of the first order desires and fundamental reasons of attraction between friends. This mechanism is explained by two terms in Aristotle's philosophy: akin (συγγενικόν)⁴ and similar⁵ (ὅμοιον). The core idea of Aristotle is that what is akin and similar is naturally pleasant, and, hence, attractive to us.

² Actually, Montaigne does not even care about explaining his love for his friend for one or many particular qualities. His friendship for someone else, as he says, rests on 'not one special consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand' (Montaigne 1957,135). Nehamas' approach seems to follow this line of thought after all.

³ For a detailed discussion regarding Montaigne's view on friendship and the connection of some of them with those of Aristotle see: Pangle (2002, 57-8).

⁴ I will mostly use the term 'similarity' and not the term 'akin', in order to refer to the general attributes that make people attractive to each other and, as a result, feel a natural pleasure from. The reason for this choice is that what is akin to us may be interpreted in two ways. We could either understand it as referring to two people who are relatives, like two brothers for instance who come from the same

But, even though my argumentative tactics are, for the most part, rooted in Aristotle, they will deviate from him in certain respects. Specifically, I will focus on what Aristotle calls *pleasure friendship*, and I will enlarge the scope of this generic kind of relationship, with the aim of developing a novel theory that will be able to explain the deeper reasons of attraction that lie beneath all cases of friendship. To this end, I will, following Aristotle, put forward the idea that there is a psychological mechanism in agents that detects similarities in others in terms of whatever general features deeply characterize us as individuals; and all these similar features that we share with our friends make them pleasant to us, and enkindle, thereby, the fundamental desires that explain our attraction to them. Of note is, also, that despite the

parents, have been educated similarly, and are alike in character (EN 1162a10-15), or, instead, two people who are companions and may have these similarities as well, except that they do not come from the same parents (EN 1162a10-15). Now, the fact that brothers, or any relatives, feel natural attraction to each other because they are relatives is not of interest to the present paper. I will focus, instead, on cases where what is akin between two people refers to similarities that do not have anything to do with the fact that friends are blood relatives or something of the sort. The same idea works for other Aristotelian friendships like those of husband and wife, father and child, etc.

⁵ Aristotle's intuition, namely, that similarity breeds attraction, has been repeatedly and hugely supported by the social sciences. Researchers from a variety of fields such as sociology, social psychology, marketing, political science have collected a significantly large amount of empirical evidence in order to support the similarity/attraction theory. In particular, there is evidence regarding the 'similarity effect', as it is usually dubbed, in cases where researchers have used personality traits (Banikiotes & Neimeyer (1981); Bleda (1974), attitudes (e.g., Byrne, Baskett, & Hodges (1971); Tan & Singh (1995)), and hobbies (Curry & Emerson (1970); Werner and Parmelee's (1979) study is especially interesting because it focuses on the significance of activity preferences between friends). It is noteworthy, that this evidence has been documented in both laboratory manipulations (Byrne & Nelson, 1964, Storms & Thomas (1977) and field investigations of existing relationships (Amos (1971), Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay (1991)). Generally, as Layton and Insko (1974, 149) have emphatically declared, 'the similarity effect is one of the best documented generalizations in social psychology.'

application of this psychological mechanism against Nehamas and others' particularist view, my thesis can also work against philosophers who are deeply suspicious of the idea that friendships are founded on similarity and point, instead, to the phenomenon of 'opposites attract' and complementarity as robust reasons, with the purpose of doubting that such a solution is possible. Lastly, before I encapsulate the main points of the present essay in the last section, I will respond to various possible objections that someone could raise to certain ideas that the present paper tries to defend.

The Particularity of our Friends

When we are asked to explain our choices of friends we usually end up perplexed regarding what qualities attract us to our friend. But even if we manage to say a few words that could approximately capture the roots of attraction that we feel towards our friend, we still seem to have a deep feeling that we have the most important things about her left unspoken⁶ (Nehamas 2010, 214). Nehamas' point is that in our friendships with others, there are usually involved elements such as various particular attributes of our friend's behaviour which are unique to them, situations that we 've been through with her, and so on, which renders these relationships so special that it is very difficult to detect an underlying psychological mechanism that could, ultimately, be applied to every possible case of friendship. Instead, Nehamas proposes that we understand each friendship individually.

In his recent, seminal work on friendship, he (2016, 2010)⁷ has emphasized particularly well this feature of friendship. He often talks about the particularity of friendship where what I love and desire in the other is not some objective Aristotelian virtue, like generosity, for example, but my friend's generosity as it is manifested in

⁶ What Nehamas, Badhwar (1987), and Williams (1981)- who also argue for a particularist view of friendship-are after is not so much that our attachments to friends are inexplicable. Rather, they're denying that such attachments are systematically explicable. With my use of the similarity view I disagree with all three philosophers.

⁷ For an excellent review of Nehamas' book see Badhwar (2016).

her⁸ and no one else (Nehamas 2010). By using examples like this one, Nehamas wants to show the deeply personal nature of our explanations of our desire and love for our friends. A characteristic and deeply personal example of Nehamas' approach is depicted by a story that he narrates where his friend Tom is involved.

In order to elucidate what he means by a friend's qualities, Nehamas narrates a story through which he describes an unanticipated action by his friend Tom. There is no need though to narrate the story once more here. Nehamas' idea is that in his case, or in any one that involves our friends, certain qualities are expressed which are unique to them. If we were asked why a certain individual is our friend we could, among other things, tell a story about her. But, Nehamas says, no matter how many stories we narrate about our friends, they would not be sufficient in order to cover a full explanation regarding why someone (in this case Tom) is our friend. This is so because when we want to say that we love the other for himself, we have a deep feeling that we are leaving aspects of the other's self, left unsaid⁹.

This happens, according to Nehamas, mainly because this self exists merely in that relationship. There are other, perhaps entirely different, features of the self which are significant for different friends. And every friendship changes both friends. Therefore, every friendship 'is a unique combination of two souls, impossible to duplicate' (2016,121). And Nehamas concludes by following Montaigne's famous phrase 'because it was he, because it was I' (2016, 119) in order to claim that, perhaps, it is only in this way that someone can offer an explanation for our desire, love, and attraction to a particular person.

Now, Nehamas's position seems *prima facie* compatible to our everyday experience of friendship. There are, indeed, many personal elements in friendships

⁸ In other words, Nehamas rejects Aristotle's view that the virtues that someone recognizes and values in her friend are those that all agents have the capacity to acquire after a long learning process regarding their ethical and intellectual virtues and are related to the completion of their nature as humans. Nehamas seems to adopt a subjective view of the virtues where the agent determines, according to her point of view, who counts to her as virtuous or not.

⁹ See also Nehamas (2010, 244).

that it becomes really hard, many times, to detect an underlying mechanism that could be applied to our attempts at explaining where the roots of attraction between any two friends stem from. But I am not in agreement with him and all sorts of similar explanatory approaches. The main reason for my disagreement rests on the fact that if the explanation of our desire and attraction to our friends is based only on the particularity of them, then any attempts at referring with precision to all those features which mainly attract us to them will inevitably fail and lead us to vagueness.¹⁰

¹⁰ This vagueness, however, is considered an advantage in Nehamas' work. This happens because, according to his theory, in saying that 'I love you for who you are,' I accept all the peculiarities of your character both positive and negative. Also, by saying this expression, I refer, according to Nehamas, to both the qualities that I share with my friend and to those that I do not. On my reading of him, the features of the "self" that I'm attracted to are so particular and idiosyncratic, that natural languages, which focus their expressive resources on the general and shared, are ill-suited to expressing them. The upshot of this reading though results only to a partial explanation of our attraction to our friend; and even though I do not directly object that, for Nehamas, there is simply no explanation for why I choose someone as my friend, the explanation that is offered by his theory turns out to be really unhelpful anyway. Let us consider just any phenomenon we may try to explain. If we say that this phenomenon can never have a full, or, at least, something close to a full, explanation then how can we understand this phenomenon at all? Also, as I have already noted, enormous experimental research in various fields has provided us with substantial evidence that support Aristotle's intuition, namely, the similarity view, or the 'similarity effect' as social scientists call it. Nehamas, on the contrary, is in favour of an intuition that has not, to my knowledge, been experimentally supported, or even been tested. I am referring here to experimental tests regarding intuitions and assumptions regarding friendship because, apart from being a philosophical concept, it is, also, a phenomenon that has largely been tested by the social sciences; and we should not neglect the results of these tests if we want our assumptions and intuitions to be well grounded. At last, perhaps in the case of a lack of a better explanation, Nehamas' theory could work, in some way, by the use of an ad hoc approach to each case friendship and still, due to the vagueness that is deep-rooted in these kinds of relationships we could not be able to explain the reasons of attraction that we feel towards our friends. In this paper though I try to show that there is an

Aristotle¹¹ has shown that this issue can be a significant part of a philosophical theory. The Stagirite, however, follows a different explanatory route than the one offered by Alexander Nehamas, and others. He tries to categorize various types of friendship in such a way that makes it easy for someone to explain her attraction to, and choice of, her friends. For instance, in a friendship that is based on pleasure, someone may enjoy the other's company in discussing art theory, visiting galleries together, etc. Aristotle does not get into further details of the kinds of friendships that he delves into. He thought, perhaps, that such an endeavour would have philosophically fruitless due to the profoundly personal elements which are involved in friendships after a lot of time spent together between friends. He simply wanted, instead, to reduce friendships¹² down to some fundamental desires, that is, those based on virtue and the good, pleasure, and utility (EN 1155b17-26).

He thought of, however, a psychological mechanism that can explain our attraction to particular individuals. Despite the fact that he refers to this mechanism at the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics*, he is clearer about it the *Rhetoric*. He describes it, in the latter work, as a propensity that we have to feel natural pleasure from people with whom we are similar.

By examining these passages, I will argue that we can explain more clearly our attraction to our friends when we comprehend the origins in this fundamental and

Aristotelian psychological mechanism that may offer us an explanation that could be applied to any friendship we may attempt to explain, regardless of any particularities that friends may have.

¹¹ I am not going to discuss in this paper Nehamas' disagreement with Aristotle on whether what the latter understands as friendship is compatible with the modern sense of this concept. For instance, Nehamas (2010) does not believe that friendships based on utility and pleasure, as Aristotle describes them, are friendships in the modern sense. Also, Nehamas (2016) highlights the fact that a good friendship is manifested mainly by the closeness between friends, and not, as Aristotle believes, by virtue, which is evident in character friendships.

¹² The most influential discussion regarding Aristotle's division of the forms of friendship can be found in Cooper (1977). See also Price (1989, 131-161) and Pangle (2003, 37-56).

natural way. Now, the ‘similarity view’ of friendship, as we may call it, has two main advantages: (a) it provides us with a psychological mechanism which can explain, in lucid terms, the roots of attraction between friends; something that is not achievable through Nehamas and others’ particularist theories, and (b) through it, we may provide, at a fundamental level, explanations regarding the attraction between friends both at the beginning of their relationship and after it has developed.

The Argument in the Rhetoric

At Rhetoric 1371b12-17 Aristotle says:

And since what is natural is pleasant, and things akin to each other seem natural to each other, therefore all kindred and similar things are usually pleasant to each other; for instance, one man, horse, or young person, is pleasant to another man, horse, or young person. Hence, the proverbs ‘mate delights mate’, ‘like to like’, ‘beast knows beast’, ‘jackdaw to jackdaw’, and the rest of them.

The main idea behind this passage is that things which are akin (συγγενῆ) or similar (ὅμοιοι) are naturally¹³ attracted to each other. The word ‘akin’ refers here to a similarity in genus, which means, a similarity¹⁴ in kind (horse to horse, man to man, etc.) or class, i.e. like kind to like kind. The point here is that we may use Aristotle’s idea regarding attraction between similar kinds in order to develop a theory that will be based on a psychological mechanism that explains the roots of the attraction we feel towards our friends.

Now, along with the examples given in the passage above (man, horse, etc.), we could also¹⁵ understand the attraction that is based on similarity, as possible to be

¹³ See also EE 1245a32, where Aristotle also argues that what is akin is according to nature.

¹⁴ Aristotle uses the idea that has to do with the attraction between similar kinds in other passages of his corpus as well (EN VIII14, 1161b33-35, 1155a34, 1165a17; EE VII.2, 1235a7, 1238a34; MM II ii, 1208b9).

¹⁵ We may infer this idea at this point because Aristotle refers to similarities between classes without being specific about them. So, this lack of precision leaves room for an interpretation that can take him to implicitly refer to just any kind of likenesses between individuals. But this should not trick someone into believing that all kinds of similarities are relevant in friendships. For instance, it does not seem

manifested between individuals who are, in general class fellows, like, for instance, tradesmen, basketball players, chess players, etc¹⁶. But this idea of natural attraction between people who belong to the same class can help us address the lack of clear explanation that is found in particularist approaches to friendship like that of Nehamas. My point is that Aristotle's idea in the Rhetoric (1371b12-17) can provide a fundamental explanation regarding our initial attraction to certain people and the deeper reasons that lead us to preserve our friendship with them. The passage though in the Rhetoric provides us only with the first step towards the development of our similarity view. We will see, in what follows, that Aristotle is consistent in believing that the attraction between similar things is natural and pleasant. This consistency is evident in the capstone of his ethical theory, the Nicomachean Ethics.

Similarity between friends in the Nicomachean Ethics

The intuition that people who enjoy the same things are naturally attracted to each other is not limited to the Rhetoric's passage, but it can also be found in the NE. In particular, at NE IX.3 Aristotle says:

The point becomes especially clear in cases where the distance that separates people is large, as for example with children's friendships: if one side continued to think as a child while the other became a man of the most powerful sort, how could they be friends, when they are not satisfied (*ἀρεσκόμενοι*) by the same things, and when they do not share pleasures and pains? For they will not do this even in relation to each other, and

intuitive to say that two friends are attracted because they both have blue eyes or black hair. I argue later on in the present paper that people are mostly attracted to each other in terms of what characterizes them deeply as individuals, what activities they find highly enjoyable, etc.

¹⁶ We could also understand the attraction that is based on similarity to be apt in cases where two friends have shared one or more similar experiences together. For example, let us imagine two Vietnam veterans who share the attribute of having fought together in this war. This is an attribute that agent X recognizes in Y, and, vice versa. Along the lines of this idea we could also say that after the agents have formed a friendship, the moments and activities that they share with each other function as similar experiences. This means that this kind of similarity between them can be another source of deepening the desire and love for my friend.

without that, it is impossible, as we said, for them to be friends, since it is not possible for them to live with one another. But we have discussed¹⁷ these things. (NE 1165b25-32)¹⁸

The central idea that we have to extract from this passage¹⁹ is that if friends do not enjoy or feel pain from similar things then they cannot live together. This is not just intuitive enough on behalf of Aristotle, but, common sense. Let us put it differently: could two people who enjoy different things, and do not feel pleasure from similar things spend time together and enjoy each other's company?

Before I proceed with providing examples that will make the theory of similarity more vivid, let me, first of all, clear something up. With his theory, Aristotle must, in general, refer²⁰ to character and pleasure friendships. In the first one

¹⁷ Aristotle refers to the discussion at EN VIII. 5-6 1157b5-1158b11. In this passage we detect ideas which are echoed in the Rhetoric (1371b12-17). Aristotle says: '...and no one can spend his days with what is painful, or with what is not pleasant; for more than anything nature seems to avoid the painful and seek the pleasant.' (EN 1157b15-17)

¹⁸ The translation is from Christopher Rowe, in Rowe & Broadie (2002).

¹⁹ Someone could claim here that the passage from NE 1165b25-32 appears in the context of a discussion where Aristotle holds that differences in virtue are causes of the dissolution from friendships. Hence, there could be an evaluatively-laden notion of similarity at play. In other words, the friend's sheer similarity to me does not explain the friend's attractiveness to me. This is actually a very good point, but I think that there is a reasonable response to it. Namely, if someone really deviates from what Aristotle understands as being virtuous then he is not supposed to be virtuous anymore. So, the sheer similarity in the case of virtue must work only in the case of completely virtuous agents.

²⁰ I am saying this because there is no pleasure involved in utility friendships. Aristotle generally understands this kind of friendship as taking place between tradesmen. Of course, someone could claim here that two tradesmen could be attracted to each other because of their similarity in that they both belong to the same class. But this must not be the case because Aristotle does not say anything about pleasures of any kind being, somehow, involved in this case. However, Aristotle's mechanism still

(IX.9), the good man recognizes virtue in his friend's action and feels pleasure from it. So, he contemplates his actions which are good and are his own²¹ (οικεία) (1170a1-4).

In this passage, Aristotle subtly refers to the idea that, what is virtuous is, in a sense, our own; and because it is virtuous, it is also pleasant to us (NE 1169b33-34). But, a tacit assumption that Aristotle also makes in this passage, is that the agent primarily recognizes that she shares something with her friend. On some primitive level, then, she is attracted to the fact that the other is similar to her friend. This fact makes her want to contemplate her friend's actions as if they were her own. I am noting this because Aristotle seems to assume that what is akin or similar takes precedence over 'what belongs to us' in the sense that: if I do not identify the other as similar to me then how can I contemplate something that, based on the Rhetoric passage, I don't feel pleasure from? But, perhaps, this sounds like understanding the things which are our own when compared to those which are akin or similar to us. I will thus follow a more modest proposal in supporting the view that the fact that something is akin or similar to us is equally fundamental to what is our own.

Now, another important idea that is prominent in this passage, is that Aristotle focuses on the similarity between virtuous people. These people are similar in terms of their goodness. If they are similar in this way, then this explains their mutual

works for the case of tradesmen, but, not when we consider their relationship as a business one; instead, we should consider it as a relationship between two people who, as tradesmen, share the same worries about the profession, etc.

²¹ At this point I consider Aristotle's view that what is 'one's own' (οικείον) qua virtuous, might be pleasant to us. Now by considering the resonances of the Greek here, someone could claim that what is one's own is 'proper to one' in a sense that carries both normative and descriptive force. But I do not think that the normative sense enters into this. If it does, this means that the virtuous agents like what they should like qua virtuous. But this would not be a convincing psychological explanation on behalf of Aristotle. What Aristotle means is that the psychological mechanism of pleasure is initiated by the very existence of the virtuousness that makes the activity of the friend pleasant; hence, it can only be descriptive.

attraction both at the beginning of a friendship and after it²² has developed. As we previously saw (NE 1165 b25-32), if something changes concerning what connects two friends then they will not keep enjoying the same things and may result for friendships like this one to dissolve at some point.

Now, let's turn our attention to pleasure friendships. Commentators of Aristotle usually²³ understand these kinds of relationships in the sense of amusing

²² In this kind of friendship, the similarity between the two friends that is based on goodness is so fundamental for their bond, so that if one of them changes for the worse regarding this quality, then it would not make sense for such a friendship to prolong any further. I just want to note here that Kolodny (2003) would not agree with this position. For him, to love someone is not to love herself directly, but to love the relationship you have with her (Kolodny 2003, 150-1). And exactly because he puts so much emphasis on the relationship itself and not on the beloved, he argues that he can explain the constancy of love between two individuals when the beloveds change; and even when they change dramatically. Kolodny seems to think, in general, that it is irrational to break off a love once it has begun (see also Nozick (1989, 78) for a similar claim, though with a different understanding of the irrationality at stake). I tend to agree though with Badhwar's (2003, 63) criticism to Nozick (and to Kolodny in a way) that his view that we should not abandon your love no matter who our beloved becomes, 'cannot be understood as love at all, rather than addiction.' Badhwar's argument seems to be compatible with Aristotle's view, and mine, that when someone changes for the worse, then their friendship will dissolve due to the absence of similarity between them regarding certain very important feature(s) that led them to bond in the first place, where in our case this feature is virtue.

²³ Aristotle also provides other, pederastic (EN 1156b1-2, 1158a10-15, 1159b15-16, 1164a2 ff.) or matrimonial (EN 1162A22 ff.) cases of pleasure friendships. I do not think though that these cases should function as the representative examples of pleasure friendships. Aristotle also admits that love resembles friendship because 'the lover is eager to share the life of the loved one, although not in the most proper way but in a sensuous manner.' (EE 1245a25-6) In this case, however, Aristotle distinguishes between this kind of relationship, with friendship and other ones. Love resembles friendship in that the lovers want to share their life with one another, but their attraction is focused on

companions²⁴, people who enjoy each other's company,²⁵ drinking companions,²⁶ or even squash partners.²⁷ But, according to the mechanism we have seen in the Rhetoric, similarity could guide us in finding pleasant friendships among just any class of people. We could imagine, for instance, cases of people who love music, basketball, philosophy, dancing, etc. However, we should not confine our understanding of similarities between friends merely to these general classes. We could, in particular, be more detailed concerning our likings. For example, we could say, that someone is fond of jazz music, a particular basketball team, metaphysics, etc. Hence, we may narrow down the classes of similarity and, thereby, be more accurate regarding the explanation of attraction between friends.

Now, in the examples that I will provide in what will follow, I will focus on pleasure²⁸ friendships. The reason is that character friendship covers only the similarity between people who share goodness as their most characteristic, mutual identifying trait; and this is the feature that each detects as similar to the other. In so doing, I will deviate from Aristotle's theory in that I will not follow his hierarchy of

sensuous pleasure. We should not claim, however, that either the passages in the Nicomachean Ethics, or the one in the Eudemean Ethics, reflect more deeply Aristotle's view of pleasure friendships than in other cases where two people may enjoy each other's company in a different way (contra Nehamas 2010, 231).

²⁴Pakaluk (2005, 267).

²⁵Bostock (2000, 169).

²⁶Cooper (1999, 318).

²⁷Broadie & Rowe (2002, 58).

²⁸I will not deny though that there is a possibility for two people to be attracted, while being in pleasure friendships, in recognizing virtue in each other, and, therefore to be similar in this way. In this case, however, my friend is virtuous, like me, not in the strict way that Aristotle wants his virtuous agents to be, but in a more flexible way. We could imagine, for example, someone being attracted to her friend's good habits in giving money to the poor.

the forms of friendship. Instead, in the way that I understand friendship, at least with regard to attraction, it has to do with the pleasure²⁹ that each part of such a relationship feels from certain attributes of her friend which are similar to her; and both participants of friendships value these attributes highly in the sense that they make their lives interesting (i.e. they give meaning to it), express their personality, aptitudes, or, more generally, are characteristic of them.

Let us imagine then an individual whose name is George. In order to keep the current example as simple as possible, let us assume that this man is a tradesman and in his free time, he likes watching action movies, or watching the games of his favourite basketball team. Now, these three attributes of George, namely, the fact that he is a tradesman, that he likes watching action movies, and that he likes watching his favourite basketball team, place him in these three corresponding classes of people.

When we apply Aristotle's idea to George's case then we get the following result. George, would feel pleasure in spending time with people who have one or all³⁰ of these attributes, as he does. He would find, in other words, someone pleasant as a friend if he were similar to him in belonging to one or all of these classes of people. Hence, if he started spending time with another person, he would be able to explain the origins his desire and choice of him to become his friend, at a fundamental level, by saying: "I desire Max to be my friend because he is a tradesman, and he likes watching basketball, like I do."

But let us consider a different example. Let us imagine Jane, who is a teenager girl and really likes gothic metal, she wears characteristic goth makeup, and is usually dressed in black from head to toe. Could we imagine this girl desiring to befriend, or

²⁹ I just want to note here that the good and the pleasant are, according to Aristotle, loveable as ends (EN 1155b19-21). I follow Jennifer Whiting (2006, 280) here, who argues that Aristotle opposes both objects of desire to what is useful. This idea is useful for my purposes, because I want to develop a theory that focuses on the pleasant and considers it as an end.

³⁰ Aristotle does not clarify whether someone must be attracted to one or all of the other's qualities. But this shouldn't worry us. Anyway, if someone is similar with someone else, in more ways than one, it could explain more lucidly why she is attracted to her.

enjoying spending time together with a middle aged, conservative woman who adores listening to Bach's fugues and Chopin's nocturnes? It seems unintuitive to answer positively to this question. In Aristotelian terms, then, this girl belongs to two classes, namely, that of teenagers, and that of gothic music followers. She will desire, therefore, other teenagers who also like this kind of music to be her friends.

Now, as I previously noted, Aristotle's theory can help us explain our attraction to particular people both at the beginning of a friendship and after it has developed. Let me put it this way. When someone wants to start a friendship with someone else she can explain what motivated her to do so in the first place. This initial motivation could rest, for instance, on one or two attributes that she shares with her friend. But as the friendship develops and deepens, the agent can still give reasons for staying in this relationship. She could, for example, add other levels of similarity that she shares with her friend for which she was not aware of before, but, realized, after spending time with her. Additionally, when friends share various activities together they inevitably bond deeper through another level of similarity. Namely, they are similar in that each agent has shared a common experience along with her friend (e.g. going hunting together, going to the movies together, even going to war together).

In this fashion, Aristotle's mechanism can, contrary to Nehamas's theory, clearly explain the reasons of attraction that we feel towards our friend, without necessarily referring to the manifestation of certain attributes of our friend's character or other peculiarities of her; or, just state, 'I love you for who you are,' without, however, being certain about what this phrase essentially means.

But, regardless of the merits and intuitive flavour of Aristotle's theory, there are various objections that someone could raise against it. In the following section, I will respond to these objections, with the aim of defending the central thesis of the present paper.

Objections against the Similarity Theory of Friendship. There could be several objections against the similarity view that I defend. The first one is that: even if I am

akin to various agents who have similar features³¹ with me, how could I explain my choice of one of them over others to be my friend? Now, we could respond to this worry by saying that someone does not have just one close friend but, 2, or even 3, good friends. But even if we are closer to one of them, this fact could still be explained by Aristotle's theory.

We could claim, for instance, that someone shares an extra element of similarity with one of her friends. Let us, once more, consider the case of George. This man could have three good friends who are also tradesmen and like watching basketball like he does. But this does not mean that all three of them like the same basketball team as he does; perhaps, only one of them does. But this means that he and George fall under another class, that is, 'fans of basketball team X'; and this fact could make him bond closer to this friend than others.

The second objection to Aristotle's theory derives from the fact that 'all kindred and similar things are *usually* pleasant to each other...' What is translated³² as 'usually' in this passage is a characteristic technical term (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ) in Aristotle's philosophy.³³ Now, someone could claim that, by using this term here, Aristotle could not have meant his theory of similarity to be true of all cases of friendships.³⁴ In other words, if it holds for most of the times, but, not always, then we can't be referring to a psychological mechanism that is appropriate for every kind of friendship.

It is, first of all, important to note, that the term 'ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ' is central in Aristotle's philosophical thought. In the *Metaphysics*, he says that scientific

³¹ I have to note here that the first objection applies to any account of friendship that makes reference to the friend's attributes, not only the similarity view. Someone could see Jennifer Whiting's (1991, 7) excellent paper 'Impersonal Friends' for a different response to a similar issue.

³² This phrase can also be translated as 'for the most part.'

³³ For great discussions regarding the 'ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ' relations in ethics see, Winter (1997), Anagnostopoulos (1994), Reeve (1992).

³⁴ Here, I mainly refer to the beginning of friendship, and not after it has significantly developed.

knowledge has to do with what holds always or usually (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ) (Met. 1027a20-1). In the Posterior Analytics, he says that there will be immediate first principle also in the case of what holds usually (Apo 96a17-19). In the same work, he argues that there is no scientific knowledge through demonstration of what holds by luck.³⁵ For, he argues, what holds by luck, is neither necessary nor does it hold for the most part, but comes about separately from these, and demonstration is one or other of the former (Apo 87b19-22). In these passages, Aristotle clearly distinguishes between when something holds always, or for the most part, with what holds by luck. In the former two cases, we can have scientific knowledge whereas in the second we cannot.

Another key idea of Aristotle regarding ‘ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ’ is that it comes about by nature (κατὰ φύσιν) (Generation of Animals 777a19-21, 727b29-30, Parts of Animals 663b28-9). In this way, he is consistent in these passages with what he says in the Rhetoric’s passage that we have already examined.

By taking into account the fact that what holds for the most part is something that comes about by nature, and that it is contrasted with what happens by chance, we may understand that the psychological mechanism that Aristotle describes in the Rhetoric’s passage could be generalized in the sense that it occurs, at any rate, in the vast majority³⁶ of cases. Without going into details about the ‘ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ’ relations, we could say that that Aristotle’s psychological mechanism, as it is presented in the Rhetoric, could, at least, show us an illuminating way that could help us explain our choices of, and attraction to, our friends for a really high percentage of times.

Perhaps, however, a solution to this problem would be something like the following. First of all, the core idea of the present paper is that individuals are generally disposed to be attracted to each other when they recognize that they share similar attributes. But, as Aristotle admits by the use of the ‘ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ’ term, this

³⁵ Aristotle contrasts what holds ‘ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ’ with what comes about from chance in other passages as well: Generation and Corruption 333b7; De Caelo et Mundo 283a33; Eudemian Ethics 1247a32)

³⁶ Anyway, for Aristotle, “the contrary of what holds for the most part is always comparatively rare” (Metaphysics 1025a14-21; Topics 112b10-11).

happens most of the times, but, not always. But why does this mechanism not hold for this small number of cases?

We could answer that this psychological mechanism functions as a power which is in a state of potentiality. For this power to be actualized, however, there has to be something in its environment that will trigger it. Consider, for instance, the following example. Wood has, in general, the power to be burned by fire. If we place fire next to a piece of wood we should expect it to start burning. But if it does not, then there is something going on that prevents this power from being actualized. Perhaps, we could realize that the piece of wood that we tried to burn is wet. But if the wood gets wet then it cannot be burnt by fire.

This example shows that even if the piece of wood was not burnt by the fire that we put next to it, this does not mean that what we initially claimed about it was false. Namely, wood still has the power to be burnt. But, for this power to be actualized it is conditional on the stability of the environment. Now, we could understand the case of friendship in a similar way. Namely, individuals who are similar, in one way or another, will normally be attracted to each other. But when they are not, something interfered in their environment, and this interference resulted in the prevention of actualization of this potentiality.

An example that would be suitable for the case of friendship is the following. Let's say that agent X shares some attributes with another agent Y. Despite though the fact that these two agents would, according to Aristotle's theory, be naturally attracted to each other, yet they are not. An account for the failure of these agents to become friends could be the fact that they are not similar in one or more attributes that one of these agents considers to be more important to himself than others. Therefore, if, say, agent X does not recognize this specific attribute in agent Y then she will not pursue to become friends with her. The idea behind this argument is that there are attributes that we value more both in our lives and when we recognize them in someone else. So even if we are similar with someone in certain general attributes, this may not always cause an instantaneous attraction to her. The reason for this is that we may be looking

for a specific³⁷ attribute in the other that we, yet, do not identify in her. But, perhaps, I would have to write another essay in order to provide a more detailed account of the solution to this issue. Therefore, I will just leave it as it is for now.

The third objection derives from a problem in relation to the similarity view that we see in Plato's *Lysis*. Various scholars (Price 1989; Pangle 2002; Penner, T and Rowe, C. 2005) take Aristotle's account of friendship to respond to problems discussed in this dialogue. In fact, Socrates considers, and rejects, the similarity view (*Lysis* 213d-214c). The problem that emerges in this part of the dialogue is that bad people are similar to each other, but they are not friends. I will briefly reflect on this worry here.

First of all, there is a tension in Aristotle's views regarding whether bad people can be friends or not. On the one hand, he argues that the bad person can neither have friendly feelings toward herself, nor others (NE 1166b6-25). This happens because the bad agent can neither find anything loveable in herself, nor in others; also, this kind of person has a highly regretful and unstable character. On the other hand, we see, both at the end of book IX, and in other passages of the NE, that Aristotle seems to accept a kind of friendship between bad people (NE 1172a9-10; NE 1159b7-12). Now, if the first part is true then the similarity thesis that I argue for does not work. But, I will argue that this tension should not worry us.

There are, in fact, two reasons that should not lead us to believe that Aristotle rejects the similarity thesis: (1) the first reason derives from the passage at NE 1159b7-12. In this passage, Aristotle argues that, in contrast to virtuous friends, the bad ones are not stable with regard to their character, since they do not remain similar even to themselves. In fact, they tend to become friends with others for short periods of time, where both parties enjoy each other's bad qualities. Friendships based on utility and pleasure are more lasting, for they endure as long as they afford each other pleasure or practical help. This passage is significant because bad people are also

³⁷ Even though Aristotle does not accept the term 'other selves' outside character friendship, we could deviate from this idea at this point and say that, even in friendships which are based on pleasure, we are still looking for another self that is similar to us, in certain ways, in order to share and enjoy our life with her.

presented here by Aristotle as being unstable. This fact though does not result in the absence of friendship between them. Instead, they do become friends based on the similar attribute that they share, namely, that they are both bad. Their friendship though lasts for a short period of time, and this is the outcome of their instability of character.

Before I move on to the second reason, let me clear something up with the invaluable help of a comment made by Terence Irwin. He (Irwin 1999, 281) makes the following comment regarding our passage:

The vicious person has no reason to value his vicious friend's vice for its own sake as a good. He may find it pleasant because of the similarity to his own character. But this will be only one of the many pleasures the vicious person pursues because of his decision; his friend cannot rely on him when something pleasanter comes along. The virtuous person, by contrast, values virtuous actions as good in themselves.

Irwin's point here is that we should not understand the bad person as being attracted by her friend's badness per se. If this were true then she would not be so unstable; namely, she would not stop loving her friend for being bad. Instead, if the vicious person happens to be attracted to one of the many different pleasures that she pursues because of her character, then she will abandon her friend. This fact though does not indicate that the similarity thesis is wrong. The thesis holds true even for vicious people. In short, a vicious person can be attracted to another vicious person; the point is though that, for Aristotle, their friendship will not last long due to their unstable characters. Let us move now to the second reason.

The second reason (2) derives from the passage at NE 1172a9-10. In this passage, and what follows a few lines after it (1172a11-14), Aristotle once more refers to the instability of friendships that takes place between bad people and highlights its differences with friendships between virtuous agents. In the case of bad people, their living together has bad effects to them since they take part in inferior activities, compared to the virtuous agents who participate in noble ones. The outcome for them is to become worse through this friendship, by gradually resembling one another through some sort of imitation. The significant point for us is that Aristotle does not seem to deny that bad people can be friends. Instead, he implies that these kinds of people are attracted to each other's similarity in being bad and become worse by imitating the bad qualities that they enjoy in each another.

The fourth objection against the similarity view is, perhaps, the most noticeable and the most important one. We could form this objection into a question: are the differences between friends ever pertinent to the agent's desire of friends? Now, the answer to this question is critical because, if it is positive, then the validity of the central intuition of the present paper could be in jeopardy. This question brings, once more, Plato's *Lysis* (215c–216b) to mind where Socrates and his interlocutor reflect upon whether things which are dissimilar can be attracted to each other. In these passages, they first consider the case of natural philosophy (215e5-9), where opposites are attracted as, for example, hot and cold. They reject the hypothesis, however, on the grounds that this kind of attraction between dissimilar things does not work in the case of people. The good man, for example, cannot be attracted to a bad man, a just man to an unjust, etc.

Now, Aristotle disagrees with this view: he defends the similarity, rather than the dissimilarity view. The point is though that there may be dissimilarities between friends that can be really important for their friendship;³⁸ and for the purposes of the

³⁸ This point has been stressed particularly well by Brink (1997, 1999). Brink mainly focuses though on character friendships, and he goes on to apply his views on a political level as well. His main point is that either on a personal -between character friends- or a political level the dissimilarities between people are highly relevant for the extension of the agents' scope of deliberation and self-criticism. In other words, the mental states and actions of a friend who is dissimilar to me have a significant influence to me and vice versa. In fact, Brink (1997, 144-45, 148-49) believes that much of having friends, rests on the fact that they are not mere clones of myself. Brink's point is important, and has to be dealt with, even in my case, where I mostly focus on pleasure friendship and not the character one. I will briefly try to answer here though to Brink's argument regarding the value of dissimilarity in Aristotle's political philosophy (see footnote 41 for a response to Brink's argument on character friendship). Even if this is not directly relevant to the present essay, I am doing it because I want to show the fundamentality of the similarity thesis even in Aristotle's political philosophy.

Indeed, we may detect passages in Aristotle's political work that could *prima facie* lead someone to believe that dissimilarities among people are more significant than their similarities. Perhaps one of the most characteristic passages where Aristotle clearly argues, *contra* Plato's *Republic V* (down to

466d), in favour of the necessity of a plurality of different people with different roles in the city is in Pol. 1261a-1262a (for more on this very interesting passage see Saunders 1995: 106-113). I'll make two comments regarding this idea of dissimilarity in the city: (a) first of all, the dissimilarity between citizens is necessary in terms of justice and not friendship; and this is important, because, as I have argued in the present paper, the similarity view has to do with friendship in which similarity must exist between the people who are involved in it. At 1261a31 ff, for instance, Aristotle says that the best state consists of dissimilar classes of people, and that the unity of the city is preserved when each citizen provides services to the society and she receives, in return, benefits proportionate to her services. The point is though that Aristotle refers here to justice (as reciprocal equality), and not to friendship. In particular, he refers to the discussion of justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* V.5 (for a discussion on 'reciprocal equality' in economics, see Pol. I. ix; for the most seminal work on Aristotle's economics see Meikle (1991, 1997); see also Finley's (1970) interesting and rather challenging explanation). But as we have seen, friendship as similarity is fundamental to Aristotle's theory of friendship, and this is evident even in the political level mainly through the civic unity and concord that derive from friendship. Let us see now how this works for the second comment. (b) For Aristotle, friendship is really important to politics (Cooper 1999, 368-372). He calls the kind of friendship that occurs between fellow citizens as civic or political friendship. This friendship or concord between them is necessary to hold cities together (NE 1155a22; 1167b2). Aristotle even says that legislators should focus more on concord than justice because "when people are friends, they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they need friendship in addition" (NE1155a26-7). Concord is very important in cities in that citizens have similar judgments about their common interest, and when they execute what they have decided in common (NE 1167a26-28). It seems then that, for Aristotle, friendship has a different role in the city than justice. In particular, friendship in the city should reflect concord, that is, similarity of mind regarding important decisions that the citizens have to make and the common good. We must also stress here the importance of common meals as a means of unifying the city (Pol. 1263b41, 1264a8). These meals do not serve so much the purpose of feeding the citizens, since their participation is guaranteed regardless of their economic status. The idea behind this institution is to strengthen the social ties, unity and sense of friendship between people by discussing the similar problems that they share as citizens (see Kraut 2002, 220-224). So, once again, in the case of political friendship, Aristotle cares about what is similar among citizens of the polis. And even if citizens are dissimilar among them,

present essay, it does not matter whether someone sticks to character, or any other form of friendship. In a nutshell, if there are dissimilarities between friends which are significant for their mutual desire and love, then even my attempt at focusing on pleasure friendships could be rendered problematic. The central idea then is that someone could be deeply suspicious of the idea that friendships are founded on similarity and could point to the phenomenon of “opposites attract” and complementarity as robust reasons that explain the attraction between friends, with the purpose of doubting that a solution like the one that I herein propose is possible. I will offer two³⁹ main reasons in order to defend the similarity view against this objection.

The first reason has to do with the priority of our desires regarding the explanation of the attraction to our friends. As I have previously argued, the desires of attraction towards our friend, which are based on similarity, are fundamental. This means that even if there are dissimilarities between friends, and these are relevant, to a certain extent, their friendship, they are not, however, fundamental to their relationship. I will use an analogy in order to clear out the idea of fundamentality. This fundamentality could be better understood through an analogy, by comparing friendships with buildings. The element that matters most, in both cases, is their foundations. If there is a serious problem there then friendships and buildings will collapse. Thus, someone could be deceived into thinking that, for example, two philosophers who disagree with each other most of the times are friends because, for instance, they are getting better by trying to disprove each other’s beliefs; this seems like jumping to conclusions. Perhaps it is significant for the two philosophers to be dissimilar in that they hold different views, since this fact helps them having interesting discussions. But this does not show that this is the foundation of their

in some respects, they share, nonetheless, similar worries about various problems that they have to deal with in the city, and they have concord regarding the good of the city..

³⁹ There could be a third reason against the dissimilarity view, but it is too short in length to incorporate it in the main text. Namely, someone could claim that differences between friends can be relevant in undermining their relationship. For instance, if a friend sees a friend doing something wrong, not only does she disapprove, but she also likes her friend less.

friendship. Rather, the foundation of their friendship is that they are both philosophers, and that they both believe, for instance, that the quest for truth is the most important thing in their lives. If these conditions were not met, then their relationship would not have started in the first place. So, the bottom line is that even though certain dissimilarities⁴⁰ are germane to some friendships, these dissimilarities are not the characteristic, fundamental elements of them. In other words, when we want to explain the foundations of friendships we should look for what is grounded on what.

The second reason has to do with an important problem that the dissimilarity view has to face. Namely, if I am attracted to all those attributes that my friend has, which are opposite to mine, then our friendship could be characterized as instrumental. I could be using her, in other words, so as to benefit from her knowledge, her wealth, and whatever else I might find in her that is worthwhile for myself. This problem though does not arise for the similarity view. If the reasons of love for my friend derive from all those attributes that I consider my friend as having, which are similar⁴¹

⁴⁰ This could also be a response to Brink's argument regarding character friendship in (see footnote 38) Aristotle's ethics. The point is that, even though dissimilarities are relevant in various ways in friendships, they are not, nonetheless, fundamental to them. In character friendship, for example, even if two friends are dissimilar to each other in certain beliefs and experiences, this does not mean that they are attracted to each other because of these dissimilarities, even though these dissimilarities can be beneficial in terms of their mutual moral development through imitation (Vakirtzis 2014, 2015). First of all, this could make someone consider character friendship as an instrumental relationship, which is obviously false. Second, the view that I defend in the present paper attributes priority to similarity over dissimilarity in friendships. For instance, let us consider the case of the two philosophers that I discuss in the main text. These two agents could not be friends in the first place if they were not philosophers and specialized, for example, in metaethics. Now the fact that one of them is a realist and the other an antirealist is of secondary value in their friendship. The core idea is then that friendships should be grounded on similarities between friends.

⁴¹ I want to stress here, once more, the fact that the similarity between two friends does not only rest on general attributes that they may have such as, generosity, open-mindedness, love of basketball, etc. As I have previously claimed in the present paper, the fact that two friends spend time together in doing

to mine, then I do not use her for my benefit. Instead, I love her as I love myself exactly because she is similar to me.

The fifth objection against the similarity view is that despite what Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric*'s passage, he does not accept the similarity view in all cases of friendship. At NE 1159a2-12, for instance, Aristotle tries to conclude a discussion he had started at 1155a32-b9. In the latter passage, he begins by wondering whether the view that 'like things are friends' is true, or, the view that that 'opposite things are friends' is true. In the former passage, he claims that both views are, in a sense, true. This happens because, on the one hand, in character friendship, both friends are alike in being virtuous. And since this is true for the best kind of friendship, then it must be true largely⁴² of all cases of friendship. But, on the other hand, Aristotle states that the

various activities makes them being similar in this way. In other words, this kind of similarity is built through the relationship, and in the relationship, of the two friends. This is another level of similarity between friends which gives prominence to the valuing of the relationship as such.

⁴² This has to do with the relation among the kinds of friendship as well. For the view that the three kinds of friendship are focally related, see Owen (1960, 169); there are other scholars though who have argued in favour of a connection by analogy (Fortenbaugh (1975), Burnet (1900, 365); Walker (1979) deviates from both interpretations; for a more recent, and quite interesting, approach regarding the conceptual unity of the three kinds of friendship see Zingano (2015). The point is that the two inferior forms of friendship are similar, in certain respects, with character friendships. In our case, Aristotle wants his similarity view to be true primarily of character friendships, but, it also holds for the other two, though to a lesser extent. But pleasure friendship is considered axiologically closer to the complete type than utility friendship (Rowe & Broadie 2002, 412). This is the main reason that explains my preference for some kind of pleasure friendship that pertains to my version of the similarity view. Namely, pleasure friendship is a valuable form of friendship, where friends enjoy the same things, activities, and have similar characteristics and attributes. In my version of pleasure friendship, however, it does not matter whether what I enjoy in the other is the fact that she is a merchant, a musician, or a generous person. What matters most is that there are various levels of similarities between friends which they find pleasant in each other.

view that ‘opposites are friends’ is true, in a limited way, of utility friendships. But even here, Aristotle does not argue that something desires an opposite for itself, but, it does so only incidentally. The reason for this is that an opposite aims at reaching an intermediate condition, which is something good for it. Therefore, even though Aristotle accepts the “opposites”, or dissimilarity view, he accepts it in a way that does not cause problems for his overall view on the role of similarity between friends.

The sixth objection against my thesis could rest on a claim that can not only be found in Nehamas, but, someone could claim that it is *prima facie* intuitive enough so as to function as one of the most evident ‘axioms’ of friendship. Namely, the idea is that I cannot be precise in expressing the reasons of attraction for my friend, not only because of her particularities, but, also, because the self that I find lovable in her is something constantly developing, generally, and in particular through our friendship. For Nehamas, the self that I love in my friend is not only the one that I perceive as representing who she is right now, but, also, her future self that she will develop through our friendship. I believe though that the similarity thesis may offer a better approach to this imprecision. The reason is that the self that we refer to when we try to express the reasons of attraction to our friends, either now or at some point in the future, is the one that is reduced to the similarities that bond us as friends; viz., all those elements upon which our relationship is founded. As I have already argued in the present essay, the dissimilarities or particularities of our friend are founded on our similarities. So, the self that I am mainly attracted to in my friend is, this reduced self, that mainly refers to the common features that I share with her. At last, despite certain problems that I detect in saying ‘I love you for who you are’ in Nehamas’ sense that I will discuss in the next objection, I want to note here that it is a huge commitment for someone to love her friend’s future self. What if she acquires certain despicable qualities which are deeply unpleasant to me? What if you don’t like anymore certain activities that we used to share our time engaging into? Nehamas’ approach does not seem to address these questions.

The seventh objection could be targeted against one of the main theses of the present paper: all friendships are forms of pleasure friendships. Or, put it differently, that the ultimate motivation for all friendships is the pleasure that the agents experience in encountering someone who is similar to them. But this, the objection could continue, leaves no plausible basis for loving our friends for their own sake—

we only love them for the pleasant experiences they provide us with. My response to this, very good, objection is the following. Despite the vagueness that is inherent both in Nehamas and other's understanding of the phrase 'I love you for yourself' that I have already discussed, there is an additional, deeper, problem with it.

An idea that both Nehamas and others seem to omit from their discussion of friendship is that we should be open to the possibility that we may not love our friends to the degree we often think. In particular, in saying that 'I love you for who you are', and in this way incorporating all the particularities, idiosyncrasies, or dissimilarities that our friend may have, we may not be sincere in our expression of love towards them. Especially in the matter of the dissimilarity between my friend and me, it is *prima facie* intuitive to say that I love you for the things you provide me that I do not have. This means that I use my friend in order for me to be completed in a way, that I previously was not. But this does not express love, in the sense of accepting our friend for who he is, but a need that is constantly pursued in order to be fulfilled by her. My view, at least, expresses a modest proposal regarding the explanation of the roots of attraction towards our friends. In saying that 'I am attracted to you because of the pleasant experiences you provide me with', however, is, perhaps, a misguided way to represent the heart of my theory. Even though it is true, it is only an outcome of the heart of the similarity view. In fact, the reason that make you attractive to me is that we feel pleasure from similar activities, and common features that we share. In this way, I see in you another self, another soul, that shares, along with me, a common view of the world. We share, in other words, a common way of living our lives together.

The eighth, and last possible objection that I am going to discuss is the following: isn't my pleasure in the other person's differences actually crucial to something like admiration, which is essential for the correction of my character through friendship? Now, even though the role of admiration could be evident for its important role in the development of our character through the emulation of the attributes of our friends that we do not possess, it is not obviously a part of Aristotle's theory of friendship; we could claim though that something like it is implied by him. In order to see that though we should examine what Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric* and combine these views with what he says in the *Nicomachean ethics* about the

development of character through friendship.⁴³ Let us begin with the Rhetoric. In this work he does not seem to discuss admiration as we understand it today. He discusses though an emotion that is, perhaps, close to it, which he calls ζῆλος, usually translated as ‘emulation’. In contemporary terms, admiration is understood as an emotion that includes a desire to emulate another’s form of behaviour, character trait, or action. In addition, it is considered as a pleasant emotion. Aristotle though puts ζῆλος in the category of painful emotions. He writes, in particular:

Emulation⁴⁴ is pain caused by seeing the presence, in persons whose nature is like our own, of good things that are highly valued and are possible for ourselves to acquire; but it is felt not because others have these goods, but because we have not got them ourselves. It is therefore a good feeling felt by good persons, whereas envy is a bad feeling felt by bad persons. Emulation makes us take steps to secure the good things in question, envy makes us take steps to stop our neighbour having them. (1388a 30-36).

Of significant note, in the above passage, is the fact that emulation is a painful⁴⁵ emotion. Specifically, we realize that we lack a certain quality compared to

⁴³ In seeing this strong theoretical and exegetical connection between Aristotle’s Rhetoric and his ethical theory both in the case of ‘ζῆλος’ and that of the similarity view, I follow, in my way, Fortenbaugh’s (1970) more general claim, that the Rhetoric is not only concerned with emotions as far as rhetorical theory and oratory are concerned, but, also, with ethical theory and philosophical psychology, and, hence, this work, is deeper than it is initially understood. There have been, however, scholars, such as Brandis (1849) and Cope (1867), who consider Aristotle’s treatment of emotion in the Rhetoric as superficial.

⁴⁴ The word ‘ζῆλος’ is translated as ‘emulation’ in the Jonathan Barnes (1984) edition and Grimaldi’s (1988) commentary; I will follow this translation here.

⁴⁵ Contrary to Aristotle, Linda Zagzebski (2015) treats admiration as a pleasant, rather than a painful, emotion. I will not enter, however, into this disagreement in the present paper. I just want to point out, that it seems, prima facie at least, unintuitive to say that I, for example, am obese and I admire someone who is thin and healthy, and I feel pleasure from realizing that I am in such a bad bodily condition. I think that Aristotle’s deeper idea is that if I feel pain from the realization of my bad bodily condition I might get initially motivated to resemble as much as possible with the admired person. But it probably

another person, we are pained by this lack, and we want to acquire this quality, without though trying to stop others from having it, as it happens in the case of envy. So, this is a response against the objection that wants the agent to feel pleasure from the fact that someone else is different from her in some respects, and for this pleasure to lead to admiration and moral improvement through the emulation of the other's qualities that the agent lacks.

Now Aristotle's idea about ζῆλος could be applied to Aristotle's discussion relating to friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The central idea at EN 1172 a8-14⁴⁶, is that friends tend to imitate each other by copying whatever quality they find pleasant in their friend. This passage should be interpreted with great caution. If we understand this passage as implying some sort of admiration of friends towards each other, where what I feel pleasure from my friend is a quality that I do not possess, then Aristotle would contradict himself compared to what he argues in the *Rhetoric's* passage. But I do not think that Aristotle contradicts himself. The reason for this is that we should understand this pleasure that the agent feels in the sense of valuing her friend's action, quality, or behaviour as good, and not as valuing it as pleasant because she does not have it. Namely, she values her friend's action because she considers it as worthy to be imitated, for being virtuous, for instance. This passage can best be understood with the aid of the passage in the *Rhetoric*. Namely, pain should accompany a perceived difference that the agent has, compared to her friend, and not pleasure; the latter should be kept for those qualities that the agent, in a general way, shares with her friend. For instance, let's assume that two agents are

needs a lot more in order to disprove Zagzebski's well-crafted argument, which I don't analyse in detail here; so, I will just leave it as it is for now.

⁴⁶ Nussbaum (1986, 363) has argued that in this passage Aristotle wants to show that character friends emulate each other's actions. In addition, Sherman (1987, 610) has also referred to the passage at EN IX 12 1172a8-14 and says that the agent may emulate character traits she does not possess that she admires in her friend. However, Sherman does not go into the details of the process of emulation; and neither does Nussbaum. For more details on the explanation of this process, see Vakirtzis (2015).

friends due to their common love for playing basketball. Now, the fact that, say, agent X, admires her friend for having a set of great qualities as a basketball player, which she does not possess, does not mean that she feels pleasure from this lack.

Conclusion

I have presented an argument, mainly inspired by Aristotle, with the aim of explaining why people, tend to choose some people to be their friends, instead of others, and why they keep being friends with them. I did that because even though Nehamas' reference to our friend's particularities, when it comes for us to explain our attraction to them, is interesting, if we approach friendship in this way then it seems inevitable that we will end up being confused, or vague, when it comes for us to explain why we desire and love our friend. The reason for this is that he did not detect a psychological mechanism that could lead us to lucid explanations regarding the roots of attraction that we feel towards our friends.

As we 've seen, however, Aristotle had detected such a mechanism. In the passage of the Rhetoric that we have examined, something (or someone) finds something else as naturally pleasant if it is akin or similar to it. The upshot is that if someone is similar to me, in the sense that we belong to the same class or classes then I feel attraction to her. Now, if I form a friendship that is based on the attraction that is caused by mutual similarity, I may explain my desire for someone to be my friend in more clear terms. In this way, Aristotle had detected a psychological mechanism that we may refer to when we want to itemize all the significant elements of the other which bond us as friends; and this can happen both at the beginning of a friendship, and after it has developed, where the shared experiences of friends are included as extra levels of similarities as well.

Nehamas (and others who follow a similar approach) did not detect the crucial passage in the Rhetoric. But, even if he did, I do not think that this would have changed his mind about how he understands this kind of relationship. For Nehamas, the reasons of love for our friends cannot be expressed in words most of the times. And this is not problematic for Nehamas because the "self" that we refer to when we say that "I love you for who you are" is not something easily detectable when we consider all those different elements that make my friend attractive and lovable to me. However, guided by Aristotle's theory, we could assume that the self that I value most

in my friend is mainly comprised of all those qualities that she has which I recognize as similar⁴⁷ to mine and are, therefore, pleasant to me; and the self that is comprised

⁴⁷ At this point I want to clear something up. We should take Aristotle as being quite flexible regarding the similarity view. Namely, two agents should not necessarily be perfectly virtuous in order to be attracted to each other. They could be attracted, instead, to each other's certain good qualities of character. We consider them, in other words, as morally good in some respect or degree even if they are not completely virtuous. Now, these types of virtue-friendship between equals, which have been correctly noted by Cooper (1980: 306-7), are really useful in seeing Aristotle's ideas from a wider perspective in that the similarity view can be applied in character friendship in a less strict way.

I also want to stress here that the similarity view could face certain problems, especially in view of Aristotle's ideas regarding friendships between unequals. The most characteristic example in these kinds of friendship is that between husband and wife (EN 1158b13-19). This is actually a class of virtue-friendship between a man who is, according to Aristotle, superior, and a woman who is inferior in virtue. Now this is a case where we have two agents who are dissimilar in virtue yet they are attracted to each other. But I do not think that it is the dissimilarity that makes them be attracted to each other. Rather, it is the fact that they share some common elements regarding virtue; and this holds for other cases of unequal virtue friendships as well (EN 1162b6-13; 1165b23 ff.)

of these attributes is, predominantly, attractive to me, despite any other ones that my friend may have which are dissimilar to mine, or are unknown to me.

References

Amos, J. R. 1971. *Similarity, interpersonal attraction and uniformity in sensitivity training groups*. (Doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University). Dissertation Abstracts International, 31(12-A), 6336.

Anagnostopoulos, G. 1994. *Aristotle on the Goals and Exactness of Ethics*. University of California Press

Badhwar, N.K. 1987. "Friends as Ends in Themselves." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48: 1–23.

Badhwar, N.K. 2003. "Love." In *Practical Ethics*, edited by H. LaFollette, 42-69. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Badhwar, N.K. 2016. On Friendship (Review of the book *On Friendship*). Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews. Retrieved from: <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/69275-on-friendship/bibliography>

Barnes, J., ed. 1984. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Bostock, D. 2000. *Aristotle's Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brink, D. O. 1997. "Self-love and Altruism." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 14(01): 122-157.

Brink, D. O. 1999. "Eudaimonism, love and friendship, and political community." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16(01): 252-289.

Byrne, D., & Nelson, D. 1964. "Attraction as a function of attitude similarity-dissimilarity: The effect of topic importance." *Psychonomic Science* 1: 93–94.

Byrne, D., Baskett, G. D., & Hodges, L. 1971. "Behavioural indicators of interpersonal attraction." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 1: 137–149.

Burnet, J. (Ed.). 1900. *The ethics of Aristotle*. Methuen.

- Carli, L. L., Ganley, R., & Pierce-Otay, A. (1991). Similarity and satisfaction in roommate relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 419–426.
- Cooper, J. M. 1977. "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship." *The Review of Metaphysics* 30: 619-648.
- Cooper, J. M. 1980. "Aristotle on Friendship." In *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, edited by A. Rorty, 301-340. University of California Press.
- Cooper, J. M. 1999. *Reason and emotion: Essays on ancient moral psychology and ethical theory*. Princeton University Press.
- Cope, Edward Meredith. 1867 [1970]. *An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Cambridge. Repr. Hildesheim: Olms.
- Finley, M. I. 1970. "Aristotle and economic analysis." *Past & Present* 47: 3-25.
- Fortenbaugh, William W. 1970. "Aristotle's Rhetoric on Emotions." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 52: 40–70.
- Fortenbaugh, W. W. 1975. "Aristotle's Analysis of Friendship: Function and Analogy, Resemblance, and Focal Meaning." *Phronesis* 20: 51-62.
- Grimaldi, William. 1988. *Aristotle, Rhetoric II, A Commentary*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Irwin, T. 1985. *Aristotle's Nichomachean ethics*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- Kraut, R. 2002. *Aristotle: Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kolodny, N. 2003. "Love as valuing a relationship." *The Philosophical Review* 112(2): 135-189.
- Montaigne, Michel de. 1957. "Of Friendship." In *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, translated by Donald M. Frame, 135–44. Stanford, ca: Stanford University Press.
- Layton, B. D., & Insko, C. A. 1974. "Anticipated interaction and the similarity attraction effect." *Sociometry* 37: 149–162.
- Meikle, S. 1991. "Aristotle on equality and market exchange." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111: 193-196.
- Meikle, S. 1997. *Aristotle's economic thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nehamas, A. 2010. "The Good of Friendship." In *Proceedings of the Aristotelian society* 110, 3: 267-294. The Oxford University Press.
- Nehamas, A. 2016. *On Friendship*. Basic Books
- Nehamas, A. 2010. "Aristotelian Philia, Modern Friendship?" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 39: 213-247
- Nozick, Robert. 1989. *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- "Love's Bond." In Nozick, *The Examined Life*, 68–86.

- Nussbaum, Martha. C. 1986. *The Fragility of Goodness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Owen, G. E. L. 1960. "Logic and metaphysics in some earlier works of Aristotle." In *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century*, edited by I. Düring & G. E.L. Owen, 163-90. Göteborg.
- Pakaluk, M. 2005. *Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pangle, L. S. 2002. *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*. Cambridge University Press.
- Penner, T., & Rowe, C. 2005. *Plato's Lysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Price, A. W. 1989. *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reeve, C. D. C. 1992. *Practices of Reason: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Rowe, C. J., & Broadie, S. 2002. *Aristotle: Nicomachean ethics*. Oxford University Press, USA
- Saunders, T. J. 1995. *Aristotle Politics Books I and II, trans. with a commentary*. Oxford University Press.
- Sherman, N. 1987. "Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47: 589–613.
- Storms, M. D., & Thomas, G. C. 1977. "Reactions to physical closeness." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 35: 412–418.
- Vakirtzis, A. 2014. *Character Friendship and Moral Development in Aristotle's Ethics*. DPhil Dissertation, University of Edinburgh
- Vakirtzis, A. 2015. "Mimesis, Friendship, and Moral development in Aristotle's Ethics." *Rhizomata* 3(2): 125-142.
- Walker, A. D. M. 1979. "Aristotle's Account of Friendship in the Nicomachean Ethics." *Phronesis* 24 (2): 180-196.
- Werner, C., & Parmelee, P. 1979. "Similarity of activity preferences among friends: Those who play together stay together." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 42: 62–66.
- Whiting, J.E.1991. "Impersonal Friends." *Monist* 74: 3–29.
- 2006. "The Nicomachean Account of Philia." In *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by R. Kraut, 276-304. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Williams, B. 1981. 'Persons, character and morality.' In B. Williams *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973–80*, 1 – 19. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Winter, M. 1997. "Aristotle, hōs epi to polu relations, and a demonstrative science of ethics." *Phronesis* 42(2): 163-89.

Zagzebski, L. 2015. "Admiration and the Admirable." In *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 89 (1) :205-221.

Zingano, M. 2015. "The conceptual unity of friendship in the eudemian and the Nicomachean ethics." *Apeiron* 48 (2): 195-219.

