

### The Three Types of Friendship

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses ethical questions about life. In book eight and nine, he talks about friendship. Aristotle sees friendship as a necessary and important characteristic of a good life. Friendship is where someone looks for advice, or where those in poverty and misfortune seek shelter. Aristotle claims friendship is what “hold states together” (1155a, 215, 23). He divides friendship into three categories, friends of utility, friends of pleasure, and friends of the good.

Aristotle defines friends of utility as those whose affection is “in terms of the good accruing to each from the other” (1156a, 218, 11-12). A person’s affection is not towards another person, but to how useful they can be to them. Almost all of my friendships formed through work fall into this category. My roommates and most of my classmates are friends of utility. We live and work with one another sharing the mutual benefits. My boss or co-worker expects me to do my job, and I expect them to do theirs. When the giving and receiving of these benefits stops, so does the friendship. If I were to leave that job, our friendship would be easily dissolved. These friendships are not out of bad taste, but simply out of our need for the usefulness we can provide each other.

Friends of pleasure source their affection from the pleasure they provide to one another. A friend “is not loved for becoming the kind of person he is, but for providing some good or pleasure” (1156a, 218, 18-20). This category is where most of my friends are found. All of my friends from high school are friends of pleasure. The circumstances of growing up with each other, playing on the same sports teams, and being locker neighbors brought us together. We certainly take pleasure in being around each other. I would willingly choose to hang out with them. However, they have proved to be too self-centered or superficial to be elevated to a friend of the good. The new friends I have made in college also fall into this category. This is because I have not known them long enough. Aristotle argues that it takes time to form truly good friendships.

The friends of the good are the best and most uncommon type of friend. Aristotle says that friends of the good are “those who wish for their friends’ good for their friends’ sake” (1156b, 219, 9-10). My parents and siblings are friends of the good. My parents have wanted nothing but the best for me since I was born. My siblings and I may compete and fight, but in the end, we would sacrifice anything and everything for each other. I believe that I have two other friends of the good. First would be Kara. Kara and I have been best friends for many years. We have helped one another through the best and worst times of our lives, and even tried and failed in a relationship. Regardless, the most important thing of our friendship is always the genuine well-being of one another. The second would be my former teacher Mr. Wuest. He was a teacher in the truest sense. He ensured that I was the best I could be in and out of the classroom. He surpassed his requirement of making sure I got good grades, and instead made sure that I was the best person I could be. Mr. Wuest set an example of what a truly good man is.