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CHAPTER THREE

Not for sale?

Aristotle on reciprocity

“The more precise the measurement of position, the more imprecise the measurement of momentum, and vice versa.”

Werner Heisenberg (1927)

Money is provided as a common measure. Aristotle makes this statement rather off-hand in the middle of a discussion of the friendship between a shoemaker and a weaver. Money is capable of expressing the value of things as distinct as shoes and clothes and hence enables us to compare values and calculate the proportions between them. As such money enables us to make equivalences and to preserve proportionality.

To a modern mind, this passages may raise several questions. For instance: why is the exchange relationship between a shoemaker and weaver called friendship in the first place? And can we really say that money is the measure of everything, even in friendships? Why is it so important to have a common measure in friendships? Friendship is not business, right? These are the kinds of questions that Adam Smith brings up, when he points out that the use of money in friendships leads to absurd calculations:

(1) Smith (1976 [1759, 1791]) 174
If your friend lent you money in your distress, ought you to lend him some in his? How much ought you to lend him? When ought you lend him?... And for how long a time? It is evident that no general rule can

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1 NE IX.i (1664a1-2): πεπόρισται κοινὸν μέτρον τὸ νόμισμα. See Sections 4.1 and 4.3 below.
be laid down... The difference between his character and yours, between his circumstances and yours, may be such, that you may be perfectly grateful and yet justly refuse to lend him a half-penny; and on the contrary, you may be willing to lend him ten times the sums which he lent you and yet justly be accused of... not having fulfilled the hundredth part of the obligation you lie under.

Awkward dilemmas and absurdities occur the moment money enters friendship—dilemmas that are urgent and actual in a society where money serves as a powerful measure of value. SMITH’s denial that money can provide a measure in friendship forges a distinction between the mechanisms of market exchange and the dialectics of friendship. Friendship obeys principles distinct from the rules of the market.²

Similar dilemmas and absurdities are explored in the course of the 4th centuries B.C.E., when φιλία emerges on the philosophical agenda.³ As we have seen in the previous chapters, the ancient Greek world witnessed a rapid increase of monetization in the 5th and 4th century B.C.E.. The scaling up of the Athenian economy also starts off a drift towards commodification: from the mid-5th century, there is a gradual expansion of the realm of things (objects, services) that can be exchanged as a commodity.⁴ In such a cultural context, money easily becomes a tool for quantification, objectification and reductionism: money not only becomes a medium of exchange, a means of

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² See SILVER (1990) and (1997) for the argument that the modern pervasive ideological distinction between relations based on formal obligations on the one hand and personal relations that are supposed to inhere in the subjective definition of the situation on the other hand has its origins in the intellectual reaction (by e.g. Adam Smith, David Hume) on the development of commercial society during the Scottish Enlightenment.

³ Apart from the dialogues and treatises by Plato and Aristotle, φιλία appears to be a prominent topic under the Minor Socratic authors as well, although we only have fragments and (later evidence of) book titles at our disposal. E.g. DL mentions a περὶ φιλίας by Speusippus (4,4) and by Xenocrates (4,12), a περὶ φίλου by Simmias of Thebes (2,124). The Suda mentions a περὶ φίλων καὶ φιλίας by Philippus of Opus. Although to Heraclitus and Empedocles φιλία functioned as a metaphor for cosmological forces (such as cohesion), it was the sophists and Socrates who first laid the foundations for the philosophical reflection on friendship as a social phenomenon. Cf. Aristotle’s demarcation of his treatment of φιλία as solely pertaining to τὰ ἄνθρωπικά, leaving aside τὰ φυσικά (NE VIII.ii; VIII.ix). FÜRST (1996).

payment and a store of value, but also a measure of exchange capable of quantifying and comparing low-value objects with high precision.\footnote{Pl. \textit{Laws} 918b: money has the power to make distributions even and symmetrical.}

“Money is the measure of everything”:\footnote{Ar. \textit{NE} V.v (1133a16-30). See Section 4.1 below.} it serves as an analytical instrument in Aristotle’s discussion of justice and it makes value assessments in friendships possible. Unlike Adam Smith, Aristotle does not dismiss money as an \textit{a priori} problematic currency of friendship. However, as we shall see in this chapter, Aristotle’s account of value in friendship does reflect concerns with demarcation: not between friends and what Smith would call the “neutral strangers” with whom one engages in commerce, but between utility friends, such as the shoemaker and the weaver, and \textit{real} friends, virtue friends.\footnote{In Adam Smith’s terminology, Aristotle’s shoemaker and weaver would be “neutral strangers”. Cf. Hill & McCarthy (2004), Mizuta (1975), Silver (1990).}

In this chapter it shall be argued that Aristotle’s philosophy of friendship can be understood as an implicit reaction to the intellectual challenges posed by the transformation of the Athenian economy. In what may be termed a sociological reading of Aristotelian philosophy, it shall be argued that the intellectual challenges provoked by the monetization of economy may have contributed to the conceptual articulation of a realm of the personal \textit{as opposed to}, or \textit{as distinct from} and \textit{irreducible to}, the commercial. In Aristotle we seem to find a thinker who articulates a “domain of human sympathy uncontaminated by the desire for personal advantage or gain and accordingly disembedded from the patterns of exchange and reciprocity that characterize social relations such as marriage and commerce.”\footnote{Konstan (1997), 13.} However, the articulation of this distinct realm of personal elective “virtue friendships” comes at a cost: it goes at the expense of those generalized reciprocities that popular morality regards as the very form and substance of \textit{φιλία}-relations. These reciprocities are now, in Aristotle’s categorization, lumped together with commercial transactions as “utility friendships”, the most inferior type of friendship.\footnote{In some contexts, it is implied that Utility Friendships are not “real” friendships. See Section 3.2 below.}

The focus of this chapter will be confined to the consequences that Aristotle’s categorization of \textit{φιλία} has for the conceptualization of reciprocity: the role of
time and interval (Sections 2 and 3) and the question of value and
commensurability (Sections 4 and 5). Both clusters of problems can be
understood as a reaction to changes in the outlook of economy: time and
interval are related to the typology of modes of reciprocity, whereas questions
of value and commensurability arise as a reaction to the availability of one
uniform measure of value. In both areas we see some basic strategies recurring:
time and interval are deemed crucial for the demarcation of gifts, loans and
purchases; questions of value and commensurability call for immunization of
friendship against incorporation in a monetized worldview.10

It has often been recognized that whereas Plato’s treatment of φιλία that is
directed towards a philosophical ideal lacks a systematic reflection on the
reality of friendships, Aristotle’s account is more reality-based in including a
descriptive analysis of real friendships and common conceptions.11 This chapter
focuses on the purportedly descriptive aspects of Aristotle’s account of
friendship, on the Aristotle who claims to offer an analysis of social realities. As
utility friendship, reciprocity and exchange do not belong to the core of
Aristotle’s prescriptive interests, his remarks about reciprocity, exchange and
utility are scattered throughout his ethical works (predominantly NE VIII and
IX, EE VII). In what follows some of his analyses and case histories will be read
in relative isolation from their direct context, while read in connection with
parallel passages that do not originate from the immediate context. What is
offered here is not a reconstruction of a philosophical argument, but a
sociological reading of Aristotle that attempts to expose the presuppositions,
the implicit norms, and conceptual preconditions of his philosophy of
friendship—a reading in which his philosophical analysis and classification of
friendship are read as a reaction (by no means necessarily an authoritative one)
to the same intellectual and cultural conditions that posed a challenge to the
authors we have dealt with in Chapters One and Two.

10 See Chapter Two.
Kern, im wesentlichen bestimmen? Aristoteles fragte: Was wird alles Freundschaft genannt?”
SCHROEDER (1997), 36: “Aristotle’s treatment of friendship is descriptive, as well as prescriptive
(...),” On the normative nature of many generalizing statements about social “realities”, see
Introduction Section 5.
1. Utility Friendship

1.1. Deficiency, need and utility

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the most common response to the isomorphism between φιλία-exchanges and market exchanges is to forge a moral demarcation. Whereas the ephemeral exchanges of the market are in principle morally underdetermined (not good or bad per se), in situations of isomorphism φιλία-exchanges are morally privileged over commercial transactions for involving good intentions (other-regarding behavior), moral emotions (gratitude), moral virtues (generosity, autonomy, self-restraint), or positive emotions (goodwill, trust, joy, delight). In such situations of isomorphism, φιλία is “good exchange” and commercial transactions, often reframed from a-moral into immoral, turn into “bad exchanges”.

Aristotle’s reaction to the problem of isomorphism is a different one. His first demarcation is not between “good” φιλία-exchanges and “bad” market transactions, but between all voluntary exchanges (Utility Friendship) and true φιλία (that is not an exchange at all, Virtue Friendship). To Aristotle, all consensual reciprocal exchanges of utilities are the same, i.e. they are to be categorized as Utility Friendships—ranging from one-off transactions between otherwise unrelated individuals (e.g. between shoemaker and builder) to bonds between the family\(^{12}\)—a range that is probably larger than Aristotle’s contemporary users of everyday language would have been ready to subsume under the denominator φιλία.\(^{13}\) All these relationships, distinct as they may seem on other grounds, share one structural similarity: they involve a reciprocal exchange of utilities, sometimes material (money, commodities, utilities on loan), sometimes immaterial (care, honor, expertise); sometimes incidental (between strangers or traders), often repeated (business partners, neighbors) and at times on a structural basis (parents and children).

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\(^{12}\) For the range of relationships see Rhet. II.iv.28 (1381b33-4).
\(^{13}\) In Rhet. II.iv (1381b33f) Aristotle makes a categorization into είδη of φιλία that is presumably more in touch with common usage: είδη δὲ φιλίας ἑταιρεία οἰκειότης συγγένεια καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα.
As such Utility Friendships, friendships διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον, are distinct from other “kinds” (εἴδη) of friendship that Aristotle acknowledges: friendships on the basis of pleasure (δι' ἡδύ) and friendships based on and aimed at the development of virtue (κατ' ἀρετήν; δι' ἀγαθόν). In short, Utility Friendships are relations where two friends are exchanging things, Pleasure Friendships those where two friends are enjoying an encounter, and Virtue Friendships those that ultimately aim at the mutual identification, or convergence, of two virtuous friends. The distinction in three types of friendship on the basis of their objects (φιλητά) corresponds to the three standard categories of value, the beneficial or useful, the pleasant, and the fine, and hence involve distinct interactional structures: exchanging utilities, sharing in pleasure, sharing in the activity of virtue.

Reciprocal exchanges of utilities called friendship presuppose two things: that a friend needs something (the utility) and that the friend wishes the other well with respect to something useful (the utility). As such, Aristotle’s demarcation of a class of Utility Friendship is the ultimate consequence of the commonplace in Greek moral reflection that what draws individuals together and sustains their bond is some form of deficiency, a “lack of” or “need for” something. This notion from folk-psychology is adopted in the work of moral philosophers in the Classical Age, most notably by Plato, who in his

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14 Also ωφέλιμον, συμφέρον.
15 Or διὰ τὸ γρή. Cf. EE VII.ii (1236a12-14.31), MM II.xi (1209 b2-4.17-19, 1210a30ff). Moreover, Aristotle uses τὸ χρήσιμον interchangeably with ωφέλιμον, συμφέρον. NE VIII.ii (1155b17-19), VIII.iii (1156a7); Cf. EE VII.ii (1236a15f), VII.iii (1238b15); MM II.xi (1209a19-21, 28ff; 1210a6.24).
16 There is some discussion over the precise interpretation of the διά-phrases: prospectively expressing final cause (coming close to ἔνεκα with genitive), i.e. what the potential friend hopes to achieve by his friend’s prosperity (Irwin 1999), or retrospectively expressing efficient cause, i.e. a causal condition in recognition of which a friend wishes his friend well (Cooper 1977, Alpern 1993), or covering both goal and ground (Price 1989, 151, referring to Phys. II.vii 198a14-21). The distinction between retrospective διά and prospective ἔνεκα is dealt with in Plato’s Lysis (217-9, 220c-d). Cf. Whiting (2006), 285, Glidden (1981), 39-59.
17 The friend “as another self”: NE IX.iv (1166a31-2): ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός; NE IX.ix (1169b6-7): ἐτερόν αὐτόν. IX.iv (1166a27).
18 Also φιλοτέον, φιλητέον, φίλον. For more on this terminology, see Dirlmeier (1962), 376, (1958),254-6.
19 NE II.iii (1155b17-19).
20 The idea that “utility” is the raison d’être of friendship also figures prominently among the Cyrenaics, which seems to support the idea that this conceptualization may have been originally associated with Socrates (Füirst (1996), 57-9). E.g. Aristippus (DL 2,91 = frg. 232
**Symposium** makes desire (ἔρως), successively, the desire to become whole again, the desire that originates in a lack, and the son of Resource and Poverty (Πενία), destined to be “always in need” (πένης ἀεί; ἀεὶ ἐνδείᾳ). Similarly, in the *Lysis* where the ultimate grounds of φιλία are investigated, Plato’s Socrates offers an “archaeology of desire”, according to which φιλία finds its source in desire that presupposes need, for the object of desire is that which something lacks (οὑ ἂν ἐνδεὲς ᾖ).

To Plato’s Socrates this “archaeology of desire” explains the ultimate grounds of φιλία and ἔρως—of everything that drives people to one another and binds them together. φιλία typically is a cohesive force sustaining bonds between individuals, and that explains our propensity to live together in communities.

At the same time, the conception of φιλία as based on deficiency and need raises some serious moral problems. One of the issues that remain unresolved in Plato’s *Lysis* is the unsettling implication that individuals who possess wisdom, i.e. persons whose character does not lack anything, cease to need friends. Along similar lines, in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates demonstrates how the
reduction of piety to commerce (prayer and sacrifice are exchanged in return for benefits from the gods) yields the absurd implication that the gods need things. This outcome that friendship is dispensable for gods or individuals who have reached completion or moral perfection obviously conflicts with the popular notion that friendship has an intrinsic moral value.

It is for reasons such as these that for Aristotle lack and need, deficiency in short, cannot be a basis for a morally perfect friendship. Whereas to Plato’s Socrates relationships based on deficiency are paradigmatic of interpersonal relationships, Aristotle treats Utility Friendship, the kind of friendship based on need, as seriously defective and as friendship “only incidentally” and not in the fullest sense; only φιλία based on virtue deserves the name of friendship “in its primary and proper sense”. The other types are quickly dismissed as “friendships” only in the analogical sense (καθ’ ὁμοιότητα), for they fail to offer a solid base for a long-term relationship. Especially friendships for the cause of utility tend to be unstable and dissolve quickly, as the rationale of their existence is cancelled as soon as the partners’ needs are fulfilled.

PANGLE-SMITH (2003), 20-36.
32 NE VIII.v (1157a29-30): καὶ πρώτως μὲν καὶ κυρίως.
33 NE VIII.v (1157a25-30). Although applying the logical terminology καθ’ αὐτό and κατὰ συμβεβηκός, Aristotle is evasive about the nature of the similarity between the three εἴδη in NE VIII.iii (1156a11ff.). The analysis in EE applies ordinal ranking (πρότη φιλία vs. δεύτεραι φιλίαι) and makes use of “focal predication” (πρὸς ἕν) to explain the relation between the friendship types. See OWEN (1960) on focal analysis in Aristotle; PRICE (1989), 131-161 on its application in EE. FORTENBAUGH (1975) for the criticism that the focal relationship in EE between the varieties of friendship should proceed through the φιλητά but fails to do so and hence lapses into homonymy. Cf. GARTNER (unpublished) for a construction of focal predication between the three φιλητά in EE. PAKALUK (1998b) for the egalitarian implication that the focal predication construction in EE broadens the application of the term φιλία as opposed to the restrictive tendencies in NE. OWEN (1960) maintains that the treatment in NE also involves focal analysis; ANNAS (1977) argues that focal analysis is absent in the Nicomachean account of friendship.

34 NE VIII.iii (1156a19-23, 34-b4), VIII.v (1157a3f., 14-16, 24-6), VIII.viii (1158b4f, 9f), VIII.x (1159b10-12); MM II.xi (1209b21-23, 29-10a2). Utility friendships and Pleasure friendships are not μόνιμος, quickly turn into (μεταπίπτειν) their opposites, are quickly formed (ταχέως γίνεσθαι) and similarly quickly ended (ταχέως παύεσθαι), are hence ἀβέβαιος and
In terms of the analysis of exchange, Aristotle’s classification has two important consequences. First, it lumps together the entire range of voluntary reciprocal exchanges of utilities into the single category of Utility Friendships (which gives a clear field for reductionism). Secondly, it solves some of the traditional puzzles of isomorphism, such as the status of teachings in virtue, by denying that these are reciprocal exchanges at all. Whereas the sophists make wisdom a commodity for sale, to Aristotle, wisdom, virtue and happiness are not possessions (κτήματα) that can be objects of exchange, but activities that are realized in Virtue Friendships. Those who attempt to sell wisdom make a category mistake, for the “coin” of Virtue Friendships, the good, cannot be changed into the legal tender of utility: there is no common measure to the good (an activity) and the useful (an object). Aristotle preemptively elevates an exchange that is potentially isomorphous with a commercial transaction above the category of Utility Friendships.

1.2. Mutual exploitation or mutual benefit?

But what exactly does it mean that utility friendship has “the useful” as its object? Does it imply that in utility friendship, friends intend to “use” one another? In fact, Aristotle’s notion of utility friendship is more subtle than that,

εὐδιάλυτος (a neologism of Aristotle and a hapax legomenon in his work (NE VIII.iii 1156a19); cf. DiRLMEIER (1979), 514). Virtue Friendship is stable and lasting; NE VIII.iv (1156b11f., 17f), VIII.v (1156b33f.), VIII.viii (1158b9), VIII.x (1159b4f.); EE VII.ii (1236 a33-b19, 37b9-12, 38a11); MM II.xi (1209b11-17). The duration of friendships is explicitly thematized in IX.iii (1165a36-b86; also IX.i 1164a8-13). Cf. FÜRST (1996), 86-101, for an argument that duration is a more central criterion for Aristotelian φιλία than is commonly assumed. The idea that the duration/viability of friendship is correlated to utility is also Cyrenaic. E.g. frg. 234 Mannebach. Cf. Xen. Mem. 1.2.53.

See also Chapter Four.

In NE I.viii (1098b32-1099a7) it is argued that the chief good (τὸ ἄριστον) is located not in the possession (κτήσεις) of excellence but in its use (χρήσεις), i.e. in its ἐνεργεία: διαφέρει δὲ ἴσως οὐ μικρὸν ἐν κτήσει ἢ χρήσει τὸ ἄριστον υπολαμβάνειν, καὶ ἐν ἐξει ἢ ἐνεργεία. This suggests not only that dealing with property is an instance of excellence, but also that there is an analogy between property and virtue. Cf. FRANK (2005), 70: “It is by understanding property as a verb and not strictly as a noun, as an activity of use and not strictly as a fungible thing, that we see that property is bound to, is indeed a site of, virtue. And it is by understanding virtue as a verb and not strictly as a noun, as an activity and not strictly as a thing, that we see virtue as a kind of property.”
as he explicitly acknowledges that the three types of friendship do share the general characteristic that there is a basic other-directed concern:

(2)  

Ar. NE VIII.2 (1156a4-6)

δεὶ ἄρα εὐνοεῖν ἀλλήλοις καὶ βούλεσθαι τάγαθα μὴ λανθάνοντας
di` ën ti òn ëι̂φì̂μενων.

A friendship needs to be mutual (there needs to be ἀντιφίλησις, hence friendship cannot involve inanimate objects like wine), it is essential that this mutual goodwill is explicitly shared knowledge (μὴ λανθάνοντας), it needs to involve being well-disposed towards the other (εὐνοεῖν, εὔνοια), which means wishing the other good things (βούλεσθαι τάγαθα) on account of one of the three qualities mentioned earlier: the useful, the pleasant or the virtuous. Moreover, in popular conception (according to Aristotle) well-wishing is principally other-directed:

(3)  

Ar. NE VIII.ii (1155b31-2)

τῷ δὲ φίλῳ φασὶ δεῖ βούλεσθαι τάγαθα ἐκείνου ἑνεκά.

Well-wishing logically presupposes a concern for the other. It is important to realize that this other-directed quality applies to all three kinds of friendships. Even the inferior types of friendships do involve an active concern for the wellbeing of the other, however defective this may be. It is not implied that any of the types of friendship are in any case altruistic in a thick sense of the word, i.e. in the sense that the interests of the other person are the only reason for acting without any reference to one’s own interests. It simply means that the

37 “[T]he parties must have good will towards each other, i.e. wish good things for each other, and be aware of the other’s doing so, the feeling being brought about by one of the three things mentioned.” (transl. Broadie & Rowe).

38 NE VIII.ii (1155b28).

39 “[A]nd people say friendship demands that one wish a friend good things for his sake.” (transl. Broadie & Rowe).

40 Gill (1998), 319 for the point that the qualification ἐκείνου ἑνεκά does not necessarily remove any reference to self-interest. So too Cooper (1977), 621 n.7. To Cooper the fact that the needs of another person can form a sufficient (though possibly not the only or strongest) reason for acting for his sake justifies the attribution of altruistic elements to Aristotle’s account of friendship. However, Aristotle’s definition of φιλία in the Rhet. (2.4 1381a5-6) adds the provision to act “for no other reason than the other’s sake.” Cf. Konstan (2000), 6. This goes at the heart of the terminological confusion around “altruism”: a thick conception of altruism demands self-negation (the interests of another person are a reason for acting, without any
interests of the other are a reason for acting in a certain way. As becomes clear in VIII.3, the inferior types of friendship are concerned with the other κατὰ συμβεβηκός, in an “accidental way”, i.e. not for what the other essentially is, but “in his quality as useful or pleasant” (ἡ χρήσιμος ἢ ἡδύς)—the fact remains that these friends are concerned with each other. As a virtue friend you are concerned with your friend for the virtuous person he is, and you wish him good things and virtue; along the same lines, as a utility friend you wish your friend useful things and you cooperate with him on a basis of utility. Your concern is confined to concern for the friend in his quality as a utility friend.

It is important to give Aristotle’s definition of utility friendship some thought for it is sometimes understood that in utility friendships it is the friend who is “used”—instead of being the one for whom one wishes useful things. Consequently, Aristotelian utility friendship is easily understood as an utterly

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41 The contention that virtue friends are committed to each other κατ’ αὑτῶν, “for what they really are”, of course implies a close connection between moral excellence and what human being essentially is. Cooper (1977), 634; Price (1989), 105.

42 See Cooper (1977) for the argument that the oppositions (i) loving a person for what he essentially is vs. loving a person for his incidental qualities and (ii) loving a person for the sake of himself vs. loving a person for the sake of oneself, are distinct. Cf. Alpern (1983).
self-seeking and utilitarian type of friendship as opposed to virtue friendship defined by other-regarding sentiments.\(^43\)

This is right to the extent that Aristotle seems to be actively engaged in demarcating Virtue Friendships from the two other, seemingly isomorphous, types of friendships. His strategy in doing so is to draw a line between the categories of value on which the friendships are based: useful (χρήσιμος) is defined as fundamentally goal-relative, as “good-for” some further end (the pleasant or the good).\(^44\) Hence, when friendship is based on utility, the basis is not an end in itself—as opposed to virtue friendships where the end is virtue in friendship.

Moreover, Utility Friends are said to connect to one another not for what the other is (οὐ καθ’ αὑτούς φιλούσιν), but to be committed to the other because of what is good for themselves (διὰ τὸ αὐτοῖς ἀγαθὸν στέργουσι).\(^45\) Being a useful friend means having access to the utilities that the other needs.\(^46\) This seems to suggest that utility friends are a means towards acquisition of utilities—as opposed to exchanges of objects being a means towards the acquisition of friends—which makes sense, as the measure of value within Utility Friendships is money: coinage (νόμισμα) is the measure of need (χρεία; see Section 4.1 below); money in general (χρήματα) is wealth-in-use (χρῆσθαι) and the utility par excellence (see Section 4.2 below). Money, need, use, utility and utility friendships all seem to belong to the realm of short-term means, as opposed to long-term ends.

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\(^{43}\) See Chapter Four for the post-Enlightenment bias against a conception of persons being “useful”, i.e. “useful as a means to an end” as opposed to valuable as an end in itself. It is, however, equally problematic to assimilate Aristotle’s virtue friendship with modern ideals of altruism. To many commentators, Aristotle appears to reduce apparent altruism in virtue friendship to egoism. E.g. ALLAN (1970), 138. But STERN-GILLET (1995), 85 for a clear statement of the point that self-love is inaccessible for those who are not virtuous. Cf. n. 39 above.

\(^{44}\) NE VIII.ii (1155b19-21). Cf. EE VII. (1235b31-37).

\(^{45}\) Ar. NE VIII.iii (1156a10-15). στέργω is often used as a “marked” term in relation to φιλέω, as “unreserved commitment” in relation to “connection”. Cf. Soph. El. 1102 where Clytaemnæstra complains that Electra “πέφυκας πατέρα σὸν στέργειν ἀεί”, i.e. “structurally chooses your father’s side.”

\(^{46}\) Aristotle suggests that utility friends are more fungible than virtue friends because the friendship is based on characteristics that are accidental (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) and not intrinsic (καθ’ αὑτούς) to the friends; but this still does not necessarily preclude even a utility friend wishes a friend well for the sake of the other; even in a utility friendship, a friend cannot be reduced to a mere means to one’s own ulterior ends.
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However, an important proviso is required here. In the *NE*, Aristotle seems to avoid the adjective χρήσιμος as a direct attribute of φίλος and to prefer formulations such as φίλοι διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον or κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον. Occasionally, Aristotle does apply the attribute χρήσιμος to friends, but it should be noted that he takes the trouble to disambiguate two ways of “use” in order to preserve the fact that even in a utility friendship, a friend cannot be reduced to a mere means to one’s own ulterior ends: “using” friends is not the same as using instruments.

What distinguishes the use of a tool from the “use” of a friend, is the absence of a common purpose, a κοινόν: a craftsman does not have an association (κοινωνία) with his tool, because craftsman and tool are not two independent agents with a common purpose consisting of a good that can be shared, but the tool is simply either a part or separate extension of the craftsman; only one of them is an individual entity (τὸ μὲν ἕν), the other is “(part) of (the) one” (τὸ δὲ τοῦ ἑνός).

By contrast, a utility friendship involves two independent agents: a friend takes a positive interest in the other as an independent agent rather than as a tool. A friend who is χρήσιμος, “serviceable”, is not “useful” in the same sense as a tool or an object. The crucial difference is that utility friends have “something in common”, i.e. they pursue a common goal that harmonizes the needs and ends of both friends, e.g. an exchange of five pairs of shoes for a bed, that meets the needs of both: the good is “divisible”, in the sense that the

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47 χρήσιμος as attribute for a φίλος: e.g. *NE* VIII.iii (1156a16), VIII.vi (58a29, 33) VIII.xiii (59b), IX.ix (69b23); *EE* VII. 1243b25, 1244a15, 44a21, 36a13, 38a22, 38a8, 38b2, 44a18, a33, 43b26. This may also be a case of focal predication: “the person with whom I have a utility friendship”, or “utility friend” instead of “useful friend”.

48 χρῆσθαι: e.g. *EE* VII. (1237a41-b1) (“Treating” (χρῆσθαι) an object of φιλεῖν (φιλόμενον)).

49 *EE* VII.ix (1241b17-24). Cf. *NE* XIII.x (1160b32-1161a3). Similarly, tool (ὄργανον) and craft (τέχνη) do no have a common purpose (οὐχ ἑνὲκα κοινοῦ τινος) but co-operate for the sake of the user (τοῦ χρωμένου ἑνὲκεν) and exist for the sake of the work (τὸ ἔργον). *EE* VII.x (1242a14-9), *NE* XIII.xi (1161a30-5).

50 A tool exists for the sake of its work (τὸ ἔργον), i.e. its activity (ἐνέργεια)—also “use” (χρήσις) in the case of tools: *De Part. An.* 645b14-18.

51 This forms a marked contrast with what Aristotle in *Pol*. II.1 (1262b7-23) takes to be Plato’s conception of φίλία in the *Symposium*: as the merging of two lovers into a single unity (συμφύναι καὶ γενέσθαι ἐκ δύο ὄντων ἀμφοτέρως ἕνα). Aristotle conceives of this merging as a destruction (ἐφθάρθαι) of both individuals, or at least one. Cf. HUTTER (1978), 110-1.

52 For Aristotle, κοινωνία is a generic term for any community of interest, any social group
person who needed a bed gets one and the person who needed five pairs of shoes gets what he wants too. Using a tool means making it realize your goals; “using” a friend, i.e. dealing with a friend, means making a deal in which both of you can realize your goals—not using him as a tool for your ulterior ends.

By distinguishing two kinds of “use” Aristotle attempts to harmonize his analysis that Utility Friendships are ultimately grounded in need and lack with his contention that friends in all types of friendship meet the basic requirement that they wish one another well. Utility friendships are grounded in mutual benefit, not mutual exploitation. This is, however, only an accurate description of functional φιλία-bonds. In Aristotle’s descriptive analysis of actual utility friendships there is a persistent tension between two approaches, i.e. between utility in terms of what each φίλος wants to get out of their φιλία and utility in terms of what φίλοι wish for one another and give to each other. This is a real tension: only ideally do these two motives coincide. In good times utility friends can afford to conceive of their bond in terms of well-wishing; in bad times and conflict situations, it is the wanting that dominates their understanding of the φιλία between them.

1.3. The consequences of isomorphism

Aristotle’s choice to categorize the εἴδη of friendship in terms of their objects has consequences for the analytical potential of his conceptual apparatus. As we shall see, the categorization of friendship types in terms of their objects has implications for the role of intentions and emotions, and hence of the first person perspective, in the conceptualization of friendship: the orientation towards a particular kind of value (useful, pleasant, the good) of both friends becomes the decisive criterion for their classification. Moreover, it has

emerging out of social interaction, ranging from commercial partners (NE V.v (1133b5-6, b14-16); VIII.xiv (1163a31)) to fellow travelers (NE VIII.ix (1159b28), Pol. I.v (1263a17)), from the oikos to the polis (Pol. I.i (1252a1-7); Hist. An. I.1 (488a7-14)— wherever individuals hold something in common (κοινόν). Cf. KRAUT (2002), 355: “[T]he Greek term koinōnia conveys nothing more than the idea of a common purpose (…)”; YACK (1993). 27-33; KRAUT (2002), 353-6. For the difference between having a common interests and having identical interests, see NE IX.v-vi (1167a20-b2), EE VII. (1241a27-29).
consequences for the **commensurability** of the types of φιλία as their value-structures are profoundly different.

It is commonly acknowledged that, compared to Plato, Aristotle’s account of φιλία is more in touch with reality in offering a phenomenological analysis of real friendship. However, his categorization of φιλία-bonds involves a God’s Eye Point of View, assuming an observer who has full access to people’s real intentions. Hence, in his observations about concrete cases of φιλία, Aristotle’s recurring problem is that it is not easy to establish which type of φιλία he is talking about (Section 3). Moreover, Aristotle frequently points to the imperfections of his own theoretical framework: he faces problems of perspective (Section 2), considers hybrid forms (Section 3), and has some serious difficulties in his distinction between unequal friendships and non-uniform friendships (Section 4 and 5).

The first consequence of the Aristotelian categorization of friendship is that the entire range of relationships that involve a consensual and reciprocal exchange of utilities are approached from the point of view of similarity. For Aristotle’s analytical purposes, the formal isomorphism between seemingly distinct relationships has priority over the very differences that seemed to have preoccupied 5th- and 4th-century thinking about φιλία: the differences between parents and children exchanging care and credit-transactions, between friends exchanging gifts and shoemakers and builders exchanging shoes and beds. Aristotle’s approach from similarity and isomorphism raises questions about the differences between all those relationships labelled utility friendships: how are these to be conceptualized?

### 2. The Debtor Paradigm of Obligation

#### 2.1. The analytical use of isomorphism

In the previous chapter, we have seen some examples of cultural attempts to demarcate long-term reciprocities from seemingly isomorphous interactions such as commercial transactions.\(^{53}\) Conversely, the isomorphism between

\(^{53}\) Cf. also Chapter Four on the demarcation of sophistic short-term traffic from Socratic long-term
finance and φιλία-exchanges can also be exploited to articulate and objectify the more “vague” obligations within long-term φιλία-relationships. The stock example is the relationship between parents and children, as we have seen in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{54} the duty to respect one’s parents is motivated in terms of a Debtor Paradigm of Obligation,\textsuperscript{55} that frames the child-parent bond as a debtor-creditor relationship, parental care as a loan and the filial obligation to care for one’s parents as a debt that needs to be repaid.

Aristotle repeatedly adheres to this conceptualization of filial duty in terms of long-term credit. When discussing the hierarchy of claims attached to various relationships, Aristotle supposes that when it comes to support (τροφή), parents have priority, because children are “so to speak in a position of debt” (ὡς ὀφείλοντας):

\begin{align}
\text{(4) Ar. NE IX.ii (1165a22-24)\textsuperscript{46}} \\
\text{Δόξειε δ’ ἂν τροφῆς μὲν γονεῦσι δεῖν ἐπαρκεῖν, ὡς ὀφείλοντας, καὶ τοῖς αἰτίοις τοῦ εἶναι κάλλιον ὡς ἐαυτοῖς εἰς ταῦτ’ ἐπαρκεῖν.}
\end{align}

Similarly, the asymmetrical bond\textsuperscript{57} between father and son is explained in terms of a debt that can never be paid off:

φιλία, and Chapter Five on the demarcation of passive and exploitative prostitution from active and beneficial φιλία.

\textsuperscript{54} See Chapter Two Section 1; Chapters Four and Five for Socrates’ larger strategy to demarcate short-term and passive requital from long-term active reciprocity.

\textsuperscript{55} This terminology is coined and explored by CARD (1988). So too ALLEN (1987), 57: “The vocabulary of duty involves debt.”

\textsuperscript{56} “But it would seem that one should give priority to parents when it comes to giving support, on the basis that a debt is owed to them, and that it is a finer thing to give support in this way to those who caused one’s existence than to oneself.” (transl. BROADIE \& ROWE).

\textsuperscript{57} NE VIII.xii (1162a4-9): the φιλία of children for their parents is similar to that of men for gods: directed towards what is good and superior (ὑπερέχον), for parents have done their children the greatest good (εὖ γὰρ πεποιήκασι τὰ μέγιστα): their being (εἶναι), upbringing (τραφῆναι) and education (παιδευθῆναι). NE VIII.xi (1161a14-21): the bond between parent and child is analogous to that between king and subjects, i.e. based on superiority in beneficence (ἐν ὑπεροχῇ εὐεργεσίας); the superior party receives esteem (τιμῶνται). See Section 5 on τιμή in unequal friendship.
In the case of parents and gods, it is impossible to honor them according to merit (κατ’ ἀξίαν), because adequate compensation cannot possibly be rendered. This fundamental asymmetry is analyzed with the aid of the Debtor Paradigm: the debts (ὀφείλοντα) owed (ἀποδότεον) by a son to his father can never be redeemed. Whereas creditors (οἷς ὀφείλεται) are free to discharge their debtors, debtors cannot remit their creditors. In the lines that follow, Aristotle admits that it is highly improbable that a father will ever disavow his son: not only is the parent-child bond “natural” (φυσική); fathers are unlikely to reject the future assistance (ἐπικουρία) the son is able to offer—whereas a bad son seeks to avoid (φεύγειν) his impending duty.

More generally, when Aristotle claims that in cases of conflicting claims, it is as a general rule better to fulfill outstanding obligations towards benefactors before doing any favor to friends, he applies the Debtor/Creditor Model:

58 “For friendship looks also for what is possible, not what accords with merit, for such a thing is not even possible in all cases, e.g., where it is a matter of honouring the gods or one’s parents; for no one could ever render them the honour they deserve, and the person who serves them to the best of his ability is thought to be behaving decently. This is why it might well not be thought permissible for son to disavow father, while father may disavow son; for the son must repay the debt he owes, and since there is nothing he can do that is worthy of the benefits he has already received, he is always a debtor. On the other hand, a creditor can remit a debt; so too, then, can a father.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).

59 Cf. NE IX.1 (1164b6): towards parents and gods, only reciprocation according to ability (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον) is possible. According to PAKALUK (1998), 148 this emphatically exceptional quality of the relationship with parents and gods may be taken to imply that in other relationships deference (τιμή) may serve to discharge debts. This is partly right: Aristotle does acknowledge τιμή as a form of symbolic capital that accrues to the superior party in unequal utility friendships, but does not accept the implication that debts in unequal friendships can ever be balanced. See Section 5 on τιμή.
The tenor is that discharging outstanding obligations (ἀνταποδοτέον) to a benefactor has precedence over making investments in long-term reciprocities (to oblige, χαρίζεσθαι, one’s ἑταῖροι—paraphrased as gift-giving (ἡ δόσις) a few lines later): one ought to ἀποδιδόναι (or ἀνταποδιδόναι) before διδόναι.  

Here, the priority of obligations of a beneficiary towards his benefactor is constructed as analogous (ὡς) to an outstanding debt (δάνειον).  

Whereas isomorphism is an important criterion for Aristotle to lump together all voluntary reciprocal exchanges under the category of Utility Friendship, ὡς in T 6 and ως in T 4 make plain that despite all the similarities and analogies, to Aristotle, the Debtor Paradigm is still only an analogy. This suggests that Aristotle’s conceptualization also allows for irreducible differences: differences due to perspective (Section 2.2) and differences related to interval in time (Section 3).

2.2. Problems of perspective

As we have seen in the previous chapters, a 5th- and 4th-century Athenian audience was both capable of applying an objectifying Debtor Paradigm to a situation and of expressing the subjective experience sense that the meaning of

60 “[A]nd one should for the most part sooner pay someone back for benefits received than give to a comrade, just as one should also sooner repay a loan to a creditor than give favours to comrades.” (transl. Broadie & Rowe).

61 A few lines later (NE IX.ii (1165a2-5)) the “general rule” (καθόλου) is repeated, that one must first pay back the debt (τὸ ὀφείλημα ἀποδοτέον), unless the balance of nobility or urgency (τῷ καλῷ ἢ τῷ ἀναγκαίῳ) is on the side of the gift (ἡ δόσις).

62 Possibly the contrast between asymmetrical (benefaction involves a superior and an inferior party with respect to access to utilities) and symmetrical (hetairoi are equally useful for one another) is also relevant. Note furthermore that Aristotle here emphatically discusses rules of thumb: the priority of redeeming debt with a benefactor over gratifying a friend applies “in most situations” (ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ); it is not, as the next lines (NE IX.ii (1164b34-5)) make plain, a universal law (ἰδοὺ γ’ οὐδὲ τούτ’ ἀει); on a more general note, Aristotle repeats his famous reservation that discussion about affections and actions have the same degree of determinacy as their subject matter (NE IX.ii (1165a12-3), referring back to I.iii (1094b11-14), I.vii (1098a26-33), II.ii (1104a1-7); cf. Met. 995a15-6).
marriage, friendship, religious communication and parents-child bonds is not exhausted by a balance sheet. Keeping a balance sheet requires an external perspective that regards exchanges as closed events; the subjective experience of relationships is bound to an internal perspective that view exchanges as ongoing processes. As Aristotle's ethical project involves an universalizing analysis of human behavior, it automatically favors an external synoptic perspective, i.e. a detached approach to obligations and behavior in the context of friendship where obligations to parents and friends can be easily framed in terms of debt.

However, Aristotle is remarkably perceptive to the shortcomings of the Debtor Paradigm of obligation and the paradoxes of perspective it yields. Whereas in T 6 the obligations towards benefactors were assimilated to outstanding debts, in T 7 Aristotle expresses objections against this assimilation. When wondering why benefactors appear to be more committed to the people they benefit than vice versa, Aristotle notes:

(7) **Ar. NE IX.vii (1167b17-24)**

Oἱ δὲ εὐεργέται τοὺς εὐεργετηθέντας δοκοῦσι μᾶλλον φιλεῖν ἢ οἱ εὖ παθόντες τοὺς δράσαντας, καὶ ὡς παρὰ λόγον γινόμενον ἐπιζητεῖται. τοῖς μὲν οὖν πλείστοις φαίνεται ὅτι οἱ μὲν ὀφείλουσι τοῖς δὲ ὀφείλεται καθάπερ οὖν ἐπὶ τῶν δανείων οἱ μὲν ὀφείλοντες βούλονται μὴ εἶναι οἷς ὀφείλουσιν, οἱ δὲ δανείσαντες καὶ ἐπιμελοῦνται τῆς τῶν ὀφειλόντων σωτηρίας, οὕτω καὶ τοὺς εὐεργετήσαντας βούλεσθαι εἶναι τοὺς παθόντας ὡς κομιουμένους τὰς χάριτας, τοῖς δ' οὐκ εἶναι ἐπιμελές τὸ ἀνταποδοῦναι.

At first, Aristotle seems to adhere to the Debtor Paradigm of Obligation (as he has done in T 4-6), because it is the model generally accepted in everyday morality (“to most people it seems”): benefaction is a loan (a δάνειον), receivers are debtors (οἱ ὀφείλοντες, “those who owe”), and benefactors creditors (οῖς

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63 “Benefactors seem to love beneficiaries more than receivers love bestowers of benefits; and this is made a problem for investigation, as if it were an unreasonable thing to happen. Now to most people it appears that one party are debtors, the other creditors; as in the case of a loan, then, where debtors wish creditors not to exist, while those who made the loan even take care to ensure the safety of their debtors, so the view is that benefactors too wish the recipients to exist so that they can recoup the favours they have bestowed, while recipients do not give the same care to repaying them.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).
ὀφείλουσιν, “those to whom they owe”). Within a relationship on these terms, it is in the interest of the creditors that the debtors are preserved, whereas debtors may not be very keen on the existence of their creditors. In the end however, this model is dismissed by Aristotle:

(8) Ar. NE IX.vii (1167b24-32)\(^{64}\)

Ἐπίχαρμος μὲν οὖν τάχ’ ἂν φαίη ταῦτα λέγειν αὐτοὺς ἐκ πονηροῦ θεωμένους, ἐοικε δ’ ἀνθρωπικῷ ἀμνήμονες γὰρ οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ μᾶλλον εὑ πάσχειν ἢ ποιεῖν ἐφίενται. δόξει δ’ ἂν φυσικώτερον εἶναι τὸ αἰτίον, καὶ οὐδ’ ὁμοιον τὸ περὶ τοὺς δανείσαντας· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ φιλήσις περὶ ἑκείνους, άλλα τοὺς σώζεσθαι βούλησις τῆς κομιδῆς ἐνεκα· οἱ δ’ εὗ πεποιηκότες φιλοῦσι καὶ ἀγαπῶσι τοὺς πεπονθότας κἂν μηδὲν ἃν χρήσιμοι μηδ’ εἰς ὕστερον γένοιτ' ἂν.

As PAKALUK remarks, it is difficult to establish the precise meaning of Epicharmus’ saying.\(^{65}\) However, the expression seems to suggest that the Debtor Paradigm is one way of seeing (θεωμένους) things—the way most people see it (πλείστοις φαίνεται, T 7)—but that somehow fails to capture the truth or the whole truth about the logic of benefits. According to Aristotle, the analogy between a debt-relationship and benefaction fails, because the former does not involve commitment (φιλήσις) to a person,\(^{66}\) but only a concern with the debtor’s

\(^{64}\) “Now Epicharmus might perhaps claim that those who say this say it because they are “observing from the bad side”, but it seems human enough; for most people are forgetful, and aim more at receiving benefits than at bestowing them. But it would seem that the explanation lies, rather, in natural philosophy, and that the case of the lender does not even resemble this one; for with the lender there is no φιλήσις involved, only wishing for the other’s preservation for the sake of what is to be got from him; by contrast those who have bestowed benefits φιλοῦσι and ἀγαπῶσι the recipients even if the latter are of no use and will not become useful in the future.” (transl. BRODIE & ROWE).

\(^{65}\) PAKALUK (1998a), 184. The main problem is that without the original context, it is impossible to establish the meaning of ἐκ πονηροῦ. The interpretations suggested by PAKALUK are: (1) “from a bad point of view”, i.e. like a bad seat at the theatre that prevents seeing what is actually going on; (2) “at the bad side of thing”, i.e. with neglect of the good in what is to see. PAKALUK thinks (1) is most likely the correct reading.

\(^{66}\) Aristotle defines φιλία as a bond of mutual φιλεῖν of two partners who are aware of each other’s φιλήσις. (NE XIII.ii (1155b28-1156a5)). τὸ φιλεῖν, the verb, and its corresponding nomen actionis ἡ φίλησις, are defined as goodwill (εὔνοια), which consists in “wishing the other good things” (βούλεσθαι ἀγαθά) for his own sake (ἐκείνου ἐνεκα)—good things, i.e. either useful, pleasant or intrinsically good things. Hence, φιλεῖν and φιλήσις are a πάθος (NE XIII.v (1157b28); Rhet. II.vi), characterized by introspective qualities. φιλία, on the other hand, is not only a relational term that denotes a bond, but is also a disposition, a ἔξω (NE VIII.v (1157b28-30)), that involves deliberate choice (προαίρεσις, NE VIII.v 1157b31).
well-being for the sake of repayment, whereas the benefactor does feel committed (φιλούσι) to the beneficiary irrespective of ulterior utility (κἂν μηδὲν ὀςι χρήσιμου)—implying that within a Debtor Paradigm, which ultimately operates on the basis of utility, the elements of commitment (φιλησίς, φιλεῖν) and appreciation (ἀγαπᾶν) are excluded from the analysis.  

In the passage that immediately follows this quotation, Aristotle proposes an alternative model to analyze the benefactor-beneficiary-relationship, based on an analogy with the craftsman-product-relationship: the benefactor and the craftsman are actualizing their potential by the acts of giving and creation. Moreover, as Aristotle notes, for the benefactor there is an element of moral excellence (καλόν) in the act of benefaction; whereas the beneficiary is merely a passive recipient (ὁ παθών) of something useful (τὸ χρήσιμον). The outcome seems to be that a benefaction-relationship simply is not an undiluted case of utility friendship: the benefactor is χρήσιμος to the beneficiary (i.e. he offers him access to utilities), whereas the beneficiary offers the benefactor the opportunity to exercise virtue. 

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67 Whereas φιλεῖν is a verb of interaction that signifies the level of commitment the subject feels towards a φίλος, ἀγαπᾶν is rather an evaluative verb indicating a subject’s positive response (“appreciation”) of a person, thing or situation, ranging from “to value”, “to appreciate” to “to be pleased with”. Cf. SCHMIDT (1879 [1969]), 485: “In dem ganzen Gebrauche also erweist sich ἀγαπᾶν als der schwächste Ausdruck, der ebenso sehr unserm schätzen als unserm lieben entspricht.” COPE & SANDYS (1877), 296: “ἀγαπᾶν (…) gives the intellectual aspect of love in the shape of esteem; no longer a mere emotion, but an affection acquired and conceived after an exercise of judgement, consisting in a valuation or estimate formed of the worth of the object of preference.” See Introduction.

68 Note that at this point, Aristotle only mentions philēsis and philein from the point of view of the benefactor/giver. Another objection frequently formulated against the Debtor’s Paradigm is that it fails to explain and take into account positive dispositions and emotions from the side of the receiver, such as gratitude. Cf. CARD (1988), 118: “Aristotle also had views about the dischargeability of obligations to a benefactor. But they leave no more room than Kant’s for gratitude. According to Aristotle, a noble person ‘is apt to confer greater benefits in return; for thus the original benefactor besides being paid will incur a debt to him, and will be the gainer by the transaction. (…) Noble people, said Aristotle, are ashamed of receiving benefits. Instead of gratitude, we have a game of One-Up.”

69 NE IX.vii (1167b34-68a10).

70 NE IX.vii (1168a10-19). On the primacy of active φιλεῖν over passive φιλεῖσθαι see NE VIII.viii (1159a27ff).

71 Aristotle is here preparing the claim he will make in the next chapter that the benefactor actually gets the greater good (NE IX.viii (1169a18-b1)). Cf. PAKALUK (1998a), 183.
the virtue. There seems to be no genuine isomorphism with full utility friendships such as credit-relations—a point that will be developed in Section 5.

The salient point is that Aristotle does acknowledge a formal isomorphism between a debt-relationship and the bond between benefactor and beneficiary—as a matter of common opinion and from a “wrong” point of view, i.e. a point of view that fails to take into account the ultimate and ulterior motives behind overt behavior. His analysis reveals an awareness of another dimension, a proper point of view that appears to be inaccessible from this material point of view. Something gets lost in translation when we apply the Debtor’s Paradigm of Obligation as the paradigm “works best for relatively formal obligations. It presents problems for informal and personal relationships.”

This is begging the question: why is this paradigm problematic for informal and personal relationships? What defines these relationships as informal and personal? What constitutes the distinction between these two relationships and how do agents construct the difference between formal and informal relationships, especially when these are, from a particular point of view, isomorphous?

3. Constructing the Informal

3.1. Law vs. moral character in Aristotle

A clear attempt to articulate such a distinction is found in Aristotle’s classification of utility friendships, ranging from one-off commercial transactions to the extreme of generalized reciprocity as we see in the case of parent and child. Aristotle’s classification is based on degrees of, what we may term, “formality”:

72 CARD (1988), 116
On the one extreme, according to Aristotle, there is the one-off cash transaction, classified under the friendship based on law (νομική): i.e. legally backed, contractual (καθ’ ὁμολογίαν) transactions on fixed terms (ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς). The “element of friendship” (φιλικόν) increases as the immediate one-off transaction (ἐκ χειρὸς εἰς χεῖρα) develops into a debt-relation with an increasing deferral of payment (ἀναβολή), for this presupposes trust (πίστις): it requires a leap of faith, for it does not guarantee immediate compensation, that the other will fulfill what is due—will fulfill his obligations. This is why some city-states refuse to formalize debt-relationships by legal backing: for that would demolish precisely this element of trust that signifies commitment (cf.

73 “Now it seems that, just as what is just is twofold, part of it being unwritten and part what accords with written law, so too friendship in terms of the useful falls into a type based on character and a type based on legal requirements. (…). The legal type is the one that operates on stated terms, the wholly commercial sort from hand to hand, the more cultivated sort over time, but still by agreement as to the question “What against what?” With this type what is due is clear and not for dispute, but if it is based on friendship it will allow for postponement; hence the fact that in some places lawsuits to recover such debts are not allowed, the thought being that those who have made an exchange on the basis of trust should be committed.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE adapt.).

74 This utterly contractual and instrumental friendship still deserves the name of friendship for it is premised on “the individual’s lack of self-sufficiency” (τὸ μὴ αὐτάρκειαν, EE VII. (1242a7-9)), since it is a matter of mutually supplying in each other’s needs, complementing each other in what we lack. Moreover, it does meet some minimum demands as to what we would be willing to regard as a “friendly” relation: both partners are consenting and co-operating in a mutual endeavor. In EE (and in NE IX.i (1163b32-64a2)) these contractual exchange relationships are instances of πολιτικὴ φιλία, “friendship of the polis”; friendship of the polis is manifested in private transactions that are voluntary (NE V.v (1131a1-9)). There is a sense of mutual concern and an awareness among the partners that they participate in a mutual advantageous activity; this awareness may even dispose them to promote “the well-being of their exchange partners as long as it does not directly harm their own interests.” Cf. YACK (1993), 37; ALPERN (1983). To Aristotle, αὐτάρκεια means “having enough” or “adequate livelihood”, rather than “self-sufficiency”. Pol. VII.v: τὸ γὰρ πάντα ὑπάρχει ὑπάρχην καὶ δεῖθαι μηθενὸς αὐτάρκειας. Cf. NE I.vi (1097b8-15). See also MEIKLE (1995), 44-5, MAYHEW (1997), 38-53.
στέργειν) by rendering it obsolete. The less one formalizes obligations, the more important character, ἦθος, becomes:

(10) Ar. NE VIII.xiii (1162b31-63a2)

ἡ δ’ ἠθικὴ οὐκ ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς, ἀλλ’ ὡς φίλω δωρεῖται ἢ ὁτιδήποτε ἀλλοκομίζονται δὲ ἀξιοὶ τὸ ἴσον ἢ πλέον, ὡς οὐ δεδωκὼς ἀλλὰ χρήσες:

Things change the moment the terms of a relationship cease to be fixed (ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς): exchanges come to be labeled in terms of gifts and giving (δωρεῖται, δεδωκὼς). Moreover, the nature of obligations changes: obligations become a matter of character and hence, within the framework of Aristotelian ethics, they come to be moral. What from the point of view of an external observer may appear as “vagueness”—vagueness surrounding the assumption of a return of favor, vagueness of time-span—is constructed by the agents as a matter of moral quality and character.

According to this particular construction the difference between a gift and a loan lies in the expectation of return. Character-based utility friendships are ambiguous: it looks like one gives to a friend, but the expectation of an equal or greater return effectively reduces the gift to a loan. A real gift “ought” to be free of expectation of return and the intention to provoke one. A similar sentiment is expressed in the pseudo-Aristotelian Problemata:

(11) [Ar.], Problemata: 950a40

οὗ δὲ τὸ χρέος, οὐ φίλος, οὐ γὰρ δανείζει, ἐὰν ᾖ φίλος, ἀλλὰ δίδωσιν.

Similarly, to qualify as an act of χάρις, a favor should be neither merely a reaction to a preceding favor (ἀντί τινος), nor intended (ἵνα) to obtain a return.

75 Cf. NE IX.i (1164b13ff) for a further analysis of the reason why some city-states prohibit lawsuits for voluntary contracts: transactions voluntarily entered in should be ended in the same manner in which one entered into it. Historically we know that the colony Locri in Italy did not regulate credit in law. See Zenobius Prov. V.4 with Millett (1991), 42. Plato argues for the irrecoverability of friendly loans on the same grounds (trust presupposes risk) in Laws 849e8-850a1 and 742c3-6. Cf. Pol. 556a10-b4.

76 “The type based on character does not operate on stated terms, but presents are given, or whatever else it may be, as to a friend; yet the giver expects to come away with an equal amount, or more, on the basis that it was not a gift he made but a loan (…)” (transl. Broadie & Rowe). See also Chapter One Section 3.2.

77 “[W]here there is a debt, there is no friend; for if a man is a friend, he does not lend but gives.”

78 Cf. Democrates DK 68b 96: χαριστικὸς οὐχ ὁ βλέπων πρὸς τὴν ἀμοιβήν, ἀλλ’ ὁ εὔ δόταν
Mere return (ἀντί τινος) would be to discharge an obligation. Moreover, the expectation of return cancels an act of χάρις: the ἵνα-phrases sharply contrast services that serve the donor (αὐτῶ) — which do not qualify as acts of χάρις — with those that serve the recipient (ἐκείνῳ). Kennedy comments that Aristotle, with this qualification, is “[t]hus excluding kharis in the sense of gratitude”; in fact, it would be more apt to say that this construction allows Aristotle to see χάρις, also in the sense of gratitude, as distinct from the mere redemption of debt: acts of χάρις may very well be a reaction to antecedent graces without being reducible to clearance of debt because it is intention that matters, i.e. the intention to do good to the friend.

According to this construction, a valid act of χάρις that meets the requirements is productive of φιλία:

ποιητικὰ δὲ φιλίας χάρις καὶ τὸ μὴ δεηθέντος ποιῆσα καὶ τὸ ποιήσαντα μὴ δηλῶσαι· αὐτοῦ γὰρ οὕτως ἕνεκα φαίνεται καὶ οὐ διὰ τι ἐτερον.

χάρις is not to be conflated with more objective forms of obligation (τὸ...
δεηθέντος ποιῆσαι),” for acts of χάρις are supererogatory. In order to be recognized as such, presentation is crucial: acts of χάρις ought not to be made public or advertised for that would betray expectations of return and self-serving behavior.

A real favor and a real gift need to be free from expectation to prevent assimilation with exchanges that are not friendly (quid pro quo) or even hostile (tit for tat, negative reciprocity)—a real χάρις ought to be gratuitous, “gratis”. Making a gift conditional is to impose formal obligations on a relation that needs to be informal to remain personal. The critical emphasis on intentions, (lack of) expectations and dispositions must be read as a strategy to make χάρις immune to total incorporation in a Debtor Paradigm of Obligation. χάρις is made an essentially subjective phenomenon—an internalization that wards off the principles of the world of banking. The subjective reaction of χάρις is separated from material reciprocation which becomes the domain of legislation. As legislation assumes objective rules of reciprocity, the difference between gift, loan and swap is collapsed, and the gift either comes to be mystified as a one-sided voluntary act of generosity, an act of self-sacrifice, or demystified as an as-if-thing, a fake gift that turns out to be a loan.

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84 See REDARD (1953), 56, BENARDETE (1965), LIDDEL (2007), 159 and BARRETT (1964) for the semantic difference between objective and external δεί and internalized χρή. See also Chapter Four Section 3.2 (esp. n.44) on χρήσθαι.

85 See Chapters One and Two.

86 Modern conceptions of gratitude place an even stronger emphasis on its subjective and internalized quality by appealing to emotions. E.g. EMMONS (2004), 5: “Gratitude is an emotion, the core of which is pleasant feelings about the benefit received. At the cornerstone of gratitude is the notion of undeserved merit. The grateful person recognizes that he or she did nothing to deserve the gift or benefit, it was freely bestowed.” I owe this quotation to KONSTAN (2007), 156.

87 A similar separation of separation between “legal” material allocations and “moral” gifts can be found in modern legislation, where the gift is defined as an essentially one-sided allocation. E.g. the German Civil Code of 1900 defines the gift as an unpaid transfer of assets (that is unentgeltlich) and a onesided allocation (it is einseitig verpflichtend). Paragraph 516 of the Civil Code (“Begriff der Schenkung”); cf. the Dutch Civil Code 7:175. This code was perceived as a drastic innovation of previous legislation that acknowledged the category of “mutual gifting” (e.g. the Prussian Allgemeines Landrecht of 1794, paragraph 1169) and instigated conceptual and ethical discussions about the possibility of a “free gift” and the possibility to subject a “social” phenomenon such as the gift to legislation. Cf. VON GIERKE (1917), II.432. For an overview of the legal discussion, see WAGNER-HASEL (2003), esp.150ff.
3.2. Character-based utility friendship: a hybrid or perspective problem?

Aristotle effectuates a separation of morality and legality by classifying utility friendship into a character-based variety and a variety with legal backing. This circumscription of character-based utility friendship in terms of absence of contracts with fixed conditions makes this category of friendship ambiguous. Aristotle’s vocabulary (T 10 “as a friend”, as a gift”) reveals what he takes to be friendship proper:

\begin{equation}
\text{\(\text{Ar. NE IX.i (1164a33-b6)}^{(\text{b})} (= \text{T 25})\)}
\end{equation}

\begin{quote}
ἐν οἷς δὲ μὴ γίνεται διομολογία τῆς ὑπουργίας, οἱ μὲν δι’ αὐτούς προϊέμενοι εἰρήται ὅτι ἀνέγκλητοι (τοιαύτη γὰρ ἡ κατ’ ἀρετήν φιλία), τὴν ἀμοιβήν τε ποιητέον κατὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν (αὕτη γὰρ τοῦ φίλου καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς)· οὕτω δ’ ἔοικε καὶ τοῖς φιλοσοφίαις κοινωνήσασιν· οὐ γὰρ πρὸς χρήμαθ’ ἡ ἀξία μετρεῖται, τιμή τ’ ἱσόρροπος οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο, ἀλλ’ ἱκανόν, καθάπερ καὶ πρὸς θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς γονεῖς, τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον.
\end{quote}

When exchanges are conducted in the context of a virtue friendship (ἡ κατ’ ἀρετήν φιλία), intention (προαίρεσις) comes to be the measure of friendship and virtue; moreover, virtue friendships are by definition free of conflict and not in need of contract (διομολογία). The supreme exemplification of virtue friends are those who share in philosophy, the value of which cannot be measured in terms of money.\(^{89}\) In other cases (μὴ τοιαύτης οὔσης τῆς δόσεως) the allocation seems to be, by implication, conditional (ἐπὶ τινι):

\(^{88}\)"But where there is no agreement about services to be rendered, those who take the initiative in giving for their friends’ own sake, as has been said, may make no accusations, since friendship according to excellence involves this sort of giving, and the return for it should be by reference to the giver’s decision to give, since this is a mark both of his being a friend and of his excellence—and this also seems to suit those who have shared philosophy, since its worth is not measured in relation to money, and honour will not balance it in the scales, though presumably what is possible will suffice, as in relation to gods and to parents.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE adapt.).

\(^{89}\)On the problem of measurement, see Sections 4 and 5 below.
(15)  **Ar. NE IX.i (1164b6-14)**

μὴ τοιαύτης δ’ οὕτως τῆς δόσεως ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τινι, μάλιστα μὲν ἴσως δεί
tὴν ανταπόδοσιν γίνεσθαι δοκούσιν ἀμφοῖν κατ’ ἀξίαν εἶναι, εἰ δὲ
tοῦτο μὴ συμβαίνει, ὥστε μόνον ἀναγκαῖοι δόξειν ἀν τὸν προέχοντα
tάττειν, ἀλλά καὶ δίκαιοι· ὥσον γάρ οὔτε ὡφελήθη ἢ ἀνθ’ ὅσον τὴν
ηδονὴν εἴετ’ ἄν, τοσοῦτον ἀντιλαβὼν ἐξει τὴν παρὰ τούτου ἀξίαν.
καὶ γάρ ἐν τοῖς ὁμίοις οὕτω φαίνεται γινόμενον.

In these situations the value of the allocation is to be established by both
partners, or, if they fail to reach an agreement, by the recipient\(^{91}\)—the regular
procedure in buying and selling (ἐν τοῖς ὁμίοις).

Aristotle’s classification of friendship in terms of their object (virtue, pleasure
and utility) forges a dividing line between those friendships that revolve
around virtuous intentions and those friendships that reveal expectations of
return. Hence, the category of character-based utility friendships is somewhat
hybrid, as Aristotle himself suggests.\(^{92}\)

(16)  **Ar. EE VII. (1242b35-43a2)**

όταν μὲν οὖν καθ’ ὁμολογίαν ἡ πολιτική αὕτη φιλία, καὶ νομική.\(^{94}\)

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90 “Where, on the other hand, the giving was not like this but was conditional in some way,
presumably the best thing will be the paying back of what seems to both parties a worthy
return, but if this turned out not to happen, it would seem to be not merely necessary but also
just that the one who has received first should fix its value; for when the other party has
received in return the amount of the benefit this one received, or the amount he would have
chosen to pay for the pleasure, he will have got what he deserved from him. For this is
obviously what happens in the case of buying and selling.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).

91 Aristotle motivates this procedure of value assessment by the thought that it is fairer for the
price to be fixed by the trustee (ὁ ἐπετράφθη) than by the creditor (ὁ ἐπιτρέψων), for “as a rule
those who have a thing and those who do not have it value it differently” (NE IX.i (1164b15-
22)).

92 YACK (1993), 116-8. SCHOFIELD (1998), 49 makes the observation that compared to EE VII.
(1242a-b), the NE-passages (VIII.xiii (1162b16, 1163a6)) lack “both the cynical tone struck in
these quotations and their suggestion that ethical friendship is generally doomed to collapse
into political.”

93 “When, then, friendship proceeds by contract, it is of the civic and strictly legal kind; but when
they trust each other for repayment, it tends to be moral friendship, that of comrades. Hence
this is the kind of friendship in which recriminations most occur, the reason being that it is
contrary to nature: for friendship based on utility and friendship based on goodness are
different, but these people wish to have it both ways at once—they associate together for the
sake of utility but make it out to be a moral friendship as between good men, and so represent it
as not merely legal, pretending that it is a matter of trust.” (transl. RACKHAM adapt.).

94 Reading η (not ἡ) and retaining καὶ. SPENGLER’S deletion of καὶ is based on his conjecture η for ἡ.
Cf. SOLOMON (1915), DIRLMEIER (1979).
ὅταν δ' ἐπιτρέπωσιν αὐτοῖς, ἥθική βούλεται εἶναι φιλία καὶ ἑταιρική. διὸ μάλιστα έγκλημα ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ φιλίᾳ· αἰτίον δ' ὅτι παρὰ φύσιν, ἔτερον γὰρ φιλία ἡ κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ ἡ κατὰ τὴν ἀρετήν· οἱ δ' ἀμφότερα βούλησαν αὖδα έχειν, καὶ ὃμιλοὺσι μὲν τοῦ χρησίμου ἕνεκα, ἥθικήν δὲ ποιοῦσιν ὡς ἐπιεικείς, διὸ ὡς πιστεύοντες οὐ νομικήν ποιοῦσιν.

Character-based utility friendships are unnatural (παρὰ φύσιν), for they stand midway between utility friendship (ἡ κατὰ τὸ χρήσιμον) and virtue friendship (ἡ κατὰ τὴν ἀρετήν): they attempt to be both, with friends who hang out together for the sake of utility (τοῦ χρησίμου ἕνεκα), but who make it a character-based encounter as if they are decent (ὡς ἐπιεικείς), as if they trust one another (ὡς πιστεύοντες) without legal backing (οὐ νομικήν).

The ὡς-qualifications remind us of the phrase of T 10, ὡς φίλῳ, “as to a friend”, a pretense that collapses in the face of conflict:

(17) Ar. NE VIII.xiii (1163a1-6)

δυναμένω δὴ ἀνταποδοτέον τὴν ἀξίαν ἡν ἐπαθεν καὶ ἑκόντι (άκοντα γὰρ φίλον οὐ ποιητέον· ὡς δὴ διαμαρτόντα ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ καὶ εὖ παθόντα υφ' οὗ οὐκ ἔδει—οὐ γὰρ υπὸ φίλου, οὐδὲ δὴ οὗ τούτο δρῶντος—καθάπερ οὖν ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς εὐεργετηθέντα διαλυτέον.)

In such a situation of conflict, the recipient of benefits should return the favor (ἀνταποδοτέον), as if (καθάπερ) the exchange was on stated terms (ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς), because the recipient mistook a utility friendship for a real friendship (οὐ γὰρ υπὸ φίλου). If obligations are thus met, the bond is dissolved (διαλυεῖν). Aristotle’s negation of friendship in the context of utility is not

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95 Cf. NE VIII.xiii (1162b34-63a1): Character-based utility friends wish to do what is morally fine (τὸ βούλεσθαι τὰ καλά), but in the end choose to do what is beneficial (προαιρεῖσθαι τὰ ὑφέλιμα).

96 “A person should, then, if he can, pay back the value of what he has received, and voluntarily, for he must not make an unwilling man his friend; he should pay it back, then, on the basis that he made a mistake at the beginning, and received benefits from someone he shouldn’t have had them from—because they weren’t from a friend, or from someone doing it because of just that—and so he should dissolve the friendship as if the benefits had been bestowed on stated terms.” (transl. Broadie & Rowe adapt.).

97 καὶ ἑκόντι is omitted in Laurentianus LXXXI as well as in Aspasius’ commentary. There is no reason to accept this omission. Pace Burnet (1900).

simply an incidental slip of the pen:**

(18) **Ar. NE IX.vi (1167a14-21)**

οὐ μὲν γὰρ εὐεργετηθεὶς ἀνθ’ ὧν πέπονθεν ἀπονέμει τὴν εὔνοιαν, τὰ δίκαια δρῶν· ὁ δὲ βουλόμενος τιν’ εὐπραγεῖν, ἐλπίδα ἔχων εὐπορίας δι’ ἐκείνου, οὐκ ἔοικ’ εὔνοις ἐκείνω εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐστιν ἐαυτῷ, καθάπερ οὐδὲ φίλος, εἰ θεραπεύει αὐτὸν διὰ τινα χρῆσιν, ὅλως δ’ εὔνοια δι’ ἀρετήν καὶ ἐπείκειαν τινα γίνεται, ὅταν τῷ φανῇ καλὸς τὸν ἀνδρεῖον ή τι τοιοῦτον, καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγωνιστῶν εἴπομεν.

Just as any expectation of return (ἐλπίδα ἔχων εὐπορίας δι’ ἐκείνου) cancels out εὐνοια, similarly the presence of ulterior motivation (διὰ τινα χρῆσιν) cancels out friendship (οὐδὲ φίλος). Absence of contract and the deferral of return suggest virtue, but in the end there is an expectation of return which, to Aristotle’s view, cancels out any element of virtue and negates the gift—the

99 The dismissal of utility friendship as not friendship in the proper sense of the word is more characteristic of the treatment of the varieties of friendship in NE (where the inferior types of friendship are only similar to real friendship) than in EE (where the author seems far less dismissive of the inferior types). (See discussion in n. 104). There is no firm consensus about the authorship of the EE, the date of its composition (before or after NE) and its independent value as a source for Aristotle’s moral philosophy. The communis opinion is that EE is authentic (Rowe (1971), Kenny (1978, 1992 Appendix I, Dirlmeier 1979; however Schofield (1998) and Pakaluk (1998b) for an argument that EE is Aristotelian in character but markedly more egalitarian). Its relation to NE however remains obscure, as some argue that NE is a revision of EE (Rowe 1971), whereas others date EE later than NE (Kenny (1978, 1992 Appendix I), Pakaluk (1998b)); the origin of the so-called “common books”, i.e. the books assigned by manuscript tradition to both treatises (NE 5, 6, 7 and EE, 4, 5, 6), is a separate question. Moreover, among those who presume that EE is later than NE judgment is still divided over the question which of the two ethics has a stronger claim to be the definitive statement of Aristotle’s moral philosophy. As the EE has not by far been studied as extensively as the NE, the verdict is still out on the comparative worth of both treatises; I believe it to be methodologically sound to suspend judgment on the question which treatise is a more authoritative testimony of Aristotle’s ethical thought. (In this I follow Kenny 1978) Moreover, the general relation between the two compositions need not always imply that on a local level subject matter that only occurs in one of the two is either an innovation or superseded by the other (later) version; other explanations are conceivable for such “local divergences” (e.g. a topic may have become less relevant in the later composition but its treatment may in itself be sound or consistent with other works of Aristotle).

100 “For a person who has been benefited metes out good will in return for what he has received, and justly so; but one who wishes someone else to do well in the hope of doing well through him does not seem to feel good will so much towards the other person as towards himself, just as he won’t be a friend, either, if the attention he pays the other is because of some use he wants to get out of it. And generally good will occurs because of excellence, or a kind of decency, where one persons appears to another a fine character, or courageous, or something like that, as we said happens when we support contestants.” (transl. Broadie & Rowe).
paradox of the impossibility of the gift. The quality of the gift becomes purely a matter of intention: a gift is only a gift if it is grounded in self-negation.

Aristotle’s confusion about the hybrid nature of character-based utility friendship is, in the end, caused by problems of perspective. The context of the classification of utility friendships is the topic of the complaints and recriminations (τὰ ἐγκλήματα καὶ αἱ μέμψεις) that utility friendship is prone to. Hence, his systematization of types of exchange in degrees of formality is entirely dictated by the question how, in cases of conflict, the value of compensation ought to be assessed. Hence, the ἠθική/νομική-distinction presupposes the vision par derrière, a retrospective point of view of a dissolved or at least, problematic friendship—a perspective that approaches a relation in terms of a series of completed events that can be objectified. The point of departure is justice, written and unwritten, and the aim is settlement of claims—whereas, as we have seen, in a long-term relationship exchange is perceived as an ongoing process and there is no such thing as a settlement of

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102 Cf. BOURDIEU (1997), 233-4: “If one adopts the standpoint of a philosophy of mind, by asking about the intentional meaning of the gift, and… wondering whether the gift, conceived as the free decision of an isolated individual is a real gift, is really a gift… then this is indeed sufficient to raise insuperable antinomies (a gift is really a gift only if neither the giver nor the receiver sees it as such) that force one to conclude that a gratuitous gift is impossible.”
103 NE VIII.xiii (1162b5-7).
104 LOWRY (1987) is one of the few commentators who takes the conflict-based perspective into account in his analysis of the ἠθική/νομική-distinction. Some commentators approach this passage as prescribing a form of development from νομική utility friendships (for instance, the notorious πολιτικὴ φιλία, “friendship of the polis”) towards ἠθική utility friendships. E.g. COOPER (1990), ALFERN (1983), PRICE (1989), 195-99. Although the possibility of such a “development” is not ruled out by Aristotle, such a reading goes against the grain of the text. YACK (1993), 116-8 objects, pointing out that Aristotle is highly critical of the character-based variety of utility friendships, deeming it unnatural and the cause of conflict (EE VII. (1242a-b)). But see SCHOFIELD (1998), 49 who points out that the passages in NE (VIII.xiii (1162b16, 1163a6)) are less dismissive about ethical friendship than the section in EE VII (1242a-b) that seems to imply that ethical friendship is doomed to collapse into political. Although I agree that the tone in NE may be less cynical; the point of view is still that of a conflict situation. As to πολιτικὴ φιλία, whereas I do not find YACK’s objection fatal, I also disagree with COOPER e.a.: when “converted” into a character-based utility friendships, political friendships cease to be (mere) relations typical for living in a polis and turn into “thicker” more personal relationships. Whereas from the point of view of the development of virtue Aristotle would certainly applaud that, I believe that this insistence on “conversion” does not do justice to the import of πολιτικὴ φιλία in its own right as underwriting the purposes of the polis.
105 Chapter Two.
accounts, for that would cancel out the ongoing process that is the substance of the relationship. From a *vision avec* (the perspective of real life), some friendships may *look* like virtue friendship and be interpreted as such: a friend appears to display virtuous intentions by not insisting on a return of a loan. In a situation of conflict, intentions turn out to be different and the friendship in question reveals itself as driven by sheer utility.\(^{106}\) Once the friendship is thus revealed, the accounts can be balanced—which results in the dissolution of the friendship.

Aristotle’s language of *genuine* friendship and real “pure” gifts not only anticipates the ideal of the “perfect gift” in Christian thought, but also instigates an “unmasking theme”\(^{107}\) in Western discourse about friendship where calculable interests are excluded from personal relations and the only friendly gift is the “pure gift”, the gift that is an act of self-negation, and where all other gifts can be unmasked as self-seeking investments. This notion of the “pure gift” presupposes its opposite, mercantile interests that are transparent to observer and subject, and hence can be seen as a product of an emancipation of the social from the economical.\(^{108}\)

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\(^{106}\) On a political level, there is more to say about the νομική/ἠθική-distinction. πολιτικὴ φιλία is a specific type of νομική utility friendships, concerning two fellow citizens who are presided over by a common system of magistrates and who both rely for backup on a legislation that is designed to serve the purposes of the good life (moral habituation requires a legal system). Hence, “law” and “legal backup” does not preclude the development and practice of virtues; the difference between νομικὴ and ἠθικὴ lies in the extent to which virtues are internalized. Cf. IRRERA (2005), 582. Hence, Aristotle’s conception of contract and friendship differs from that of modern legislation and modern theorist who take the distinction as strictly disjunctive. Cf. n. 104.

\(^{107}\) I owe this term to ALLAN SILVER *unpublished*.

\(^{108}\) PARRY (1986), 455: “[T]he notion of a “pure gift” is mere ideological obfuscation which masks the supposedly non-ideological verity that nobody does anything for nothing.” Cf. BOURDIEU (1986): “[B]y reducing the universe of exchanges to mercantile exchange, which is objectively and subjectively oriented toward the maximization of profit, i.e., (economically) self-interested, it has implicitly defined the other forms of exchange as noneconomic, and therefore distinterested.”
4. **THE PROBLEM OF MEASUREMENT**

4.1. **Money as a common measure: Aristotle’s theory of value**

In the previous sections we have seen how Aristotle deploys the Debtor Paradigm of Obligation as an analytic instrument to deal with the temporal dimension of reciprocity. Moreover, we have seen how the Debtor Paradigm evokes conceptual paradoxes and problems of perspective when applied to long-term relationships: it fails to take the subjective experience of exchange into account, it offers a “thin” conception of the moral quality of exchange behavior and it reduces generalized reciprocity either to immediate transactions or to one-sided gifts.

Related to the problems of time and interval is the question of value that provokes similar conceptual problems of perspective: how is the value of a return to be established? What is the measure of value? Whereas in modern discourse precise measurement supposedly has no place in relationships that are experienced as “personal”, Aristotle famously propounds that “money is provided as a common measure” in friendship. Nonetheless, we shall see how Aristotle’s account of value in friendships reflects concerns with demarcation: not between friends and strangers, but between utility friends and virtue friends.

The idea, quoted in book IX, that money provides a measure of value and hence facilitates exchanges between friends, is a reprise of an earlier treatment of value in book V where Aristotle discusses proportionate reciprocity (τὸ ἀντιπεπονθὸς κατὰ ἀναλογίαν), a specific form of justice operative in...
exchange (μετάδοσις).

For exchange to be just, a common measure is required that “equalizes” (ἰσασθῆναι) two dissimilar (οὐκ ἴσων) exchange partners such as the physician and farmer (exchange between two physicians does not make sense according to Aristotle) by making the exchange objects comparable (συμβλητά):

\[ (19) \quad \text{Ar. NE V.v (1133a20-23)} \]

εὖ' ὁ τὸ νόμισμ' ἐλήλυθε, καὶ γίνεται πῶς μέσον: πάντα γάρ μετοικισθήναι, ὥστε καὶ τὴν υπεροχὴν καὶ τὴν ἐλλείψιν, πῶσα ἄττα δὴ ὑποδήματ' ἴσον οἰκία ἢ τροφὴ. δεῖ τοίνυν ὁπερ ὑποδήματος πρὸς σκιτότομον, τοσαδί ὑποδήματα πρὸς σκιτότομον.

At first sight, coin money (νόμισμα) seems to provide the middle term (πῶς μέσον), the common measure, that establishes the relative value of qualitatively different products as shoes, beds, food, health, and that hence makes exchange and communality possible.

It is important to get the example of shoemaker and builder straight. The example involves a ratio (A : B = D : C) that seems to suggest that there are inequalities at stake. It is true that Aristotle repeatedly speaks of the particular justice at all (RITCHIE (1894)). See MEIKLE (1995), 129 ff. for a discussion of the history of the scholarship of this passage.

114 NE V.v (1132b30ff).

115 “This is a role that is fulfilled by currency, so that it becomes, in a way, an intermediate; for since it measures everything, it also measures excess and deficiency—so measuring just how many shoes it does take to equal a house, or food. Then as builder is to shoemaker, so must such-and-such a number of shoes be to a house or food.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).

116 NE V.v (1133a24-6). The thought seems to be that the existence of a common standard of measurement automatically provides commensurability that makes equalization of goods possible. Cf. NE V.vi (1133b16) where the thought recurs. Cf. MEIKLE (1979). 60: “The idea is clearly inadequate, and Aristotle knew it. It is inadequate because there can be no common measure where things are incommensurable. The possibility of a measure presupposes commensurability, and, moreover, presupposes it in the dimension where measurement is to be possible.” Cf. MEIKLE (1995), 6-42. Cf. Pl. Laws 918b-c that νόμισμα has brought commensurability to humanity.

117 Here I concur with MEIKLE (1995), 129-146.

118 “D : C” instead of “C : D” because the exchange involves “diagonal conjunction” (ἡ κατὰ διάμετρον σύζευξις, 1133a6-7)—which merely means that for exchange to take place, shoemaker and builder do not receive their own products. Cf. MEIKLE (1995), 131n.2.

119 The alleged inequality has been interpreted in terms of social status or worth (RACKHAM (1926), 283; POLANYI (1957)), of the quality of labor (SPENCLER (1955)) or skill involved (SOUDEK (1952)), or, more promising, in quantitative terms of labor time (RITCHIE (1925), SCHUMPETER (1952), 60-2, GORDON (1964), 115-28, VON LEYDEN (1985)). MARX (1962 [1867]) and CASTORIADIS (1978) also...
importance of “equalizing” the non-equal for exchange to take place: physician and farmer need to be equalized, shoemaker and builder even so, just as their products need to be equalized. This simply points to the fact that in exchanges, the products exchanged are rarely spontaneously equal (“equivalent”, we would say), as one of them often “beats” the other (1133a12: κρεῖττον εἶναι)—i.e. a house “beats” a shoe. In that case the respective ἔργα need to be “equalized” (1133a13: ταῦτα ἰσασθῆναι). As Aristotle explains earlier in his exposition on justice, justice is a sort of equality implying at least four terms: two persons to whom a certain distribution is just, and two things distributed. There are two options: either the two persons are equals (ἴσοι), in which case the things exchanged need to be equal (ἴσα) as well; or the two persons are not equal, in which case the things exchanged should be unequal too. As reciprocity (τὸ ἀντιπεπονθός) is introduced as a type of justice, it entails that if there is talk of equalizing products in order to exchange, the partners are assumed to be equal as well, and vice versa. Hence, everything must be comparable and commensurable—for which purpose money is introduced, because money is capable of expressing “excess and deficiency” (τὴν ὑπεροχὴν καὶ τὴν ἔλλειψιν), i.e. the simple fact that a house “exceeds” a shoe, i.e. how many shoes it takes to compensate for a house (τοσαδὶ ὑποδήματα πρὸς οἰκίαν). No matter how unequal and heterogeneous builders and shoemakers may be, for purposes of exchange they are “equalized”, they are treated as equals qua transactors.

This interpretation of the analogy has been criticized because it seems to make the introduction of the mathematical analogy needlessly complicating or perhaps even pointless. However, the analogy should be read as deliberately

understand the analogy in terms of labor and deem Aristotle’s theory of value essentially flawed because it fails to provide genuine commensurability, either because Aristotle lacked a concept of “abstract human labor” that makes the labor of shoemaker and builder commensurable (MARX), or because Aristotle did not have a full-blown concept of human equality at his disposal (CASTORIADIS). Most approaches assume that the analogy involves geometric proportion; SOUDEK (1952) and LOWRY (1987) identify the analogy as a harmonic mean.

1131a20-4.

120 MEIKLE (1995), 142 paraphrases this as A : B = D : xC.

trivial. It describes the way commercial exchanges work: they aim at equivalence\textsuperscript{123} and therefore they need money as a common measure. Moreover, as we will see in Section 5, the introduction of the analogy does make sense against the background of the discussion of unequal utility friendships—friendships that are unequal with respect to the τὰ χρησιμά involved, where the ratio \( D : C \) is not equal and where, therefore, \( A \) to \( B \) is unequal too. In contrast, commercial exchanges take as their point of departure that in order for the exchange to be fair, the equality between the exchange partners \textit{qua} exchange partners is axiomatic.

In the equalization process, money is introduced as a common measure. On second thought, however, money turns out to be a mere substitute (\( υπάλλαγμα \)) of the real common measure:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[20)] \textit{Ar. NE V.v (1133a27-30)\textsuperscript{124}}
\end{enumerate}

\begin{center}
tοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τῇ μὲν ἀληθείᾳ ἡ χρεία, ἢ πάντα συνέχει· εἰ γάρ μηθὲν δέοντο ἢ μὴ ὀμοίως, ἢ οὐκ ἔσται ἀλλαγή ἢ οὐχ ἡ αὐτή· οἶον δ' υπάλλαγμα τῆς χρείας τὸ νόμισμα γέγονε κατὰ συνθήκην.
\end{center}

Need (\( χρεία \)) is a commensurating property, the standard \textit{against which} everything is measured (\( πάντα μετρεῖσθαι \)); money is merely the measure \textit{with which} need is measured. Although it is tempting to read a economic notion of “demand” or “marginal utility” into this phenomenon of “need”,\textsuperscript{125} to Aristotle, need (\( χρεία \)) is simply the logical counterpart of utility (\( τὸ χρησιμόν \)): “utility” applies to shoes and houses, “need” to the builder who wants shoes and the shoemaker who is after a house. Need holds them together, enabling the

\textsuperscript{123} Cf. \textit{EE VII.x (1242b33-35)}: ἔστι δὲ τῆς χρησίμου φιλίας εἰδὴ δύο, ἢ μὲν νομικὴ ἢ δ' ἠθική. βλέπει δ' ἢ μὲν πολιτικὴ εἰς τὸ ἰσον καὶ εἰς τὸ πρᾶγμα, ὡσπερ οἱ πωλοῦντες καὶ οἱ ὀνομένοι. “Utility Friendship is of two kinds, the merely legal and the moral. Political Friendship looks to equality and to the object, as buyers and sellers do.”

\textsuperscript{124} “In truth this one thing is need, which holds together; for if people did not need things, or if they do not need them to the same extent, then either there will be no exchange, or the exchange will be a different one. But as a kind of substitute for need, convention has brought currency into existence.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE adapt.).

\textsuperscript{125} Cf. MEIKLE (1979, 1995) and FINLEY (1970): “Demand” is an misleading translation of \( χρεία \) because it might (falsely) attribute a modern subjective or utility theory of value (or even a theory of marginal utility) to Aristotle. See MEIKLE (1995), 29-42 on the difference between the Aristotelian notion of \( χρεία \) and modern theories of value. “Demand” constitutes a homogenous measure of value whereas in Aristotelian theory, “need” and “utility” are defined by the heterogeneity of their ends.
association between shoemaker and builder:

(21) **Ar. NE V.v (1133b6)**

εἰ δ’ οὔτω μὴ ἦν ἀντιπεπονθέναι, οὐκ ἂν ἦν κοινωνία. ὅτι δ’ ἡ χρεία 
συνέχει ὀσπερ ἐν τι ὄν, δηλοὶ ὅτι όταν μὴ ἐν χρείᾳ ὦσιν ἄλληλων, ἢ 
ἀμφότεροι ἢ ἄτερος, οὐκ ἀλλάττονται (…)

Need (ἡ χρεία), i.e. the need for each other’s products, holds shoemaker and 
builder together (συνέχει) making them an association (κοινωνία) for purposes 
of exchange (ἀλλάττω), in which they are, so to speak, one entity (ὡσπερ ἐν 
ti). However, Aristotle emphatically insists that commensurability can only 
obtain “in relation to χρεία”.

(22) **Ar. NE V.vi (1133b16-21)**

tὸ δὴ νόμισμα ὥσπερ μέτρον σύμμετρα ποιῆσαν ἰσάζει· οὔτε γὰρ ἂν 
μὴ οὔσης ἀλλαγῆς κοινωνία ἢν, οὔτ’ ἀλλαγῆ ἰσότητος μὴ οὔσης, 
οὔτ’ ἰσότης μὴ οὔσης συμμετρίας. τῇ μὲν οὖν ἀληθείᾳ ἀδύνατον τὰ 
τοσοῦτον διαφέροντα σύμμετρα γενέσθαι, πρὸς δὲ τὴν χρείαν 
ἐνδέχεται ἰκανός.

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126 "If reciprocity could not be achieved in this way, there would be no sharing in activity between 
the parties. That it is need that holds them together, being as it were a single thing, is shown by 
the fact that when the parties involved do not have a need for each other—either each for the 
other, or one of the two—they make no exchange (…).” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE adapted).

127 RACKHAM (1926) translates ὡσπερ ἐν τι ὄν as “by serving as a single standard”, assuming that 
ὄν refers back to χρεία. MEIKLE (1995) 33 thinks this implausible on grounds of gender (ὄν 
instead of, say, οὐσία) and because a few lines later Aristotle explicitly casts doubt on the ability 
of χρεία to really serve as a standard of value. I am not convinced by the grammatical argument 
(ὦν needs to agree with ἐν τι, not necessarily with χρεία), and I also disagree with his 
contention that in this passage Aristotle gives χρεία “merely” the role of what “holds things 
together”. χρεία holds people together, i.e. the partners of exchange, into a κοινωνία: for a 
moment the cooperating partners are “as a unity” (so too ROSS (1925) and IRWIN (1985)). This is 
in line with the way Aristotle uses the verb συνέχει elsewhere in NE: NE 1155a23 (φιλία keeps 
together cities), NE 1132b30 (reciprocity keeps together associations).

128 MEIKLE (1979) finds it remarkable that Aristotle here seems to “return” to the first idea of money 
(νόμισμα) being a common measure, the view that was “superseded” by the introduction of 
χρεία. However, it seems to me that the point is rather that Aristotle here makes an important 
restriction which was left implicit before: νόμισμα, as a unit of account, can only function as a 
measure in relation to χρεία.

129 “Currency, then, acts like a measure, making things commensurable and so equalizing them; for 
there would be no association without exchange, no exchange without equality, and no equality 
without commensurability. Strictly speaking, of course, it is impossible that things so different 
in kind should become commensurable, but in relation to people’s needs a sufficient degree of 
commensurability can be achieved.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).
Coinage only provides a basis for commensurability that is sufficient\textsuperscript{130} in relation to \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \). The contrast between “in relation to \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \)” and “in truth” (\( \tau\iota\ \mu\epsilon\nu\ \omega\nu\ \alpha\lambda\nu\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha \)) does not so much express a divergence between theoretical commensurability and “commensurability that will do for practical purposes”.\textsuperscript{131} More crucially, it is indicative for the place of money in Aristotle’s philosophy: in truth (as in “the whole truth”), commensurability is not possible between things that are as radically distinct as they are in the natural world. Shoes and beds are never \textit{really} commensurable—only with respect to “need”. Goods (or aspects of goods) that function outside the realm of need and utility are measured by different standards of value, such as the good or the pleasant, and they cannot be made commensurable with need. Hence, their value cannot be expressed in monetary terms. As we shall see in Section 4.3 below, this contrast becomes more salient in Book IX of the Ethics where non-uniform

\textsuperscript{130} This statement too is reminiscent of the famous preamble in \textit{NE} I.iii (1094b12-28) that in ethical and political matters precision must not be sought to the same degree as in mathematics. Cf. n. 62.

\textsuperscript{131} \textsc{Meikle} here signals a “problem of commensurability” that Aristotle never satisfactorily answers. Cf. \textsc{Meikle} (1995), 6-27, (1979), 60-1, (1994), 29. This is an observation shared by more Marxist scholars of Aristotle who follow Marx in pointing out that Aristotle, because he lacks a labor theory of value and “a concept of human equality”, has a fundamentally insoluble problem with explaining commensurability. \textsc{Marx} (1962 [1867]), Ch. 3 Section 3A2; Cf. \textsc{Castoriadis} (1978). To \textsc{Meikle} (1995), the fundamental obstacle to postulating of \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \) as the common standard of value is metaphysical in nature. \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \) is a promising candidate for the force that “keeps together” an association, but is less suitable as a measure, because \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \) lacks a unit. The solution Aristotle attempts seems to be to regard money as the conventional representation of \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \): \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \) provides commensurability, money provides a measure. Similarly, the distinction made in \textit{Pol. Lix} (1257a5-14) between the “natural use” and “use in exchange” of property is based on the value structure of possessions that are held to have a qualitative and a quantitative value. This distinction inevitably gives rise to metaphysical problems—problems that Aristotle in the end fails to resolve: use value and exchange value fall into different logical categories, i.e. quality vs. quantity. Things are \textit{in}commensurable as substances or use values; they are supposedly commensurable as exchange values, but that raises the question what the metaphysical status of exchange value is in relation to use value (which is the object of neo-classical economic theory). There is a “metaphysical gap” between use value and exchange value that makes it, in the end, impossible to achieve \textit{genuine} commensurability of objects—an impossibility that, according to \textsc{Meikle}, is recognized by Aristotle in \textit{NE} V.v. To me this reading seems a case of metaphysical overload: Aristotle nowhere speaks of objects “being use values” or “being exchange values”. Rather, things \textit{have} a use or exchange value—or, closer to Aristotle’s idiom: things can be used “properly” (the \( \alpha\iota\kappa\epsilon\iota\alpha\chi\rho\epsilon\iota\alpha\)) or for the sake of exchange (\( \alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\iota\zeta\varepsilon\nu\varepsilon\kappa\varepsilon\nu\zeta \)). Cf. Ar. \textit{Pol. Lix} (1257a6-13). Of course, this does not solve the problem of value (how do we determine the amount of \( \chiρ\epsilon\iota\alpha \) that an object has?—a problem that Aristotle does not seem to be interested in at all), but it does take the metaphysical edge off it.
friendships are discussed: friendships between partners who operate with different measures of value and that lack a common measure.

4.2. Means and ends

Things get further complicated once we realize that to Aristotle money is a heterogeneous phenomenon whose status depends on the ends to which it is used. Aristotle has a dual conceptualization of the phenomenon that we call money: νόμισμα (coinage) refers to the concept of money in its quality as a conventional medium of exchange, χρήματα to the concept of money in its quality as a commodity or utility, as something-good-for-X. χρήματα is eventually goal-relative.

Within utility friendships coinage (νόμισμα) functions as a substitute for, or the expression of, the common measure of value: need (χρεία), the commensurating property of the useful (the χρήσιμον). As Aristotle defines the useful as that through which some good or pleasure comes about (NE VIII.ii 1155b19-20), the entire field of ΧΡΗ-vocabulary is defined by goal-relativity: things are useful as a means to attain something good or pleasant. From an ethical point of view, this means that there is a difference between good use and bad use, good utilities and bad utilities, good utility friends and bad utility friends—depending on the goal.

The good use of property, for instance, i.e. the actualization of wealth, is a virtuous activity.132 “Giving” property becomes an intrinsically valuable activity.133

(23) Ar. NE IV.i (1120a4-9)134

ἀν δ' ἐστι χρεία, ἐστι τούτων χρῆσθαι καὶ εὖ καὶ κακῶς· ὁ πλοῦτος δ' ἐστὶ τῶν χρησίμων· ἑκάστῳ δ' ἄριστα χρῆται ὁ ἔχων τὴν περὶ τοῦτο

132 NE I.viii (1098b32-1099a7).
133 Cf. Rhet. I.v.vii (1361a12-25). This distinction between two ways of using property is not the same as the one drawn in Pol. I.ix (1257b8ff) between use value and exchange value. Cf. MEIKLE (1996) and (1994).
134 “Things that have a use can be used both well and badly; wealth is something that has a use; and each thing is used best by the person possessing the excellence relating to that thing: wealth, then, too, will be used best by the person possessing the excellence relating to money, and this is the open-handed person. Using money seems to be a matter of spending and giving: taking it and keeping it seem more to do with possessing it.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).
ἀρετήν· καὶ πλούτῳ δὴ χρήσεται ἄριστα οὗτος δ' ἐστιν ὁ ἐλευθέριος. χρῆσις δ' εἶναι δοκεῖ χρημάτων δαπάνη καὶ δόσις· ἡ δὲ λῆψις καὶ ἡ φυλακὴ κτῆσις μᾶλλον.

Here, in a passage that deliberately activates the etymological connection between several lexemes of the ΧΡΗ-root, it is argued that the best use (χρῆσις) of wealth, (which is τῶν χρησίμων, one of the things that have a use), is in accordance with the particular excellence that pertains to money (χρήματα). This particular excellence is liberality (ἐλευθεριότης), characterized by the observance of the mean in relation to wealth, especially in giving (δόσις). The good use of wealth is using it in a way that makes it an intrinsically valuable activity: in giving it to someone, rather than spending or selling it as a means to an ulterior end. This conception of property differs from that of modern economic theorists who treat property as fundamentally instrumental, i.e. as a means to wealth maximization. Aristotle’s economics concerns the realm of ends, not means. Hence, from his ethical point of view, it is possible to regard money as a means to exercise value and not as the coin of utility friendships, need. Money may be a measure of value, but as there are three distinct categories of value (utility, pleasure, and virtue), it cannot be a uniform measure. As we shall see, this heterogeneous approach to money gives rise to ambivalences in non-uniform (ἀνομοιοειδής) friendships, where friends

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135 See Chapter Four for a similar play with etymology in Xenophon’s Oeconomicus. A similar sentiment is expressed by Democritus (68B282) and in Plato’s Euthydemus (280d).
136 NE IV.i (1119b22).
137 In Pol. I.ix (1257a5-14) it is argued that property is essentially dual; Aristotle distinguishes between “uses of property” in terms of the value structure of the objects of exchange, i.e. between “natural use” and “use in exchange”, corresponding to the distinction between the two arts of acquisition οἰκονομική (aimed at the acquisition of wealth for the sake of life) and χρηματιστική (the acquisition of wealth for the sake of maximization). Cf. MEIKLE (1995), 48-50, FRANK (2005), 54-111.
138 E.g. BECKER (1977), ch. 2.
139 See MEIKLE (1995), 180-200 for a survey of economic thinkers who, despite this fundamental incompatibility of the Aristotelian and the modern world views, have attempted to show that Aristotle’s thought prefigures modern economic thinking. “In Aristotelian theory, actions are heterogeneous in virtue of the heterogeneity of their ends, and use value is heterogeneous both in itself and as the end-product of heterogeneous actions. Economics has appeared to overcome the heterogeneity of actions by holding that there is only a single end, “utility”, and it has appeared to overcome the heterogeneity of use value by holding that there is only a single usefulness, utility, in relation to which all things are commensurable. This enforced homogeneity is bought at a price.” (190).
differ in their motivations for engaging in friendship and are oriented towards potentially incommensurable values (Section 4.3). Nonetheless, it also ultimately explains Aristotle’s differentiation between non-uniform friendships and unequal (ἄνισος) friendships (Section 4.4, 5.1 and 5.2).

4.3. The incommensurability of utility, pleasure and virtue

The contention from book V that money provides a common measure recurs in book IX, where we also find similar examples: the shoemaker and the weaver. The examples are introduced as instances of πολιτικῇ φιλίᾳ,¹⁴⁰ the commercial ties between fellow citizens that sustain the polis:¹⁴¹

(24) Ar. NE IX.i (1163b32-64a2)¹⁴²

Ἐν πάσαις δὲ ταῖς ἀνομοιοειδεσι φιλίαις τὸ ἀνάλογον ἰσάζει καὶ σώζει τὴν φιλίαν, καθάπερ εἴρηται, οίον καὶ ἐν τῇ πολιτικῇ τῷ σκυτοτόμῳ ἀντὶ τῶν ὑποδημάτων ἁμοιβή γίνεται κατ’ ἄξίαν, καὶ τῷ ὑφάντῃ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς. ἐνταῦθα μὲν οὖν πεπόρισται κοινὸν μέτρον τῷ νόμισμα, καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο δὴ πάντα ἀναφέρεται καὶ τούτῳ μετρεῖται.

The tacit contrast here is between the political friendship of shoemaker and

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¹⁴⁰ That “φιλίᾳ” is implied in “ἐν τῇ πολιτικῇ” is corroborated by the parallel phrase ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐρωτικῇ a few lines later (a3) that without doubt refers to erotic friendships.

¹⁴¹ See n.103 and 105 above.

¹⁴² “In all friendships based on dissimilarity, what is proportionate equals and preserves the friendship, as has been said, just as in political friendship too the return the shoemaker gets for his shoes is measured by their worth, and similarly with the weaver and all the rest. Here, then, currency is available as a common measure, and it is to this that everything is referred, and by this that everything is measured.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).

¹⁴³ Here Aristotle seems to suggest rather surprisingly that political friendship and the examples he mentions are instances of friendships that are non-uniform (ἄνομοιοιδής), which is distinct from friendships that are unequal (ἄνισος): unequal friends only differ quantitatively (one is superior to the other with respect to the φιλητόν that is the basis of the relationship: in utility, pleasure or virtue); dissimilar friends, friends in a non-uniform friendship, differ in a qualitative sense: they have different motivations for appreciating one another and engaging in friendship. In contrast, the exchange between shoemaker and weaver is an example of two partners who have different products to offer, but that does not make the relationship non-uniform. I follow ΠΑΚΑΛΥΚΩ’S reading of the passage, in taking political friendship as a contrastive example: unlike political friendships that are uniform (ὁμοιοιδής) in nature and hence have a common measure, relationships that are non-uniform, as e.g. the erotic relationship, often lead to quarrels because there is no common measure in the first place. The example of the shoemaker and the weaver refers back (καθάπερ εἴρηται) to the previous chapters (VIII.xiv and
weaver (a utility friendship on the basis of equality) and non-uniform (ἀνομοιοειδής) friendships: although both types of friendship operate on a basis of proportionality, only in the case of the uniform and equal utility friendship between shoemaker and weaver is this made possible by the common measure provided by money. Non-uniform friendship, such as the erotic friendship mentioned a few lines later, lacks such a common measure: an ἐραστής appreciates the pleasure his friend offers, while the ἐρώμενος appreciates the utility provided by his friend (NE IX.i (1164a4-14)). In these cases, money cannot function as a κοινὸν μέτρον, for money only applies to those friendships that accord value and relevance to money, or more properly to χρεία: friendships because of utility (διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον).

Within a non-uniform friendship, friends operate with different measures of value, which makes these friendships intrinsically fragile: not only are these friendships easily dissolved (whenever one of the partners ceases to be capable of offering that on account of which he was desirable to the other), but they are vulnerable to quarrels if the partners fail to understand each other’s motives and do not get what they want. As different types of friendship set different standards of value, conflicts within non-uniform friendships are the hardest to fix:

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xv) that deal with equal and unequal friendships that operate on the basis of proportionality; hence it is introduced to draw a contrast with non-uniform friendships. Pakaluk (1998a), 149-150. Cf. Meikle (1995), 129-146.

144 The example given is that of the lyre-player (IX.i (1164a13-22)) who is promised that “the better he sang, the more he would get”, but who is told the next morning when he demands payment that he has been given “pleasure in return for pleasure” (ἀνθ’ ἡδονῆς ἡδονὴν ἀποδεδωκέναι). Aristotle remarks that this argument only holds if both partners desired pleasure; but if one desired the pleasure of entertainment and the other monetary gain (κέρδος), then only one of the partners got out of the transaction what he wanted and the terms of the association are not met.
 CHAPTER THREE

(25)  Ar. NE IX.i (1164a35-64b5)\(^{145} (= T \, 14)\)


Aristotle here takes friendship centered around philosophy to be an instance of friendship based on virtue (ἀρετή), which is logically less liable to conflict.\(^{146}\)

Here it is explicitly stated that virtue friendships involve an exchange of goods that does not allow measurement along the same lines as money does. In the context of a virtue friendship purposive choice (πρωαίρεσις) comes to be the measure of friendship and virtue: the value of philosophy cannot be measured in terms of money (οὐ πρὸς χρήμαθ’ ἡ ἀξία μετρεῖται) and cannot be balanced by deference or esteem (τιμὴ ἱσόρροπος οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο). The goods of utility friendship are fundamentally incommensurable with the goods of virtue friendship.

This yields a contrast with the mercantile practice of the sophists, evoked by the examples of Protagoras and the sophists that precedes this passage, who do exchange “wisdom” for money.\(^{147}\) For sophists, who are engaged in the non-uniform exchange of wisdom for money, there are two options: either letting the customer fix the value of what is given (“wisdom”), as Protagoras did, or fixing the price in advance when the customer is still unaware of the true value of the sophist’s wisdom.

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145  “[B]ut where there is no agreement about services to be rendered, those who take the initiative in giving for their friends’ own sake, as has been said, may make no accusations, since friendship according to excellence involves this sort of giving, and the return for it should be by reference to the giver’s decision to give, since this is a mark both of his being a friend and of his excellence—and this too, it seems, is how a person should make return to those who share in philosophy, since its worth is not measured in relation to money, and honour will not balance it in the scales, though presumably what is possible will suffice, as in relation to gods and to parents.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE adapt.).

146  In NE VIII.xiii (1162b6-13) it is stated that virtue friends will not quarrel if they act virtuously. See previous section.

147  NE IX.ii (1164b23-34). On the monetization of education and wisdom, see Chapter Four.
This is Aristotle’s answer to one of the greatest puzzles of isomorphic exchanges, the status of teachings in virtue. In insisting on the incommensurability between money and wisdom, Aristotle attempts to immunize philosophy from commodification and to control the distribution of virtue and wisdom: wisdom and virtue are activities embodied as long-lasting dispositions of philosophers, not possessions that can be exchanged and alienated in an objectified state like books or lessons for pay. Hence, philosophy is not an exchange object, but something one can “share in” (κοινωνέω)—preferably in Aristotle’s Lyceum.

4.4. Subjectivity and value formation

Even if both partners admit to be motivated by utility, problems arise when the relationship is unequal, featuring a superior and an inferior partner, in this case with regard to utility:

(26) Ar. NE VIII.xiv (1163a10-21)\textsuperscript{148}

ἀμφισβήτησιν δ’ ἐχει πότερα δεί τῇ τοῦ παθόντος ὡφελεία μετρεῖν καὶ πρὸς ταύτην ποιεῖσθαι τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν, ἢ τῇ τοῦ δράσαντος εὐεργεσίᾳ. οἱ μὲν γὰρ παθόντες τοιαύτα φασὶ λαβεῖν παρὰ τῶν εὐεργετῶν ἁ μικρὰ ἡν ἐκείνοις καὶ ἐξήν παρ’ ἑτέρων λαβεῖν, κατασμικρίζοντες: οἱ δὲ ἀνάπαλιν τὰ μέγιστα τῶν παρ’ αὐτοίς, καὶ ἀ παρ’ άλλων οὐκ ἢν, καὶ ἐν κινδύνοις ἢ τοιαύταις χρείαις. ἀρ’ οὖν διὰ μὲν τὸ χρήσιμον τῆς φιλίας οὔσης ἡ τοῦ παθόντος ὠφέλεια μέτρον ἔστιν; οὗτος γὰρ ὁ δεόμενος, καὶ ἐπαρκεί αὐτῷ ὡς κομιούμενος τὴν ἰσην· τοσαύτη οὖν γεγένηται ἐπειδὴ ὁ δεόμενος ὥσπερ ἐπηύρετο, καὶ ἀποδοτέον δὴ αὐτῷ ὥσπερ ἐπηύρετο, ἢ καὶ πλέον· κάλλιον γάρ.

\textsuperscript{148} “There is room for dispute whether one should measure in terms of benefit to the recipient, and the repayment be made with regard to this, or in terms of the beneficence of the giver; for the recipients say they have received the sorts of things from their benefactors that were small to them, and that could have been got from someone else, belittling the matter; conversely the givers say they were the greatest things they had to give, and things that could not have been got from anyone else, and given at a time of danger or in some similar sort of emergency. Is it, then, the benefit to the receiver that is the measure when the friendship exists because of what is useful? For he is the one asking for it, and the giver supplies it on the understanding that he will come away with equal value; the quantity of the assistance given, then, is the quantity of benefit received, and what the recipient must give back to the other is therefore the amount of the benefit he enjoyed, or else more than that, since this will be a finer thing to do.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).
Even when partners agree that an association should be concluded on the same terms as it has started, there is still potential disagreement (ἀμφισβήτησις) in establishing the size of compensation (ἀνταπόδοσις). The receiver or beneficiary, who is the inferior friend, measures the value of the original favor by the benefit he got out of it (ὡφελεία), stressing the substitutability of the benefaction: he could easily have got it from someone else (παρ' ἑτέρων) and it was only of slight value (μικρὰ) for the benefactor. Conversely, the benefactor, who is the superior friend, measures the value of the original act in terms of its moral quality (ἐὐεργεσίᾳ) by stressing the unique, irreplaceable and subjective character of the act of beneficence: he gave away things that meant a lot to him (τὰ μέγιστα τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς), that could not have been obtained from others, and that were given away in dangerous or pressing circumstances. Aristotle settles the issue by suggesting that since the friendship was on account of utility (διὰ τὸ χρήσιμον) in the first place, the recipient should be the one to assess the value of the benefaction in relation to what the usefulness of it was to him (ἡ τοῦ παθόντος ὠφέλεια μέτρον ἐστίν)—which, apparently, is quite easily quantified (ὁσον...ὅσον)—but the significant point is that Aristotle recognizes the subjective elements in the process of value formation that, in cases of conflict, become incommensurable. The origins of this incommensurability lie in the problematic category of “unequal friendship” itself: although Aristotle explicitly labels the exchange at hand as a utility friendship, it is only the inferior party who is motivated by need and who measures benefaction with the standard of ὧφελεια. The superior party measures the exchange in terms of

149 NE VIII.xiii (1163a3-10).
150 Cf. the economic notion of “isolated exchange”: two parties exchanging in primary reliance upon their own subjective preferences without reference to alternative market opportunities. In modern economics isolated exchange is fundamentally distinct from market exchange that presupposes an informed market where individuals deduce their transactions from a market price, i.e. a sense of an on-going pattern of exchange among more individuals. Cf. LOWRY (1987), 185-9: “Although some elements of a market may have developed in ancient Greece, isolated exchange is more characteristic of pre-market and preindustrial economies with nonuniform goods, an additional reason for the presumption that Aristotle’s analysis of exchange was in a judicial rather than a market context.” Cf. PAKALUK (1998), 155: “In a reconstruction of what would have been fair terms of such an exchange, then, it is necessary that the subjective considerations of both giver and recipient come into play.” However, PAKALUK presumes that even in non-uniform exchanges the parties have a notion of market price at their disposal.
beneficence, εὐεργεσία. As we shall see in Section 5.2, this reflects Aristotle’s dual notion of using property.

In virtue friendships complaints are unlikely in the first place and compensation is in accordance with intention or choice (προαιρέσεις):

(27) Ar. NE VIII.xiv (1163a21-23)\(^\text{151}\)

ἐν δὲ ταῖς κατ’ ἀρετὴν ἐγκλήματα μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, μέτρῳ δ’ ἔοικεν ἡ τοῦ δράσαντος προαιρέσεις. τῆς ἀρετῆς γὰρ καὶ τοῦ ἠθοῦς ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει τὸ κύριον.

The decisive factor in virtue and character is choice (προαιρέσεις).\(^\text{152}\) Aristotle here clearly intends to draw a contrast with the constitution of utility friendships where the measure of benefaction equals the utility or benefit to the recipient and is suggested to be easily quantified. In case of virtue friendships where the “measure” is purposive choice such quantification is much harder to imagine.\(^\text{153}\) Here the notion of “measure” is presumably applied more metaphorically as the standard for the moral quality of virtuous action towards friends;\(^\text{154}\) the quality of a virtuous action depends on the moral decision-choice that precedes it (a favor is only a favor if it is intended as such by an agent who understands its consequences), somewhat along the same lines as the value of a useful action that depends on the quantity of its usefulness.

\(^\text{151}\) “However, in friendship based on excellence there are no accusations, and the measure looks as if it is the decision of the doer; for the determinant of excellence and character lies in decision.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).

\(^\text{152}\) Cf. the notion that virtue friendship is based on προαιρέσεις: EE VII.x (1243b9-10, 1243b2-3), NE VIII.v (1157b30-31). Moral virtue is defined by Aristotle as a ἕξις προαιρητική: NE II.vi (1106b36-a2), EE II.x (1227b5-11), acting in accordance to virtue as “the distinguishing mark” (ἰδιον) of the morally virtuous man: I.ix (1367b22-23) for abiding to one’s προαιρέσεις means being ἐγκρατὴς and failing to do so is ἀκράτεια: NE VII.i(1145b17). On the concept of προαιρέσεις and its central place in Aristotle’s ethics, see CHAMBERLAIN (1984) and MELE (1981); see especially WIGGINS (1978-79) on problems of προαιρέσεις in relation to commensurability; IRWIN (1992) for the relation of προαιρέσεις to other concepts designating intentional mental states such as βουλήσεις.

\(^\text{153}\) PAKALUK (1998a), 153 on NE IX.i (1164a33-6): “That he (Aristotle) brings in again the principle of compensation according to choice shows that he regards it as an important idea, yet he has said little to explain it.”

\(^\text{154}\) We should keep in mind that virtue friendships are, in the end, not structured as reciprocal exchanges. This “metaphorical” use of μέτρον, with only a suggestion of quantifiability, is akin to BOURDIEU’s metaphor of “conversion rates” between different types of capital whereas strictly speaking only economic capital is quantifiable.
5. Preserving incommensurability

5.1. The incommensurability of τιμή and utility

We have seen that Aristotle in his endeavor to keep virtue friendships separate from utility friendships makes virtue incommensurable with utility, for they have different measures: deliberate choice and need. In utility friendships, the subjective definition of value raises problems in cases of conflict, as both partners come up with a value assessment of their own. Aristotle bypasses this problem by insisting that the recipient of the original favor, the person who was originally in need, is to establish the value—thereby implicitly conceding that these friendships are not undiluted utility friendships, but friendships that allow for heterogeneous measures of value.

This problem resurfaces in Aristotle’s discussions of τιμή, deference or esteem, that functions in unequal utility friendship. It is this notion of τιμή that eventually makes Aristotle’s category of unequal friendships (as distinct from non-uniform friendships) untenable, as the value of τιμή cannot be explained with reference to utility alone.

In VIII.xiv conflict situations in unequal friendship are analyzed:

(28) Ar. NE VIII.xiv (1163a24-35)
Διαφέρονται δὲ καὶ ἐν ταῖς καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν φιλίαις· ἀξιοῖ γὰρ


156 “People quarrel in friendships based on superiority too; for each of the two parties thinks he should have more, and when this happens, the friendship is dissolved. For if one of the parties is a better character, he thinks it appropriate for him to have more because it is appropriate for good people to be assigned more; and similarly if one of the parties is in a position to bestow the greater benefits, for they say that if someone is useless he shouldn’t have an equal share, because it turns into a kind of service to the community instead of friendship, if what results from the friendship is not going to accord with the value of what the parties have done. They think that it should be the same in a friendship as in a financial partnership, where those who contribute more get more. But the person in need, or the inferior character, takes the converse position: that assisting the needy is the mark of a good friend, since what use is it, they ask, to be friends with a good or a powerful person if one is not going to get anything out of it?” (transl. Broadie & Rowe).
According to Aristotle, both the superior and the inferior friend consider it just to get the larger share: the inferior friend because of his neediness, mistaking the exchange for pure charity (λειτουργία); the superior friend on account of his quantitatively superior service mistaking the exchange for a commercial exchange (which presupposes equality between the partners qua transactors).\(^{157}\)

Aristotle grants that both are right in expecting the larger share, but explains that each is to receive a larger share of different things: τιμή is the share that accrues to the superior friend where the needy friend receives material gain (τὸ κέρδος):

\begin{align*}
&\text{(29)} \quad \text{Ar. NE VIII.xiv (1163b1-5)}^{158} \\
&\text{ἔοικε δ’ οὖν ἑκάτερος ὄρθως ἄξιον, καὶ δεῖν ἑκατέρῳ πλέον νέμειν ἐκ τῆς φιλίας, οὐ τοῦ αὐτοῦ δὲ, ἀλλὰ τῷ μὲν ὑπερέχον ἑκατέρῳ τῷ δ’ ἐνδεέι κέρδους· τῆς μὲν γὰρ ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς ἐὐεργεσίας ἡ τιμή γέρας, τῆς δ’ ἐνδείας ἐπικουρία τὸ κέρδος.}
\end{align*}

τιμή is said to be “the reward of excellence and beneficence” (τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς ἐυεργεσίας γέρας). This deal can only provide a solution on the assumption that τιμή is of a different order than the material compensation that the needy friend receives, yet has the capacity to compensate for material loss.

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\(^{157}\) See Section 4.1 above.

\(^{158}\) “Well, it seems that the expectations of each of the two sides are correct, and that each should be assigned more out of the friendship, only not of the same thing: the superior person should get more honour, the needy one more in the way of profit, for excellence, and beneficence, have honour as their privilege, while profit is assistance for the needy.” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).
5.2. Symbolic economy

Nowhere is Aristotle unequivocally clear about the nature and value structure of τιμή. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests a pervading awareness of incommensurability: although τιμή does have quantity (it is possible to assign more (πλέον νέμειν) of it, and hence also less), it is not commensurable, i.e. to be measured with the same standard as utilities. τιμή is carefully constructed as an entity that circulates in a symbolic economy that is not (entirely) reducible to the realm of need and utility. For instance, in book IV, τιμή is characterized as the prize (ἄθλον) of excellence (τῆς ἀρετῆς), a reward for excellence, but not a compensation, for it is fundamentally insufficient:

(30) Ar. NE IV.iii (1124a4-9)

καὶ ἐπὶ μὲν ταῖς μεγάλαις καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν σπουδαίων μετρίως ἥσθησεται, ὡς τῶν οἰκειῶν τυγχάνων ἢ καὶ ἐλαττόνων· ἀρετῆς γὰρ παντελούς οὐκ ἀν γένοιτο ἄξια τιμή, οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ἀποδέξεται γε τῷ μὴ ἔχειν αὐτοὺς μείζω αὐτῷ ἀπονέμειν

There cannot possibly be τιμή that is equivalent to real virtue. Hence, not only is τιμή not to be measured with reference to utility; it is also an incommensurate and insufficient compensation for virtue. The moral quality of a virtuous act can never be reduced to an equivalence with τιμή: people who act virtuously do not do so in order to obtain τιμή.

If we think back to Aristotle’s categorization of φιλία into three kinds corresponding to the three categories of value—the useful, the pleasant, the good—we recall that only utilities are proper objects of exchange. The good, as Aristotle defines it, is not a κτῆμα that can be exchanged but an activity that

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159 In the context of a utility friendship, it remains unclear whether τιμή functions as a useful good or a surrogate useful good or as an entity that is ultimately incommensurable with utility. Cf. Pakaluk (1998a), on Aristotle’s discussion of unequal friendships in VIII.xiv: “The whole matter is unclear, and the difficulties are compounded by his never distinguishing explicitly the function of honour described here, and its very different function described in VIII.vii-viii.” (148).

160 Ar. NE IV.iii (1123b35-1124a1): τῆς ἀρετῆς γὰρ ἄθλον ἢ τιμή, καὶ ἀπονέμεται τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς.

161 “[I]n the case of great honours, accorded him by people of excellence, he will be moderately pleased, on the grounds that he is getting what belongs to him, or actually less than that—for there could be no honour worthy of complete excellence. All the same, he will accept it in so far as they have nothing greater to mete out to him.” (transl. Broadie & Rowe).

162 Cf. T 14 and 25 above (NE IX.i (1164a35-64b5)).
friends can share in. Attempts to exchange the good, e.g. wisdom, for money are destined to fail because it conflicts with the ontological structure of the good (sophists who attempt to do so reveal their merchandise to be counterfeit) and bound to cause conflicts because it is impossible to reach consensus over the value of incommensurable goods: it is a non-uniform friendship. How then does Aristotle’s discussion of τιμή, as a return for virtue, in unequal friendships fit in?

The answer is that Aristotle acknowledges that exchanges can have a “moral moment” without implying that this moral aspect is an exchange object itself, exchangeable with utility: the superior partner who displays virtue (e.g. the virtue of beneficence, of liberality) receives τιμή, which is a token (σημεῖον) of the reputation for doing good (ἐυεργετικῆς εὐδοξίας):

(31) Ar. Rhet. I.v.ix (1361a27-b2)  
τιμὴ δ’ ἐστὶν μὲν σημεῖον ἐυεργετικῆς εὐδοξίας: (...) μέρη δὲ τιμῆς θυσίαι, μνήμαι ἐν μέτροις καὶ ἀνέν μέτροιν, γέφα, τεμένη, προεδρίαι, τάφοι, εἰκόνες, τροφαὶ δημόσια, τὰ βαρβαρικά, οἷον προσκυνησίες καὶ ἐκπαύσεις, δῶρα τὰ παρ’ ἐκάστοις τίμα, καὶ γὰρ τὸ δῶρον ἔστι κτήματος δόσις καὶ τιμῆς σημεῖον, διὸ καὶ οἱ φιλοχρήματοι καὶ οἱ φιλότιμοι ἐφίενται αὐτῶν· ἀμφοτέροις γὰρ ἔχει ὧν δέονται· καὶ γὰρ κτήμα ἐστὶν οὐ ἐφίενται οἱ φιλοχρήματοι, καὶ τιμήν ἔχει οὐ οἱ φιλότιμοι.

Significantly, the gift, which is an example of τιμή, is here defined as consisting of both a material part (the allocation of property, κτήματος δόσις) and a symbolic part: it is a token of deference (τιμῆς σημεῖον). If we bear in mind the inequality implied in the relation between benefactor and beneficiary, it becomes clear that τιμή is meant to compensate for the asymmetry between exchange objects. The surplus value is paid out in τιμή. This is how unequal

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163 “Honor is a token of a reputation for doing good: (...) The components of honor are sacrifices, memorials in verse and prose, privileges, grants of land, front seats, public burial, statues, state maintenance, and among the barbarians, prostration and giving place, and all gifts which are highly prized in each country. For a gift is at once a giving of a possession and a token of honor: wherefore gifts are desired by the ambitious and by those who are fond of money, since they are an acquisition for the latter and an honor for the former; so that they furnish both with what they want.” (transl. FREESE adapt.).

164 On a communal level too, Aristotle thinks that benefactors cannot be accorded communal money and τιμή at the same time (NE VIII.xiv (1163b5-12)): τιμή is not an “extra” on top of
utility friendships work: because the objects exchanged are unequal (the partners are unequal with respect to utility) the partners become unequal in terms of τιμή—in terms of social standing. This is a moralizing account of the way power works—as opposed to equal utility friendships where the respective status of the exchange partners is irrelevant to the fairness in the exchange.

Hence, in unequal friendships, inequality can be taken into account (ἀνταποδοτέον) in terms of τιμή:

(32) Ar. NE VIII.xiv (1163b12-15)⁶⁸

οὕτω δὴ καὶ τοῖς ἀνίσοις ὁμιλητέον, καὶ τῷ εἰς χρήματα ὤφελουμένῳ ἢ εἰς ἀρετὴν τιμήν ἀνταποδοτέον, ἀποδιδόντα τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα, τὸ δυνατὸν γὰρ ἡ φιλία ἐπιζητεῖ, οὐ τὸ κατ’ ἄξιαν.

τιμή serves as compensation for both money and virtue that the inferior friend cannot requite according to desert (κατ’ ἄξιαν). However, this construction, the complementarity of money and deference preserves a sense of “equivalence” (ἀνταποδοτέον (T 32); ἐπανισοῖ, “balance equally” in the lines immediately preceding T 32)⁶⁶ that is misleading in a sense for τιμή is not quantifiable along the same lines as monetary recompense is.

The value of τιμή cannot be measured by need, as τιμή circulates in a symbolic economy of prizes (γέρας, ἄθλον) and tokens (σημεῖον) as reward for excellence (ἀρετή) without ever being capable of fully compensating for ἀρετή. τιμή is the symbolic currency that enables Aristotle to keep utility and virtue separated as incommensurable quantities. Although Aristotle does use terminology that suggests quantity and equivalence, he also takes care to preserve the boundaries between these different types of capital by insisting on incommensurability: there is a distinct measure of value for ἀρετή, value monetary compensation, but is granted to the person who “comes worse off” (ἐλαττομένῳ) in terms of money.

⁶⁸“This, then, is the way a person should associate with unequals too, and if he is being helped in terms of money or towards excellence he should give honour in return, paying back what he can. For friendship looks also for what is possible, not what accords with merit (…).” (transl. BROADIE & ROWE).

⁶⁶Cf. NE V.ii (1130b30-1131a9) where τιμή is one of the objects of distributive justice. Its juxtaposition with χοήματα, as well as its collocation with notions of “sharing” (ἐν ταῖς διανομαῖς) and “parts” (ἀνίσον καὶ ἴσον) suggest quantifiability and, hence, commensurability; at the same time the juxtaposition with χοήματα implies that τιμή is not reducible to material assets.
expressions in terms of monetary value are carefully avoided, and τιμή and material gain are complementary and hence distinct.

This reveals what is Aristotle’s real ground for distinguishing between non-uniform exchanges (the good for the useful) and unequal exchanges (the superiorly useful for the inferiorly useful). Both types of exchanges are heterogeneous in relying on more than one measure of value, but there is a systematic difference for Aristotle: non-uniform exchanges are ultimately misguided in an attempt to make a κτήμα out of the good and to sell it. Unequal utility friendships involve unequal exchanges between an inferior partner who receives the greater share of the useful and a superior partner who, in giving away the greater share of the useful, is exercising the virtuous activity of liberality and beneficence (the proper use of property!), and receives recognition for his exercise of virtue: the greater share of τιμή. Selling wisdom is exchanging the good for the useful, i.e. to make a category mistake and to trade down. Being virtuous in your exchange behavior is doing good by giving utilities, i.e. developing your virtues and obtaining the larger share, τιμή.

Beneath Aristotle’s approach of exchange relations lies his conception of the proper use of utilities, as we have seen in T 23: utilities can be used in two ways, by spending (δαπάνη) it as a means to the acquisition of revenues, and by giving (δόσις), i.e. use of property as an intrinsically valuable activity. Aristotle dismisses the idea that virtue and wisdom can ever become goods on a free market. Instead he applauds the exercise of virtue through beneficence and liberality—i.e. by fostering unequal utility friendships. Hence, his discussion of τιμή can ultimately be read as a legitimization of asymmetrical power relationships: because τιμή can never be a sufficient return for the virtue of liberality and beneficence, the debt of the inferior partner is irredeemable. As has been noted, in insisting that in unequal exchange friendships partners should reciprocate on the basis of capacity instead of equivalence, “Aristotle

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167 This distinction recurs in Aristotle’s definition of property in Rhet. I.vi.vii (1361a12-15), where two ways of using (χρῆσθαι) one’s property are distinguished: as χρήσιμα, i.e. as a means to the acquisition of revenues (i.e. as πρᾶσις), or in the liberal fashion, use for the sake of the activity of using, as an intrinsically valuable activity, e.g. by giving (δόσις).
paves the way for the obligation between patron and client and a redefinition of friendship along these lines in the postclassical period.”

6. Concluding remarks

Aristotle’s philosophy of friendship is an artificial construct, far removed from society perhaps, that ultimately favors one specific type of friendship and virtue: ideal friendship, that has lost most of the characteristics of everyday φιλία based on the reciprocal exchange of goods, help and support. Aristotle’s conceptualization of reciprocity, however, can be read in continuity with the popular social analyses that we have seen in the previous chapters, as his analysis too reflects concerns with demarcation. His articulation of long-term reciprocity is informed by the conceptual availability of a commercial paradigm: the Debtor Paradigm and the common measure provided by money.

Aristotle’s insistence on intentions, on the priority of capacity over desert in reciprocity, on not expecting a return, on other-regarding orientation, on incommensurability of virtue and utility, serve to construct and affirm a dialectics of friendship and virtue that is distinct from the economy of investment, credit, buying and selling: they are attempts to face the challenge of demarcation and to articulate a realm of the personal as opposed to the formal.

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168 Schroeder (1997), 45. After Aristotle, the analytically elusive topics of gratitude and obligation continued to be popular subject matter in the philosophical schools. Starting in the Peripatos, where both Theophrastus and Demetrius of Phaleron wrote treatises titled περὶ χάριτος (D.L. 5.48; D.L. 5.81.), the topic was adopted by Epicurus’ περὶ δώρων καὶ χάριτος (D.L. 10.28) and the early Stoics Cleanthes’ περὶ χάριτος (D.L. 7.175) and Chrysippus’ περὶ χαρίτων and περὶ κατορθωμάτων (SVF 3.674, 2.1081) as well as Dionysius of Heraclea’ περὶ πλούτου και χάριτος και τιμωρίας (D.L. 7.167). From the early Peripatos we have a Pseudo-Aristotelian letter, where the author claims that “the giving and interchange of favors holds together the lives of men, who give, receive and return.”: χάριτος ἀμοιβὴ καὶ δόσις συνέχει τοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίους, τῶν μὲν διδόντων, τῶν δὲ λαμβανόντων τῶν δ’ αὖ πάλιν ἀνταποδιδόντων. (frag. 3 (Plezia)). Among the few surviving treatises are the two Stoic works: Cicero’s De Officiis and Seneca’s De Beneficiis. Seneca’s instructions “how to give, receive, and return benefits correctly willingly” are grafted upon Aristotle’s moralization of reciprocity. The instructions are aimed at the obligations of the givers of benefits (patrons) and designed to reinforce the donor’s position of power over the recipient. See Inwood (2005) on the position of De Beneficiis in the Stoic context; Griffin (2003) for a contextualization in Roman society. On φιλία in the Peripatetic authors, see Schroeder (1997).
As such they are not fundamentally different from the strategies of demarcation we have seen in the previous two chapters.

The true friend is defined as someone oriented towards the good, not the useful, and the true gift is motivated by a desire to do good, not to acquire utilities. An ideal gift is one-sided and has no place in a utility friendship. The expectation of a return reduces a gift to a loan and a true friend to a mere utility friend. The utility friend that comes closest to giving a gift is the superior friend who gives more than the inferior friend can return; the surplus value of the gift over the return, i.e. the element of self-negation, is a manifestation of virtue and hence rewarded with τιμή.

To Aristotle, the morally privileged types of friendship are either not an exchange at all (virtue friendship) or exchange on an asymmetrical basis (unequal utility friendship). The more equal types of friendship, i.e. the everyday reciprocal exchange of goods, help and support, are demystified by Aristotle as not fundamentally different from the isomorphous credit transactions: they are eventually short-lived commercial bonds that serve the short-term order.\textsuperscript{169} The reproduction of the long-term order depends on other relationships: on elective affinities between virtuous individuals, and on asymmetrical bonds that perpetuate inequalities.

\textsuperscript{169} However, as I intend to argue elsewhere, in a well-designed constitution those utility friendships called πολιτικὴ φιλία, friendships of the polis, sustain the larger order of the polis both economically and ethically.