

Contributi/1

«A Statesman Should Know the Soul»

On Emotional Rationality in Friendship

Jonas Holst

Articolo sottoposto a doppia *blind review*. Inviato il 15/09/2018. Accettato il 26/04/2019.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle urges the statesman to study to soul. Yet, what insight into the human soul did he hold in store for the statesman? Aristotle tends to privilege rationality over the emotions, but he also expounds the need for emotions to guide reason in practical life. Drawing on the notion of friendship, the paper offers a critical reinterpretation of Aristotelian ethics and psychology in order to present an alternative understanding of the intertwinement of reason and emotions. The thesis is that ethical and political forms of friendship, instead of privileging rationality over emotion, allow for a more balanced state between the two, which the paper will expound on in dialogue with modern scholars' interpretations of friendship and emotional rationality.

1. Aristotle on The Role of Emotions in Ethics and Politics

At the end of the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states twice that the statesman should have some knowledge of the soul. Not necessarily a full and exact account of all psychological intricacies of the human psyche, as this might be more arduous than what a statesman can go into. Yet, he needs to have, Aristotle ventures, some idea of how the human soul works, if he wants to promote happiness among citizens and help them flourish¹.

Aristotle takes happiness to be a certain activity of the soul, particularly of the part which rules and constitutes the defining characteristic of human beings, *logos*. Man is, in contradistinction to other living beings, in possession of *logos* which is the capacity to reason about and give reasons for one's actions. It is the ruling principle in the human soul and forms the firm ground on which the virtuous man builds his life, which enables him to rise above the rest of living

¹ *EN* I, 13, 1102 a 13-24. The ancient Greek text used: *Ethica Nicomachea* (ed. L. Bywater), Oxford 1993. The English translation used: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Indianapolis, Cambridge 2014.

beings by motivating his actions and sharing his thoughts on the good life with other people².

Yet, according to the bipartition of the soul which Aristotle explicitly adopts, *logos* is not the only part of the human psyche. There is another part which Aristotle in most of his works designates *alogos*, a vegetative life force, predominant in plants, which lacks speech and reason. It is also active in the human soul, especially in sleep, and vital for nourishment and growth. However, according to Aristotle, a part of *alogos* is not completely separated from *logos*, but it participates in reason by listening to and obeying its commands. Aristotle identifies this middle part of the soul with the appetitive and desiderative capacity³, whose dynamic nature is characterized by stretching and striving towards something. Aristotle sees this middle part as somehow pertaining to *logos*, while maintaining, at the same time, that its origin lies outside the ruling principle of the soul.

The double role of the appetitive and desiring capacity complicates Aristotle's understanding of the human soul: First of all, because it is not clear how something which is, in principle, non-rational can listen to the rational part, and, secondly, because the appetitive and desiring capacity, which gives rise to human emotions, seems difficult to tie down to one part of the soul, as it shows up both inside and outside reason depending on how it responds to the demands coming from the rational part. We will need to return to these two critical points in order to clarify the role of desire and emotions within the framework of the politically relevant knowledge of the human soul which Aristotle has in mind.

For now, the bipartite model of the soul, which Aristotle offers the statesman as a preliminary account, appears to be sufficient for him to govern. Following this model, *logos* should rule like a master over the unruly elements of *alogos* with their disturbingly temperamental tendencies. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle also compares *logos* to a father twice⁴. In her interpretation of this passage, Nancy Sherman wonders whether this means that the desiring part of *alogos* is like a child obeying its father. Michael Pakaluk, Marlene K. Sokolon and Donna Burger interpret the *logos-alogos* relation in this way⁵. Contrary to them, Sherman draws the conclusion that this is an inadequate analogy, insofar as a child perceives and understands things in a dialogue with reason, but Aristotle does not assign this role to desire, which may not fit into the bipartite model of the soul: «Desire (*orexis*) is considerably more complex than the division of the soul into rational and non-rational parts suggests»⁶.

² *ENI*, 7, 1098 a. *Politics*, Cambridge, London 1932, I, 2, 1253 a 10.

³ *ENI*, 13, 1102 b 30: *to epithymētikon kai holōs orektikon*.

⁴ *ENI*, 13, 1102 b-1103 a.

⁵ M. Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. An Introduction*, New York 2005, p. 93; M. K. Sokolon, *Political Emotions: Aristotle and the Symphony of Reason and Emotion*, Illinois 2006, p. 13; R. Burger, *Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates: On the Nicomachean Ethics*, Chicago 2008, pp. 42-43.

⁶ N. Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue*, Oxford 1989, p. 163. In *On the Soul* or *De anima*, Hamburg 1995, 432 b 4-7, Aristotle shows reluctance to split the de-

It does indeed seem strange that Aristotle compares the functioning of the human psyche to a social relationship linked to the household, as he is highly critical of Plato's tripartite explanation of the soul, which presupposes a congruency between the soul, the house and the city-state. Still, there is a similarity between Aristotle's and Plato's account: they both assume that if the statesman has insight into the soul, he will know how to rule and help the city-state to become the best possible. Yet, what if Aristotle's account of the soul is incomplete? He himself insinuates that he does not give us the full story. After having declared that understanding the soul as divided into two parts will be good enough for his readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and apparently also for the statesman, he goes on to assert:

Whether these are distinguished like the parts of the body or like anything else that is divisible or whether they are two in definition but inseparable by nature (like convex and concave in a curved surface) makes no difference for present purposes⁷.

But perhaps it does make a difference once we look further ahead to how the desiderative part is supposed to work together with its rational counterpart, if citizens are to become virtuous. As Paula Gottlieb has observed, the analogy of the convex and the concave, which belong together and define each other in virtue of being complementary parts, may «not apply very well to the soul of the non-virtuous person», but «when applied to the virtuous person it is suggestive»⁸. The reason for this is that in a non-virtuous person the non-rational part of the soul appears to be clearly distinct from the rational part, separating itself from it and disobeying its orders, whereas in virtuous people, «it chimes with reason in everything»⁹. Gottlieb's comment notwithstanding, the suggestive use of the convex and the concave as illustrative of the dynamics of the soul could still be applied to the non-virtuous, if one understands their disagreements with reason as taking place within the rational principle itself, and not as two distinct parts struggling against each other.

How is it even possible that the non-rational part of the soul can listen to and obey its rational counterpart? Would it not have to contain some trace of rationality itself in order to be receptive to reason? Aristotle does not consider these questions. Many of his commentators emphasize that his understanding of the soul is more holistic and does not necessarily involve or lead to bipartition¹⁰. This may be true, but in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle still keeps deploying

siderative capacity up. For a thorough discussion of this, see Giles Pearson, *Aristotle on Desire*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 17-19, 170-198.

⁷ *ENI*, 13, 1102 a 28-32.

⁸ P. Gottlieb, *The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics*, Cambridge 2009, p. 105.

⁹ *ENI*, 13, 1102 b 28.

¹⁰ See for example U. Wolf, *Aristoteles' «Nikomachische Ethik»*, Darmstadt 2002, p. 45, and M. Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. An Introduction*, pp. 93-94. W. W. Fortenbaugh is one of the few who considers that «the division between the alogical and logical halves of the moral psychology occurs within the scientific faculty of intellect», in *Aristotle's Practical Side: On his Psychology, Ethics, Politics and Rhetoric*, Leiden, Boston 2006, p. 53.

the image of the soul as consisting of parts and seeing some parts of desire and emotions as originating in the non-rational part, although he recognizes that the counter-movements or contradictions of the soul cannot be observed in the same way as the movements of the body. In his more elaborate account in *On the soul*, he casts doubt on dividing the soul into parts and stresses that the psyche seems to have «an infinite number of parts», and its whole structure, especially the desiderative part, raises questions which are difficult to answer¹¹. Considering the dynamic nature of desire and emotions, it is not odd that they do not fall neatly into any clear-cut division. Maybe it becomes clearer why they can be classified as both non-rational and rational, if we take a closer look at what Aristotle understands by *pathos*, passion or emotion.

As Sokolon has pointed out, Aristotle does not offer a systematic, coherent explanation of how the emotions are related to appetites and desires, on the one hand, and to deliberation and reason, on the other hand. The ancient Greek word *pathos*, which is a particular form of desire (*orexis*), can refer to both passion and emotion depending on the context, and Aristotle does not distinguish between them in his ethical treatises, even when he enumerates examples of what he understands by the word: «appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate [...]»¹². In the *Rhetoric*, however, he makes a distinction between non-rational emotions, such as anger, which appears alongside desire and appetite, and emotions with a rational component, for example friendship (*philia*) which is to wish for someone else's good¹³. Yet, Aristotle knew very well, as his own analysis in the *Rhetoric* testifies to, that anger is not completely devoid of rationality, but he still «frequently refers to the emotions as 'irrational' – though, strictly speaking, his theories do not entitle him to use that word of them in either of its recognized senses: for they are (in his view) neither non-cognitive nor (normatively) unjustified and false»¹⁴.

Like desire, emotions may not be so easily divided into rational and non-rational. Sokolon also calls them «Janus-like» and asserts: «This means that it is equally possible for at least certain emotions to be rational, rather than non-rational, desires»¹⁵. It depends on how they relate to reason: If they listen and obey, then they are somehow rational, as Aristotle says, but if they ignore and disobey reason, then they are, if not irrational, not wholly rational. This understanding of the soul is, as we saw, still grounded in bipartition which cannot solve the problem of how the non-rational becomes rational enough to obey rationality. Declaring that it is «rational wish (*boulēsis*)», a desire specifically directed toward the human good, which enables the desiderative capacity to listen to the rational

¹¹ *De Anima*, III, 8-9, 432 a-b.

¹² *EN* II, 3, 1105 b 21-22.

¹³ *Rhetoric*, New York 2010, 1369 a, 1380 a-b.

¹⁴ M. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, p. 99.

¹⁵ M. K. Sokolon, *Political Emotions*, p. 18.

part, as Reeve has proposed¹⁶, is only half the solution, because we are still left with the question in what sense a wish is rational and communicates with reason in pursuing the good. The only way out of the dilemma appears to be to develop a deeper understanding of the human soul according to which desire and emotions are bound up with and are receptive to reason from the start. Depending on how the emotions are cultivated or remain uncultivated, they chime more or less with reason or draw it apart provoking dissonance.

Aristotle actually helps us on the way to such an understanding, when he, instead of calling that which runs counter to reason non-rational, designates it «something other next to or opposite reason»¹⁷. It is neither illogical nor irrational, but *para-logical* which allows for everything that falls within this field of dynamic and often opposing forces, appetite, desire and emotions, to retain some form of rationality or counter-rationality. Although Aristotle does not elaborate further on this concept, it is as suggestive not unlike the image of the convex and the concave which it spells out in logical terms: Instead of envisioning the soul as divided into two parts, *logos* and *alogos*, it could be framed as a double relationship between interdependent parts, *logos* and *para-logos*, in which reason does not remain unaffected by the emotions, as if it were a master or a father reigning supremely over them. Reason is defined and guided by emotions which are right next to it. Thinking along the same lines as Aristotle, Sokolon underlines that when reason makes decisions single-handedly without any contact with the emotions, it «also makes possible vicious actions» and can turn irrational¹⁸.

After introducing the concept of the *para-logical*, Aristotle offers an alternative to the patriarchal model: Possessing reason is not only comparable to how a father relates to that which lacks reason, he states, but also to how friends relate to each other¹⁹. It is not clear from the context, if Aristotle employs the two relationships as metaphors, or if he thinks that the way in which a human being acquires the ability to reason and give reasons for his or her actions actually goes through two equally valuable human relationships: Fatherhood and friendship. Independently of whether they are meant as metaphors or real life relationships, they still convey two very different views on the human soul. Framing rationality as a top-down relationship of sovereignty, with the father at the top, is predicated on an asymmetric and masculine representation which leaves almost nothing for the 'child-like' emotions to contribute with.

Friendship, on the other hand, allows for a more egalitarian and mutual relation, not only internally in the soul, but also in relation to other souls. For

¹⁶ C. D. C. Reeve, *Aristotle on the Virtues of Thought*, in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (ed. R. Kraut), Oxford 2006, p. 203. Giles Pearson clarifies in what sense *boulēsis* can be said to be rational, according to Aristotle, and he also shows how the other types of desire, appetite and spiritedness, assist and aid reason in the virtuous, G. Pearson, *Aristotle on Desire*, chapters 4, 5 and 6.

¹⁷ *allo ti para ton logon*, *EN I*, 13, 1102 b 17.

¹⁸ M. K. Sokolon, *Political Emotions*, cit., p. 4.

¹⁹ *EN I*, 13, 1102 b 32.

Aristotle friendship is the ethical and political relationship par excellence which enables citizens to live well and come together peacefully to share their lives together. The hypothesis to be developed and defended in the following section is that a statesman would do well and perhaps even do politics better, if he acquired knowledge of the soul based on the *para-logical* model, which is more akin to the complementarity of the convex and the concave, than if it were based exclusively on the patriarchal representation of reason reigning one-sidedly over the partly non-rational emotions.

2. Virtues, Friendship and Politics

It should be remembered why Aristotle goes to such lengths to define the role of emotions in human life: Being specific desires, which generate qualified movements that reason itself is incapable of, emotions are decisive for the way humans act ethically and politically. Citizens should therefore mind their emotions, because they need them in well-ordered proportions to live a good life, but also because they can be led astray by them, if they let them loose impulsively. Emotions play this double role of which the statesman should also be aware in order to steer the citizens onto the way of virtue.

Although it is beyond the scope of the present paper to dig deeper into the Aristotelian theory of the virtue as the mean between two extremes, a brief look at how Aristotle conceptualizes virtues, such as courage and temperance, will give us a clearer idea of the emotional content of the virtues: Courage is a well-balanced disposition between cowardice and rashness, canalizing fear and anger in an appropriate way, at the right moment and place and toward the right people. In a similar way, temperance is, as its name says, a temperate state between intemperance and insensibility, which balances the appetites²⁰. Each virtue contains, potentially, more than one emotion which becomes balanced when it is practiced in a proportionate manner and involves the right reasons.

For Aristotle, right reason (*orthos logos*) in practical affairs binds the ethical virtues together and its highest expression is found in the intellectual virtue, practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). While the ethical virtues belong to the non-rational part of the soul, practical wisdom falls, according to Aristotle's division, within the rational domain which reasons and deliberates truthfully about what is good in life, how and when it is to be done and in relation to whom. It is thanks to *phronēsis* that each virtue not only gets it right but does it in the right context and knows why it is right. *Phronēsis*, on the other hand, depends on the ethical virtues with their desiring and emotional component to have the right motivation and to be directed toward practical goals in ethically sound ways²¹.

²⁰ For an overview of the ethical virtues as means, see P. Gottlieb, *The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics*, cit., p. 112.

²¹ *EN VI*, 13, 1144 b 23-32.

Aristotle's way of integrating ethical and intellectual virtues is still predicated on the division between the rational and the non-rational part of the soul, which runs into certain explanatory problems, as Aristotle himself observes in *On the Soul*. One of these problems can be illustrated by Aristotle's own interpretation of *phronēsis*: Drawing on a proverb, Aristotle ventures that *phronēsis* is saved by temperance (*sophrosynē*), which makes sure that pleasure and pain remain balanced in the practically wise, whose reason may not be sufficient in itself to find a balance²². This goes to show that well-balanced emotions are crucial for practical reason to perform ethically and that what originates within the 'non-rational' part of the soul can also guide and even save rationality at times. Again, this only seems to be possible, if the 'non-rational' is also partly rational, which is exactly the case in Aristotelian ethics, in so far as a virtue, such as temperance, can only single out the middle way between extreme appetites if guided by the right and truthful form of reason, i.e. *phronēsis*.

The way in which practical wisdom and temperance presuppose each other points to the interdependence between 'non-rational' desire and practical rationality in Aristotelian ethics. Similarly to how «[T]he ethical virtues, as defined by Aristotle, do not fit in any simple way into the classification of power in the *Metaphysics*, as rational or irrational»²³, so Aristotle leaves the psychological status of *phronēsis* ambiguously undefined «at the junction of the soul's moral and intellectual capacities»²⁴. Rather than an asymmetrical or hierarchical relation with *logos* reigning supreme, the human soul engaged in practical action and decision-making appears to exhibit a dynamic double structure, in which practical reason can be said to share its place in the human soul with desire and emotions.

This is what Aristotle tells us, when he lets the middle 'part' of the soul take share in reason and describes decision-making as «desiderative thought or intellectual desire»²⁵. Yet, instead of keeping onto the dichotomy of *logos-alogos*, we have suggested that it would make more sense and be more in accordance with Aristotle's own practical thinking to interpret this 'participation' as going on within a parallel structure of *logos* and *para-logos* comparable to the convex and the concave which describe two complementary aspects of the same structure. According to this line of thinking, what listens to *logos* in the human soul is not non-rational, but it constitutes precisely a complementary capacity of receptivity, which is needed for practical rationality to be not only reasonable but also wise. When analysing how *phronēsis* selects the particular and grasps a unique phenomenon in a situation, Aristotle also calls it a «sense» (*aisthēsis*),

²² *EN* VI, 5, 1140 b 11-19.

²³ W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, Oxford 1981.

²⁴ Anthony Celano, *The relation of prudence and synderesis to happiness in the medieval commentaries on Aristotle's ethics*, in Jon Miller (ed.), *The Reception of Aristotle's Ethics*, Cambridge 2012, p. 128.

²⁵ *EN* VI, 2, 1139 b 4-5.

which should not come as a surprise now that we realize that desire and emotions take part in practical reason and complements it like another side of itself²⁶.

Aristotle does not elaborate on the concept of the *para-logical* or the suggestive analogue of the convex or the concave, and one reason for this could be that he prefers to see *logos* as the sovereign principle of the soul. In order to develop an alternative knowledge of the soul, leading to another form of politics than the one proposed by Aristotle, but in line with his over-all project, we shall look for a participatory relationship, imbued by equal parts of emotion and rationality, in which the partners are not self-sufficient, but they need each other to pursue the good life together and become truly themselves.

As we have seen, besides the father Aristotle also employs the example of friends talking and listening to each other as a key to understanding what it means to be in possession of reason. According to his own analysis, friends stand in different relationships to each other which fulfil the conditions just mentioned and may solve some of the other problems posed: The ancient Greek term for friendship, *philia*, covers all kinds of loving and affective relationships, and it takes up two whole books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, more than any of the virtues. It constitutes a cornerstone in the political order: «Friendship also seems to hold city-states together, and lawgivers are more concerned about it than about justice»²⁷. To Aristotle, humans are political beings, because an essential part of what it means to be human is to live, not in idle isolation, but surrounded by family, friends and fellow-citizens in ordered societies²⁸. Friendship plays such an important role for upholding the political order, as it embodies what Alasdair MacIntyre has called a shared agreement and recognition of the complex measure of the interrelationship of the virtues²⁹.

If we start working out the ethical and political significance of *philia* in Aristotle's oeuvre, his introduction of friends into his definition of what it means to be in possession of reason does not seem to be a mere metaphor for what goes on inside the soul when it reasons with itself. Friends can have an impact on each other's reasoning, so much so that they can come to change their mind, when they talk and listen to each other. Emotions are capable of turning human judgment around³⁰, and friendship is itself an emotion related to ethical and virtuous ways of being and speaking with other people³¹, which means that *logos* is part and parcel of these relationships.

In his reference to friends having a persuasive effect on reason, what sort of friends could Aristotle be thinking of? As the Greek term *philōn* also covers kin and family, one could understand his reference narrowly and restrict friendship

²⁶ *EN* VI, 8, 1142 a 26-29. See *De Sensu*, Cambridge 2014, 437 a 12, where Aristotle claims that to listen contributes decisively to *phronēsis*.

²⁷ *EN* VIII, 1, 1155 a 22-24.

²⁸ *EN* I, 7, 1097 b 7-11.

²⁹ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London 2000, p. 155.

³⁰ M. K. Sokolon, *Political Emotions*, cit., p. 14.

³¹ *EN* IV, 6, 1126 b 11-23.

to the household. However, by adding friends, Aristotle clearly intends to include other relationships than those only linked to a father, and regarding other relations between family members they can indeed be categorized as friendships, but they do not lay any special claim on having an impact on rationality of the sort which Aristotle seems to think of. The friendships based on pure pleasure are even less centered on *logos*: The people involved in such relationships are, according to Aristotle, more concerned about giving into to their pleasures than about controlling them by listening to reason, so they do not fit the description.

Good and virtuous men form complete friendships which Aristotle rank highest, as they are built on virtue between likeminded people, and they are thus stable. The virtuous act and are disposed towards themselves in the same way as they act and are disposed towards their good friends, which leads Aristotle to coin the enigmatic phrase that a friend is “another self”³². Close friends seem to have such a deep influence on each other that Aristotle speaks of some friends becoming like one soul. Yet, having acquired ideally all the virtues and being in complete possession of *phronēsis*, the most virtuous are flawless and do not suffer any change of mind, as their emotions are harmoniously balanced with reason. Contrary to friendships of pleasure, which hang onto the ‘non-rational’ removing themselves from reason, virtue friendships are grounded in reason which approaches every man most to himself³³.

In this way, the highest form of virtue friendship in Aristotelian ethics remains predicated on an understanding of *logos* as the supreme ruler in the soul, which makes sure that the good man maintains a sovereign and self-contained balance internally without suffering any alterations. In a certain sense, friends of virtue mirror their own impeccable goodness. Despite his preference for the truly virtuous men and their friendships, Aristotle still seems to allow for some change for the better even here: Those, who find themselves at the peak of their lives, can get to act and think even better, if they accompany each other, compared to how they would have fared had they each acted on their own³⁴.

Still, they stand in no need of being persuaded by “better reasons”, as their own reason has reached a high degree of self-sufficiency. As suggested earlier, in order to find the sort of friends, who are exposed to emotional changes of mind, we should look for friendships between people, who are not wholly virtuous and self-sufficient. Some of their emotions may still, at times, run counter to reason, yet they are receptive to reasons concerning the good life and to act upon them. These people may engage in the sort of friendships which Aristotle calls political:

Political friendship (*philia politikē*) has been established mainly in accordance with utility; for men seem to have come together because each is not sufficient for himself, though they would have come together anyhow for the sake of living in company³⁵.

³² EN IX, 4, 1166 a 1-31.

³³ EN IX, 8, 1168 b-1169 a.

³⁴ EN VIII, 1, 1155 a 14-16.

³⁵ *Eudemian Ethics*, Cambridge 1935, VII, 1242 a 7-10.

Being the decisive factor for people living together in political communities, friendship exhibits a variegated web of relations, some between just and moderate people, others between more or less virtuous people. Even people lacking in virtue may in different ways contribute to the complex measure of community life by complementing each other with a view to the common good. Aristotle is aware that truly good friendships are as few as there are truly good people, and as citizens are unlike each other in each city-state and the majority is not in possession of *phronēsis* to the highest degree, political friendships are characterized by differences and contrasts which need to be negotiated and mediated in an open exchange that looks to the best for all involved³⁶.

The political form of friendship is concerned mainly with utility and so falls mostly within the third category of friendship which Aristotle enlists together with pleasure and virtue friendships. Yet, it does not seem to be limited to utility, because, as Aristotle adds, the citizens would have sought each other's company anyhow in order to live together, which is equal to the purpose of political life as such, which is not utility, but the good and happy life promoted by the statesman. Likewise, there exists an ethical form of utility friendships, which friends enter freely into, not because of a legal or social contract, but out of a more liberal spirit of offering each other a gift in generosity. Coming together they are concerned about contributing with something useful to their common course, but as in political life they may be more or less open-minded, looking also to nobler goals than counting every contribution that each partner makes³⁷.

What we are left with are ethical and political forms of friendships, which do not fit neatly into Aristotle's tripartite categorization of friendships nor into his bipartite model of the soul. They contain some virtues, but not all of them, which is why the people engaged in those type of friendships come together to reason about what is best and act accordingly. In both the ethical and political forms of utility friendship, friends may trust each other and do something for the other's sake and also wish him or her well out of generosity, which are two virtuously balanced emotions that Aristotle consider to constitute the foundation of good friendships. Wishing well (*boulesthai*) is a desire, which Aristotle holds to be rational, as it strives for something good, be it an apparent or a genuine good. In friendship wishing each other well is mutual and is a benevolent way of minding the other, which is a condition for communities and city-states to prosper³⁸.

In the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle offers a way to conceptualize this form of friendship, in which neither of the friends, taken by themselves, are perfectly

³⁶ *Pol.* III, 2-5, 1276 b-1281 a.

³⁷ *EN* VIII, 13, 1162 b-1163 a.

³⁸ E. Irrera, *Between Advantage and Virtue: Aristotle's Theory of Political Friendship*, *History of Political Thought* Vol. 26, No. 4, 2005, pp. 569-572, pp. 577-582.

balanced, yet in striving towards each other and meeting in the middle, they may themselves reach a mean:

In a way too friendship of the opposite is for the good, the parties desiring each other because of the mean. Like tallies (*symbola*), they desire (*oregetai*) each other because in this way a single mean is created from the pair³⁹.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle advances a similar analogy⁴⁰, but without developing the comparison of the tallies, the pieces of the same gift item, which in Greece constituted tokens of trust shared by guest friends since ancient times. Yet, by viewing the friends themselves as tallies, Aristotle moves the attention from the things shared, the tokens, to the persons desiring to find a middle term and share their lives together in friendship. They themselves are marked by opposition and may even be like strangers to each other, yet by receiving and meeting each other halfway, their desires, which Aristotle compares to heat and cold, balance each other so as to achieve a temperate state.

Orexis, i.e. the desire of each friend to meet the other, becomes the driver behind each of the friends achieving a middle state, which has a certain similarity to the intermediate path of virtue as a mean between two extremes, in so far as their tendencies turn moderate and temperate. Aristotle would probably take *orexis* in this context to be the form of rational desire which is orientated toward some human good. Each friend taken on his own may not reach the good, middle state, yet by mediating their differences and even curbing their extreme tendencies, they have a chance of approaching virtue. Describing such friendships as good too, Aristotle opens a way toward becoming virtuous, which starts, not from self-ruling *logos* within the soul, but from the other friend and leads back to oneself to create a mean.

3. Rethinking the Emotional Rationality of Friendship

The understanding of emotions as «imbued with reason»⁴¹ has been developed by Ronald de Sousa in the book titled *The Rationality of Emotion*, in which he argues against Plato and Aristotle that emotion can «break a tie when reason is stuck»:

When faced with two competing arguments, between which neither reason nor determinism can relevantly decide, emotion can endow one set of supporting considerations with more salience than the other⁴².

³⁹ *EE* VII, 5, 1239 b 30-34.

⁴⁰ *NE* VIII, 8, 1159 b 19-24.

⁴¹ D. Perler, *Emotions and Rational control: Two Medieval Perspectives*, in *Thinking about the Emotions. A Philosophical History* (eds. A. Cohen & R. Stern), Oxford 2017, p. 64.

⁴² R. de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, Cambridge, London 1990, p. 16.

Robert C. Solomon has gone even further by asserting that «emotions are more central to rationality than even reason and reasoning, for without them (as David Hume argued a few centuries ago in his *Treatise of Human Nature*), reason has no point or focus». Emotions are embedded, Solomon claims in a larger, political discussion of «how people relate and respond to each other»⁴³, which this paper has elaborated on by developing the ethical and political implications of the Aristotelian notion of friendship.

In a similar line of thinking, Martha Nussbaum has defended Aristotle against such charges, advanced by de Sousa, that the Greek philosopher overlooks the significance of emotions for rationality, and she shows instead that Aristotle actually presents a complex understanding of human actions and emotions as built on cognitive elements. Also for Nussbaum *philia* becomes vital to interrelating the virtues in harmonious ways, which does not only lead to pleasure and joy, but friendship also exposes each friend to the contingencies of life. The need for friendship even among the best comes with a 'price': Caring for somebody inevitably involves fearing for that friend's life and experiencing grief, if he or she dies. Nussbaum stresses that Aristotle, contrary to Plato and Kant, thinks that these emotions are not 'pathological', but that they form part of the good life, exemplified by friends, who nobody would choose to live without, even if he had all the other goods⁴⁴.

In so far as most humans are not completely self-sufficient beings and have not reached full virtue under the supreme rule of *logos*, even those, who are at their peak in life and have acquired *phronēsis*, will be receptive and responsive to «their friends' insightful advice», as Hans-Georg Gadamer has pointed out: «Aristotle knows what he does, when he includes 'showing understanding' (*synēsis*) among the virtues as a modification of being reasonable (*phronēsis*)»⁴⁵. Gadamer explicitly refers to the Aristotelian notion of friendship as the foundation for his own hermeneutical studies on how dialogue shapes and changes the way humans understand themselves and the world⁴⁶. He interprets friendship in a congenial way as this paper, namely as a relationship, which is based on emotional and ethical dispositions that enable reason to be receptive to other reasons advanced by other selves⁴⁷.

The understanding of the nonsovereign self and of the emotional rationality of friendship advanced in this paper comes closer to a democratic

⁴³ R. C. Solomon, *True to our Emotions: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us*, Oxford 2007, p. 5, 7. Within the scholarship on Aristotelian ethics, Nancy Sherman has advanced a similar argument on emotional dispositions as «relevant points of view»: «We notice through feeling what might otherwise go unheeded by a cool and detached intellect», N. Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, cit., p. 45.

⁴⁴ M. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton 1994, 79-93. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge, New York 2001, pp. 365-366.

⁴⁵ H.-G. Gadamer, *Ethos und Ethik, Gesammelte Werke 3*, Tübingen 1995, p. 364. See also W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle's Practical Side*, cit., p. 49, for a similar conclusion.

⁴⁶ H.-G. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke 10*, Tübingen 1995, p. 97.

⁴⁷ H.-G. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke 4*, Tübingen 1995, p. 187.

vision of politics, as Sharon R. Krause has also argued: She claims that a careful integration of 'affective intelligence', in which reflective and affective processes are integrated and «reflective deliberation and intentional choices are preceded by and shot through with preconscious processes» without «being strictly determined by them», presents «a more coherent account of human agency» and of «democratic self-rule» than the theory of autonomous reason and rational choice making⁴⁸.

Yet, the purpose of the paper has not been to defend any singular political doctrine, but to develop the ethical and political implications of understanding the human soul and self as nonsovereign. This alternative knowledge of the human soul implies that what Aristotle considers to define man the most, namely reason, is intertwined with emotions which open every human up to an outside which affects him or her decisively. Pertaining to the *para-logical* side of the human soul, emotions expose *logos* to an outside of which it is not in complete control. It has been argued that certain forms of ethical and political friendships, being imbued with a form of emotional rationality which promotes virtuous action and heightened self-awareness, can have an equally beneficial influence on the soul as temperance has on practical wisdom: Like the former can be said to save and sustain the latter, according to Aristotle, friendship can be said to save people from losing control and enable them to live well. Even the most virtuous need to tap into their emotions in order to act well, and friendship, which is more than an emotion and a virtue, is crucial to sustain the ethical and political forms of emotional rationality through which human beings can come to act and think even better than they would have, if they had been on their own.

Jonas Holst, Universidad San Jorge
✉ jholst@usj.es

⁴⁸ S. R. Krause, *Democracy and the nonsovereign self, Passions and Emotions* (ed. J. E. Fleming), New York and London 2013, pp. 231-238.