

ARISTOTLE'S NOTION OF FRIENDSHIP: THE BASIS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

This paper titled "Aristotle's Notion of Friendship: The Basis for International Relations" addresses the frosty relationship existing between nations which has left a terrible gap among international communities resulting to a protracted and seemingly irresolvable international conflicts as result of the failure of the conflicting nations to see each other as friends. This ugly scenario has given rise to catalogue of disaster and human misery in the international community. The existing bilateral diplomatic relationships existing between ally nations has contributed immensely in sowing the seed of discord and lethal acrimony between nations with their divide and rule policy. The paper argues that bilateral relations are problematic as it tends to be divisive, exploitative and egoistic in nature. The paper therefore recommends a multilateral relationships based on Aristotle friendship of the good will that tends to be more inclusive, interdependence and healthy competition. This Aristotelian Friendship based on the good will appears to be the only respite for humanity towards ensuring a robust cohesive, coherent and interconnected multilateral relationship as it aims to focus more on things that unite us as a community of humans than what tears us apart. The paper employ critical method of analysis to establish her claims.

Keywords: Bilateral, Multilateral, Good, friendship, Reciprocation.

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization where the socio-economic and political prosperity of a nation is most fundamentally dependent on how robust and beneficial a nation's alliance and friendship with other nations are, a re-examination of Aristotle's notion of friendship becomes an imperative. For a number of decades, a body of work has been developing which attempts to re-conceptualize civic and political relations using the concept of friendship. There is no denying the fact that many crises that rock the world all boiled down to the failure of the conflicting nations to see one another as friends. The protracted

wars between Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Palestine bear eloquent testimony to the lack of friendship between nations. Taking a kaleidoscopic view of Aristotle's notion of friendship, which is a conscious effort and dedication of two or more parties to care for the well-being of the other party and wish each other well in accordance with the motive of the friendship. Aristotle divided friendship into three categories: Friendship based on utility, pleasure and friendship of the good. According to him, men also apply the term friends to those who love one another for profit's sake, as happens with countries (for expediency is thought to be the ground on which countries make alliances), and also to those who love one another for pleasure's sake, as children do, perhaps we too ought to apply the name to such people, and to speak of several kinds of friendship. Thus, friendship of the good which is based on a reciprocated goodwill between two or more good people (or institutions) of like minds appears to be the best form of friendship that will form the basis of international relations. The reason why friendship between nations tends to be superficial and short-lived is because the friendship is hinged on a condition so that when the friendship doesn't serve the purpose it was intended for, it disappears to the thin air a dissention and lethal acrimony set in.

According to Aristotle, in order for people to be friends, they must be well-wishers to one another, i.e. must wish each other's good from one of the three motives (pleasure, utility and good) and be aware of each other's feelings. Aristotle categorized three kinds of friendship being equal in number to the motives of love; for any one of these may be the basis of a mutual affection of which each is aware. Now, those who love one another wish each other good in respect of that which is the motive of their love. Those, therefore, whose love for one another is based on the useful, do not love each other for what they are, but only in so far as each gets some good from the other. It is the same also with those whose affection is based on pleasure; people care for a wit, for instance, not for what he is, but as the source of pleasure to themselves. Those, then, whose love is based on the useful care for each other on the ground of their own good, and those whose love is based on pleasure care for each other on the ground of what is pleasant to themselves, each loving the other, not as being what he is, but as useful or pleasant (Nicomachean Ethics Book VIII, 181). This body of work argues for an explicit form of political friendship, and it uses Aristotle's notion of friendship as a model or ideal for civic relations such as citizenship, international relation and diplomacy to form alliance with other nations. It is suggested that political or civic friendship can form the basis of a new social bond, a bond which variously invokes care, joint projects, and affection to overcome the perceived individualization, alienation, and fragmentation of contemporary (Western) societies. This work aims to use Aristotle's Friendship of the good as a *conditio sine qua non* for international relations. It also uses this model of friendship as a bridge towards closing the debilitating gap that tends to tear nations apart.

1.1 Definition of Terms:

Friendship: Aristotle sees friendship as a reciprocated good will between two or more like-minded individuals. A perfect friendship according to Aristotle is that which friends

love each other for their own sake, and wish good things for each other at all times. This kind of friendship according to him is only possible between good people similar in virtue. Out of the three versions of friendships that will be discussed in this work, Aristotle sees this kind of friendship as the best because it's long-lasting and not hinged on any condition.

International relation: International relations can be defined as a multidisciplinary field of study that focuses on the interactions and relationships between sovereign states and other international actors in the global system. It examines the political, economic, social and cultural dynamics that shape these interactions and aims to understand the causes and consequences of various international events and phenomenon.

As a variable, international relations refers to the different factors, conditions and variables that influence and shape the behavior and outcomes of interactions between states and other international actors. These variables can include political factors (such as power dynamics, ideologies, and governance structures) economic factors (such as trade, investment and economic interdependence) social and cultural factors (such as norms, values and identity), as well as technological issues, and international institutions. They study of international relations as a variable involves analyzing and understanding how these different factors interact and impact the conduct and outcomes of international relations

2.0 Aristotle's Notion of Friendship

Aristotle sees friendship as a virtue, or is essential and indispensable in our life. Since man is a social animal, Aristotle is of the view that no one would care to live without friends, though he had all other good things. He buttresses the point further by holding strongly to the view that no man is so self-sufficient as not to be in need of friends. Indeed, according to him:

It is when a man is rich, and has got power and authority, that he seems most of all to stand in need of friends; for what is the use of all this prosperity if he has no opportunity for benevolence, which is most frequently and most commendably displayed towards friends? Or how could his position be maintained and preserved without friends? For the greater it is, the more is it exposed to danger (Nichomachean Ethics, BkVIII, 179).

Aristotle sees friendship as inevitable phenomenon that one must experience in bad times and in good times, in riches and in poverty. According to him, in poverty and all other misfortunes, again, we regard our friends as our only refuge. We need friends when we are young to keep us from error, when we get old to care for us when we longer enough strength to execute our tasks, and in the prime of life to help us in noble deed in action (Nichomachean Ethics BkVIII, 180).

Aristotle sees friendship as the glue that knits and binds nations and individuals together in an inextricable bond of mutuality. Aristotle sees friendship as an article of an inestimable worth much more desirable than justice. In his own words he says,

It seems that friendship is the bond that holds states together, and

that lawgivers are even more eager to secure it than justice. For concord bears a certain resemblance to friendship and it is concord that they especially wish to retain, and dissension that they especially wish to banish as an enemy. If citizens be friends, they have no need of justice, but though they be just, they need friendship or love also; indeed, the completest realization of justice* seems to be the realization of friendship or love also. Moreover, friendship is not only an indispensable, but also a beautiful or noble thing: for we commend those who love their friends, and to have many friends is thought to be a noble thing; and some even think that a good man is the same as a friend (Nicomachean Ethics Bk VIII, 181).

He is also of the view that people who are likeminded have the likelihood of becoming friends. This according to him is the origin of the saying, "Like to like," and "Birds of a feather flock together," and other similar sayings.

Friendship, or *philia*, for Aristotle is a virtue and it is also developed through cultivation. He argues further that, we need friends to lead a happy and fulfilled life. It was due to the pivotal role friendship plays towards our wellbeing that Aristotle dedicates two books in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is pertinent to remark that friendship is indeed a necessary prerequisite for achieving well-being and *eudemonia* (Joseph Karuzis, 2).

From the perspective of Yuri van Hoef and Andrea Oelsner, friendship is synonymous with positive peace on the grounds that it concerns human integration, and can cover an extensive list of subjects, ranging from 'functional cooperation between groups or nations through technical and cultural collaboration or trade policies, to institutional fusion with superordinate bureaucracies, police forces, courts and governments till the world state is reached'. Galtung primeval view of positive peace closely echoes the historical process of Franco-German cooperation in the twentieth century. The social tradition of friendship which springs up from within these spheres of cooperation can help flesh out a normative, substantive concept of positive peace (89). It is interesting to note that reciprocation is a keyword in Aristotle's notion of friendship. In all the three forms of friendships, reciprocation plays a fundamental role. In a bid to make sense of Aristotle's account, it is germane to welcome the idea that he hinges reciprocation on two senses: reciprocation as 'correspondence', and reciprocation as 'exchange'. Aristotle sees the former as the most paramount and complete form of friendship; and it is also this sense of reciprocation which opens the possibility of the minor strand which is anchored on exchange or utility.

According to Smith and Romero, reciprocation finds its way into Aristotle's theory of friendship in a clearer way when he employed it to differentiate friendship from mere goodwill which is necessary but not sufficient for friendship. In his own words, Aristotle explicitly state thus;

... In the case of a friend they say that one ought to wish him good for his own sake. Those who wish for the well-being of others in this way are called well-disposed if the same feeling is not evoked from the other party, because goodwill, they say, is friendship only when it is reciprocated. Perhaps we should add 'and recognized'; because people are often well-disposed towards persons whom they have never seen, but believe to be good or helpful, and one of the latter might feel the same towards the former: then clearly these people are well-disposed towards each other, but how could we call them friends when their feelings for one another are not known? So friends must be well-disposed towards each other, and recognized as wishing each other's good, for one of the three reasons stated above [i.e. virtue, pleasure or utility (Nicomachean Ethics 178)]

3.0 Types of Friendship

In our pursuit for a worthy and well-lived life, we must seek out good friends. In this vein, knowing the different types of friends is a leeway towards making a valid rational decision that will assist us in the acquisition of good friends and the accompanying impacts they have on one's search for happiness. To properly understand and delineate the different kind of friendship, it is germane to know that all men are in the pursuit of the good life. This may be the good itself, i.e. the good without qualification or something that is good in general for oneself. This distinction according to Aristotle is a significant one for indicating what definition of good we are seeking will assist us in understanding the type of friendship that will be developed. Aristotle identifies three objects of love and three corresponding types of friendship.

The three purpose of love according to Aristotle are the useful, the pleasant, and the good. From this tripartite objective of love Aristotle states that there are friendships based on utility, friendships based on pleasure, and friendships based on the good.

3.1 Friendship Based on Utility

According to Aristotle, Friendships based on utility arises from relations in business. One may be seeking something useful and another may be able to provide that good or service. This kind of friendship according to him is short-lived in the sense that when the desired object or service is no longer sought after or desirable, the said friendship immediately dissolves. This happens because the friendship was based on utility, i.e. for the sake of something else rather than friendship itself, and there was no deep concern for the other person involved. This kind of Friendship exists amongst international communities where relationship is diplomatic and based on what the other party has to

offer.

3.2 Friendship Based On Pleasure

According to Aristotle, friendships based on pleasure are also changing and short-lived. This, according to him is because the object of pleasure often changes and once this happens such a friendship quickly dissolves. Friendships based on utility and pleasure are usually transient, and are not the best types of friendships to be sought after due to the fact that in these relationships it is possible for a virtuous person to become friends with someone wicked. Aristotle warns us of this possibility in the following statement. The motives of love being thus threefold, the love of inanimate things is not called friendship. For there is no return of affection here, nor any wish for the good of the object it would be absurd to wish well to wine, for instance; at the most, we wish that it may keep well, in order that we may have it.

According to Aristotle, those who in matters of love exchange not pleasure but profit, are less truly and less permanently friends. The friendship whose motive is profit ceases when the advantage ceases; for it was not one another that they loved, but the profit. For pleasure, then, or for profit it is possible even for bad men to be friends with one another, and good men with bad, and those who are neither with people of any kind, but it is evident that the friendship in which each loves the other for himself is only possible between good men; for bad men take no delight in each other unless some advantage is to be gained. But it is commonly said that we must wish our friend's good for his own sake. One who thus wishes the good of another is called a well-wisher, when the wish is not reciprocated; when the well-wishing is mutual, it is called friendship. We must have to add that each must be aware of the other's well-wishing? This is because, people often wish those whom they have never seen well, but presume to be good or useful men; and one of these may have the same sentiments towards him. These two, then, are plainly well-wishers to each other; but how could one call them friends when each is unaware of the other's feelings?

According to Aristotle, friendships based on utility and pleasure can be termed “accidental;” for the object of affection is loved, not as being the person or character that he is, but as the source of some good or some pleasure. Friendships of this kind, therefore, are easily dissolved, as the persons do not continue unchanged; for their love disappears to the thin air if the said friends cease to be pleasant or useful to one another. But the useful is nothing permanent, but varies from time to time. On the disappearance, therefore, of that which was the motive of their friendship, the friendship itself is dissolved, since it existed solely with a view to that.

They are quick to make friendships, therefore, and quick to drop them; for their friendship changes as the object which pleases them changes; and pleasure of this kind is liable to rapid alteration.

3.3 Friendship of the Good

According to Aristotle, the perfect kind of friendship is that of good men who resemble one another in virtue. For they are both intentional about wishing each other well as good men, and it is their essential character to be good men. He clarified further that those who wish their friends well for the friends' sake are friends in the truest sense; for they have these feelings towards each other as being what they are, and not in an accidental way: their friendship, therefore, lasts as long as their virtue is a lasting thing. On another note, each is intrinsically good in his own nature and good to his friend; for it is true of good men that they are both good simply and also useful to one another. In the same manner, they are pleasant too; for good men are both pleasant in themselves and pleasant to one another: for every kind of character takes delight in the acts that are proper to it and those that resemble these; but the acts of good men are the same or similar. This kind of friendship, then, is lasting, as we might expect, since it unites in itself all the conditions of true friendship. For every friendship has for its motive some good or some pleasure (whether it be such in itself or relatively to the person who loves), and is founded upon some similarity: but in this case all the requisite characteristics belong to the friends in their own nature; for here there is similarity and the rest. He enunciated further that what is good in itself and pleasant in itself are the most lovable things: and so it is between persons of this sort that the truest and best love and friendship is found among good people. This kind of friendship according to Aristotle is uncommon and very rare to find such people. Such a friendship, requires above all, long and familiar interaction. For, as the proverb says, 'it is impossible for people to know one another till they have consumed the requisite quantity of salt together. Nor can they accept one another as friends, or be friends, till each show and approve himself to the other as worthy to be loved' (Nicomachean Ethics Bk VIII, 182)

Those who quickly come to treat one another like friends may wish to be friends, but are not really friends, unless they not only are lovable, but know each other to be so; a wish to be friends may be of rapid growth, but not friendship. This kind of friendship, then, is complete in respect of duration and in all other points, and that which each gets from the other is in all respects identical or similar, as should be the case with friends.

According to Aristotle, friendship of the good is perfect, whole and complete as it has the element of all the elements of the other two types of friendships earlier mentioned embedded in it. He made the point clearer with this analysis:

The friendship of which pleasure is the motive bears some resemblance to the foregoing; for good men, too, are pleasant to each other. So also does that of which the useful is the motive; for good men are useful also to one another. And in these cases, too, the friendship is most likely to endure when that which each gets from the other is the same (e.g. pleasure), For the source of pleasure in the latter case is not the same for both: the lover delights to

look upon his beloved, the beloved likes to have attentions paid him; but when the bloom of youth is gone, the friendship sometimes vanishes also; for the one misses the beauty that used to please him, the other misses the attentions. But, on the other hand, they frequently continue friends, i.e. when their intercourse has brought them to care for each other's characters, and they are similar in character (Nicomachean Ethics, Bk VIII, 181).

The friendship of good men, again, is the only one that can defy defamation; for people are not ready to accept the testimony of anyone else against him whom themselves have tested. Such friendship also implies mutual trust, and the certainty that neither would ever wrong the other, and all else that is implied in true friendship; while in other friendships there is no such security. For since men also apply the term friends to those who love one another for profit's sake, as happens with states (for expediency is thought to be the ground on which states make alliances), and also to those who love one another for pleasure's sake, as children do, perhaps we too ought to apply the name to such people, and to speak of several kinds of friendship—firstly, in the primary and strict sense of the word, the friendship of good men as such; secondly, the other kinds that are so called because of a resemblance to this: for these other people are called friends in so far as their relation involves some element of good, which constitutes a resemblance; for the pleasant, too, is good to those who love pleasant things. But these two latter kinds are not apt to coincide, nor do the same people become friends for the sake both of profit and pleasure; for such accidental properties are not apt to be combined in one subject.

Aristotle places friendship of the good on a high pedestal and sees it to be a prototype of what true friendship ought to be. In his own words, he said thus:

The truest friendship, then, is that which exists between good men, as we have said again and again. For that, it seems, is lovable and desirable which is good or pleasant in itself, but to each man that which is good or pleasant to him; and the friendship of good men for one another rests on both these grounds. But it seems that while love is a feeling, friendship is a habit or trained faculty. For inanimate things can equally well be the object of love, but the love of friends for one another implies purpose, and purpose proceeds from a habit or trained faculty. And in wishing well for their sakes to those they love, they are swayed not by feeling, but by habit. Again, in loving a friend they love what is good for them; for he who gains a good man for his friend gains something that is good for him. Each then loves what is good for himself, and what he gives in good wishes and pleasure is equal to what he gets;

for love and equality, which are joined in the popular axiom are found in the highest degree in the friendship of good men (Nicomachean Ethics 181)

4.0 ARISTOTLE NOTION OF FRIENDSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Given the widening gap of economic inequality existing between the first world and third world countries, the possibility of establishing a reciprocal relationship becomes increasingly impracticable. The widening gap has made the developed countries more developed as they churn out economic policies that will suffocate the under-developed countries as they keep descending down the slippery slope of under-development. Aristotle attempted to proffer solution to this seemingly insurmountable anomaly in his Nicomachean Ethics Book VIII by suggesting that since the inferior partner in an unequal friendship can never make an equal return for the favors received, the inferior reciprocates by loving more than he is loved and in proportion to the superiority of his friend. Loving here in this context does not mean actively doing well by the superior friend since if the inferior could do that, he wouldn't be inferior. Rather, what Aristotle mean is that the inferior feels greater affection and expresses that affection in open admiration or honor of the superior. This is interpreted to mean that, despite what people may think and what Aristotle himself initially suggests, greater affection cannot equalize permanently unequal friendships, such as between father and child, husband and wife (according to Aristotle) and a virtuous political leader and his fellow citizens (Nicomachean, VIII 179).

However, friendship of the good is in some respect an activity of self-realization rather than in the return of love and honor one receives. Aristotle emphasizes the reciprocation and balancing of an unequal friendship between superior and the minor thus "equal friends must be equal in loving and in other respects, as their equality requires, but unequal must repay in proportion to the superiorities involved" (Nicomachean Ethics Book VIII 7-8). Aristotle calls the great-souled man – whose virtue is to demand honor as an appropriate return for his moral greatness – an "ornament" of virtue. In the context of strengthening the bond of international relation and diplomacy, the widening gap of unequal relationship between nations, can only be closed when nations pay undivided loyalty and allegiance to the countries they are friends to though unequal. Furthermore, Since Aristotle sees friendship as a mutual understanding between two or more persons, who are aware and active in the business of caring, loving and wishing each other well. For friendship to worth its salt, it must be between people who have good intention for one another and are ever ready to bare it all for the wellbeing of their friends. This implies that all parties have a role to play in friendship. No one is too inadequate as not to have something to offer and no one is too self-sufficient as not to expect love and affection from the other (182).

Uduigwomen asserts that "although the world has never known peace, peace has always

been one of humanity's highest good and is ready to pay any price for it. For such people, the most advantageous peace is better than the most just war” (228). The fruit of friendship is peace. Peace, being an opposite of dissension, violence and war serves as an antidote which heals the venomous wounds of hatred and hostility, sorrows and discords, tears and heart breaks among all those who cling to it whenever forgiveness and reconciliation seem eluding.

To the Greeks, friendship brought with it the reciprocal obligation to help one's friends and to hurt one's enemies (Baltzly & Eliopoulos, 28–30). This conception of friendship seems to still be in vogue in the contemporary understanding of international relation where countries join forces with countries they have strong alliance with to fight their enemies. This can be glaringly observed in the involvement of some countries in keeping aglow the catastrophic inferno of acrimony during international conflict by supporting their ally countries with fire arms, war emissaries and financial support to 'crush' their enemies. International conflicts become more devastating and bloody thereby leading to more destruction of lives and properties when ally countries of two conflicting parties interfere.

Van Hoef and Andrea Oelsner remark that the field of international friendship has been advanced through several debates at national and international conference panels, which have often resulted in collective research projects and outputs (117). Schwarzenbach corroborated Aristotle's position that *Virtue-friendship is indeed* the highest form of friendship. Here, the 'other's whole character is loved (253), rather than one particular aspect of it. This friendship is based on a mutual recognition of *good* character: the friends strive towards a common good, and in doing this together they strengthen each other. Although reciprocal, virtue friendship is not egoistic; it is based upon good character, rather than pleasure. Virtue-friends have an obligation to help each other strive towards the good and to correct each other when they make mistakes. In its reciprocity, virtue-friendship is altruistic. The friends love each other's qualities, not just the advantage or pleasure they find in the other, and the friendship ends when one of them no longer pursues the good, because then they no longer share the same purpose of spreading goodness. The only friendship that will help to sustain and strengthen the bond of international relationship between nations is the friendship of the good. When international friendship is based on the good, countries work together with concerted effort towards the common good of the international community as whole.

Sasley is of the view that by approaching friendship as an affective emotional bond between actors, friendship offers a more sophisticated alternative to traditional realist notions of self-interest States can also employ emotions as a diplomatic strategy to achieve concrete results (Hall, 2015), which can even include political self-sacrifice (693) has demonstrated that 'affective attachments...order priorities for leaders'. The challenge of studying emotions lies in the fact that scholars use the concepts of affection, emotions, and feeling, interchangeably and do not agree on the conceptualizations of these definitions. Toeing Sasley's line of thought, a study of friendship concentrates on

the positive feeling political actors hold for each other, and the extent to which this positive valence influences their policies. This allows us to include several further aspects when studying emotions, which aligns with Jonathan Mercer's line of thought who proposed to treat emotions and feelings as identical (516). Van Hoef and Andrea Oelsnerview friendship as a form of positive peace. According to them, studying friendship in the international arena addresses the loophole of research on positive peace. In the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Peace Research* (JPR) editor and founder Johan Galtung (2) defined the two central concepts of Peace Research, negative peace and positive peace, as 'the absence of violence, absence of war' and 'the integration of human society' respectively (120).

5.0 CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, we must have to remark that building and establishing a robust and meaningful international relation based on Aristotle's virtue friendship in other words called friendship based on the good is a sine qua non towards achieving the long anticipated international peace. However, bureaucracy and unhealthy economic policies can hamper international peace. When the policies of one country lead to injustice and domination in another, a certain degree of bitterness can arise that will hamper the relationship existing between nations. This in the long run can be a clog on the wheel of progress.

For all the nations to benefit from the dividends of globalization, this paper is proposing a multilateral relationship as against the bilateral or unilateral relationship that have been the order of the day in building diplomatic relationship between nations. Applying Aristotle's friendship based on the good, nations are advised to cement and solidify their relations by having good intention for one another and not base their intention on profitable grounds or pleasure. In this vein, the prevailing economic policies should be based on altruism and not on egoism where nations are often times tempted to use other nations as a means towards achieving their economic end. When friendship is based on the good, it will help to strengthen international relation and it will go a long way to linking all of humanity irrespective of nationality or race in an inextricable string of mutuality.

Bilateral relationship between nations will bring about divisiveness, bifurcation, and disunity in the international community. Whereas multilateral relationship based on Aristotle's friendship of the good will strengthen international relations and bring all nations into a more coercive, concrete and coherent whole. Just as the saying goes, a friend in need is a friend in deed, nations that are economically buoyant enough are morally obliged to lend a helping hand to needy nations without any string attach. This divide and rule policy engendered by a bilateral diplomatic relation can only be corrected by establishing a benevolent and virtue based multilateral relationship between nations. In a multilateral relationship, an injury to one is an injury to all. Thus, in this context, every nation has a role to play in fostering international peace and economic stability. In this vein, the barbaric tradition of supporting ally countries with war materials during international conflict should be condemned and the United Nations should enact a law that will incriminate such an act and any country found guilty of this should be made to bear the brunt of the international law sanctions and be charged with war crimes or crimes against humanity. Finally, the world

will experience an Eldorado and a serene atmosphere of equanimity if nations apply Aristotle friendship based on the good for the common good of the human community.

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