Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Madhavi Seth   April 17th 2012

Exploring Friendship, Past and Present: The Compatibility of Aristotelian
Friendships and Friendships on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

by

Madhavi Seth

Dr. Ann Hartle
Adviser

Department of Philosophy

Dr. Laura Braden

Committee Member

Dr. Marta Jimenez

Committee Member

2012

Exploring Friendship, Past and Present: The Compatibility of Aristotelian
Friendships and Friendships on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

By

Madhavi Seth

Dr. Ann Hartle

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Philosophy

2012

Abstract

<u>Exploring Friendship, Past and Present: The Compatibility of Aristotelian Friendships
and Friendships on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)</u>
By Madhavi Seth

As they have grown and taken on varied forms within the past decade, Social
Networking Sites (SNSs) have become a significant part of an increasingly
technologically advancing world, reflected primarily by their popularity and frequent
usage, as well as appearance as discussion topics within the news and scholarship.
Several news sources highlight the positive and negative attributes of the usage and
prevalence of sites like Facebook and Google Plus (G+). Though there is scholarship
within the social sciences on this topic, the impact of SNSs on contemporary definitions
of friendship has remained an unexplored topic within philosophic literature. Shannon
Vallor (2011), however, is one of a handful of scholars in the field who has recently taken
up the question of new social media and its relationship to classical Aristotelian notions
of friendship. Vallor's article, titled "Flourishing on Facebook: Virtue Friendship and
New Social Media," highlights that there is a need for philosophical inquiry into the
subject of SNSs and friendship, as these technological innovations have implications for
the concept of not only contemporary friendship but human "flourishing" (Vallor, 2011,
p 1).

This thesis seeks not only to expand on Vallor's argument that Aristotelian
friendships of utility and pleasure are cultivated through SNSs, such as Facebook and
G+, but to argue against her claim regarding the cultivation of Aristotelian virtue
friendships through SNSs. Particularly, I will argue that, although SNSs do serve to
cultivate and promote Aristotelian friendships of utility and pleasure, they do not suffice
in facilitating those of character. This is because SNSs are inadequate forums for such
friendships as they do not serve in providing the appropriate knowledge associated with
the character and moral aptitude of their users.

Exploring Friendship, Past and Present: The Compatibility of Aristotelian
Friendships and Friendships on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

By

Madhavi Seth

Dr. Ann Hartle

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Philosophy

2012

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

Since its advent in the mid-1990s, the World Wide Web has served as an innovative platform for connecting people who are oceans apart from one another, and is claimed to have delivered on its promise of providing a means of faster, cheaper, and more direct communication between individuals. Notably, avenues such as electronic mail (Email), Instant Messaging (IM), and Social Networking Sites (SNS) have served as novel online developments for facilitating instant human interfacing. In providing a medium for individuals to connect with one another in a way that does not entail the sharing of each other's physical presence, SNSs, in particular, have come to have a significant impact within the contemporary social lives of human beings worldwide, and not only influence the process by which individuals interface and communicate, but the way in which human beings establish, revitalize, and maintain their relationships with one another.

As they have grown and taken on newer and varied forms within the past decade, SNSs have become a significant part of an increasingly technologically advancing world, reflected primarily by their popularity and frequent usage, as well as appearance as discussion topics within the news. Several news sources highlight the positive and negative attributes of the usage and prevalence of sites like Facebook and Google Plus (G+). One BBC News Article in particular, titled "Google+ and the Friends v. Acquaintances debate," addresses how Facebook and G+ provide features which enable users to sort, label, and categorize their Friends[1] into different groups. Such an article

---

[1] To differentiate the articulated list of Friends on Social Networking Sites (SNSs) from the colloquial term "friends," we capitalize the former.

leads one to consider broader questions concerning the way in which SNS users perceive and value the relationships they form and maintain online (De Castella, 2011). Thus, news stories regarding SNSs, such as Facebook and Google Plus (G+), reflect the rise of concerns surrounding the effect of these sites on individual perceptions of identity and definitions of friendship.

Along with being featured in the news media, SNSs have garnered attention within academia, as studies within the fields of psychology, anthropology and sociology have sought to explore the impact and influence of such sites on individual personalities and human lifestyles. However, the majority of research connected with the subject of online socializing through SNSs has focused on tracking patterns of online activity rather than on exploring questions pertaining to its effect on human relationships and friendships. Additionally, the studies that touch on the effects of SNSs are divided and limited in their scope: while a handful of studies claim that SNSs prove advantageous and assist individuals in maintaining their relationships, most of the of literature provides commentary on tangential issues of privacy and how computer mediated communication is smudging the lines between individuals' public and private lives. Thus, most of the literature within the social sciences neither directly treats the question of SNSs' effects on current perceptions and definitions of friendship, nor addresses Facebook and G+'s problematic use of the term "friendship" to define the type of engagement that individuals have online. Nevertheless, the evidence of some social science scholarship and analysis of the consequences of online socializing indicates that SNSs have a degree of influence on ideals concerning human behavior and values, both of which have relevance within the field of philosophy.

Like scholarship within the social sciences, the impact of SNSs on contemporary definitions of friendship has remained an unexplored topic within philosophic literature. Shannon Vallor (2011), however, is one of a handful of scholars in the field who has recently taken up the question of new social media and its relationship to classical Aristotelian notions of friendship. Vallor's article, titled "Flourishing on Facebook: Virtue Friendship and New Social Media," highlights that there is a need for philosophical inquiry into the subject of SNSs and friendship, as these technological innovations have implications for the concept of not only contemporary friendship but human "flourishing" (Vallor, 2011, p 1). Particularly, Vallor's study stresses the fundamentally normative question regarding whether social networking sites can facilitate Aristotelian friendships of utility, pleasure, and virtue, as well as long-term human happiness. Vallor arrives at the conclusion that social networking sites can strengthen and support all three types of friendship, including friendships of virtue[2], and thus facilitate the good life for human beings. This is apparent when she claims that social media, particularly Facebook, promotes the set of values associated with all three friendship types. More importantly for our purposes, Vallor stresses that, by enabling reciprocal and continuous exchanges of information, amusement, encouragement and empathy with a lower opportunity-cost than face-to-face exchanges, and in principle, helping users explore one another's most fundamental "values, beliefs, hopes and commitments," SNSs can extend the lifespan of friendships, and hence promote Aristotelian virtue friendships (Vallor, 2011, p. 12).

---

[2] With regard to terminology within this discourse, I shall use the terms "friendship of virtue," "virtue friendship", "friendship of character", and "true friendship" interchangeably to refer to the third type of Aristotelian friendship.

Although it serves as a starting point for raising the question of the overlap between SNS and Aristotelian definitions of friendship, Vallor's study is limited since it draws conclusions by looking only at Facebook. Moreover, since it does not provide an account of the role of love and virtue within both Aristotelian and SNS friendships, Vallor's conclusion that SNSs promote long-term virtue friendships is incomplete.

This thesis seeks not only to expand on Vallor's argument that Aristotelian friendships of utility and pleasure are cultivated through SNSs, such as Facebook and G+, but to argue against her claim regarding the cultivation of Aristotelian virtue friendships through SNSs. Particularly, I will argue that, although SNSs do serve to cultivate and promote Aristotelian friendships of utility and pleasure, they do not suffice in facilitating those of character. This is because SNSs are inadequate forums for such friendships as they do not serve in providing the appropriate knowledge associated with the character and moral aptitude of their users.

In order to support the claim that SNSs facilitate all but Aristotelian friendships of virtue, this honors thesis will do a comparative analysis of Aristotelian friendship types to those of SNSs. Chapter I will define the values associated with Aristotle's classical view of friendship, as outlined in Books VIII and IX of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Since Chapter I is not intended to serve as an exhaustive account of Aristotle's view of friendship, it will highlight general characteristics of Aristotelian friendships, as well as compare and contrast the degrees of love, virtue, and shared activity within the three types of friendship. I will argue that there are higher degrees of love, virtue, and shared activity within the friends of an Aristotelian virtue friendship. Chapter II will focus on characterizing the effect regarding the history, technical features, and purpose of SNSs,

notably Facebook and G+[3]. I will further outline the effects of Facebook and G+ as enablers of effortless networking and creators of a digital community between their users, as well as provide a working definition of SNS Friendships as superficial and hedonistic interactions which function within the realm of an anarchic online community. Finally, Chapter III will serve as the culmination of the first two Chapters, and present points of compatibility and incompatibility between Aristotelian and SNS definitions of friendship. Particularly, in this Chapter, I shall argue that, given that they do not provide an appropriate setting for the practice of, and hence the knowledge about, the virtue of their users, SNSs do not enable the cultivation of Aristotelian friendships of character. Lastly, this thesis will conclude by highlighting the relevance of the subject of SNSs for further research on friendship within philosophy, and discuss how it is necessary to pursue such inquiry further in order to understand the effects and ramifications of SNSs on society's understanding and valuation of friendships. As Vallor (2011) suggests towards the end of her essay, inquiry into the virtue of virtual friendships raises broader ethical questions and has global implications since it indicates the advantages and disadvantages of SNSs on friendships (p. 14). An important upshot of my study will be the realization that, in causing individuals to change both the way in which they interact with one another and their own perception of the activities associated with friendship, SNSs show potential for leading society away from the classic Aristotelian ideals of true friendship.

---

[3] Facebook and G+ were chosen as the SNSs for study since statistics, mentioned in Chapter II, show that these sites are most frequented for keeping up with personal and professional associates today. They are the most popular and commonly used SNSs today.

I. Love, Virtue, and Shared Activity within Virtue Friendships

In this chapter, I seek to explore the elements of Aristotelian friendships, notably those of virtue. I will argue that, amongst the elements which entail virtue friendships, the attributes of a higher degree of love for the friend as another self, of virtue, and of shared activity are the central ones to the friendships of character. These attributes distinguish virtue friendships from the other types that Aristotle discusses within Books VIII and IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, namely those of utility and of pleasure.

To gain an understanding of the significance of these three attributes in friendships of character, I will first outline the common characteristics that Aristotle assigns to all friendships, notably those of unanimity, goodwill, and love, and show that virtue friendships have a significantly higher degree of love, virtue, and shared activity, as compared to the friendships of utility and pleasure. With regard to love and virtue, I shall discuss Aristotle's claim that the true friend loves a friend for his own sake and chooses virtuous actions for their own sake. Next, I shall consider both the parallel that Aristotle draws between these notions, as well as scholarship from Richard Kraut (1976) and Jennifer Whiting (2002), to evaluate the accuracy of the claim that "choosing virtuous actions for their own sake" is analogous to "loving a friend for his own sake." Lastly, I shall evaluate the role of shared activity within Aristotelian friendships and characterize action, notably seeing a person in action, as a way of acquiring the kind of knowledge about an agent's moral character, that is relevant and necessary for the development of virtue friendships. Through discussing how these factors within the friendships of utility and pleasure compare with those within character friendships, I will show that there is a distinguishingly higher degree of love, of virtue, and of time

devoted to virtuous activity and engagement between the friends of character than between other friend types.

Books VIII and IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics* serve as a culmination of Aristotle's discussion regarding the influence of choosing a life of virtue on the achievement of individual happiness, or *eudaimonia.* Aristotle's discourse transitions, from the end of Book VII, to the idea of friendship, which he claims entails an excellence that is "most necessary for living" (NE 1155a3-4). Within the context of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII follows "naturally" from Book VII's discussion of pleasure, pain, continence and incontinence, and thus focuses on addressing these issues within the context of friendship (NE 1154b32-1155a3). According to Michael Pakaluk (1998), Book VIII justifies the "inclusion of a rather lengthy discussion of friendship within Aristotle's [holistic] account of ethics" and is analogous to passages which define *eudaimonia* as "'activity of the soul in accordance with virtue in a complete life'" (Pakaluk, 1998, p. 45). The link between friendship and ethics is established and apparent, as friendship serves as the underlying "directing principle" of not only Books VIII and IX, but of the *Ethics* as a whole (Pakaluk, 1998, p. 45).

A. **What makes an Aristotelian friend? Unanimity, Goodwill, and Love as Characteristics of Aristotelian Friendships**

In order to discuss how a higher degree of love, virtue, and shared activity is characteristic of virtue friendships, it is necessary to first outline the characteristics that Aristotle deems as essential to all friendships. According to Paul Schollmeier (1994), the five traits that are key indicators of a friend include: one who 1) wishes and does what is good (or apparently good) for the sake of his friend; 2) wishes his friend to exist and live,

for his own sake; 3) lives with his friend; 4) chooses the same things as his friend, and; 5) grieves and rejoices with his friend (p. 55). Aristotle emphasizes that possessing friends is not only noble, but necessary, since it enables people to be beneficent, to guard and preserve prosperity, and to find refuge in times of misfortune and poverty (NE 1155a5-11). On a fundamental level, then, friendship is essential for agents who seek to attain and engage in some degree of generosity, prosperity, and security.

i. Unanimity

Moreover, Aristotle discusses the importance of friends' possessing a common motive since he attributes unanimity, not merely of opinions, but of mindsets, to agents who are friends. Notably:

> "Unanimity also seems to be of a friendly relation. For this reason it is not identity of opinion; for that might occur even with people who do not know each other; nor do we say that people who have the same views on any and every subject are unanimous...but we do say that a city is unanimous when [people] have the same opinion about what is to their interest, and choose the same actions, and do what they have resolved in common" (NE 1167a22-28)

Here, although Aristotle refers to unanimity in terms of political friendships, this concept applies to personal friendships, since they, akin to political friendships, have bearing on "things that are to our interest and have an influence on our life" (NE 1167b3-4). Such unanimity is distinctly found among Aristotelian good people, who are "unanimous both in themselves and with one another," are "of one mind," and form bonds over a common and constant wish for "what is just and advantageous" (NE 1167b5-8). Bad people, however, cannot be unanimous, and hence cannot be friends,

since they aim at getting more than their share of advantages and are "unwilling to do what is just" (NE 1167b9-15). Consequently, it becomes necessary for friends to share the same goal for the friendship in order for the association to be labeled as such. It is clear, then, that people who are good can aspire to become friends, as they are active in sharing and pursuing a particular and common end.

ii. Goodwill

Goodwill is further mentioned as a "friendly" relation associated with the beginning of a friendship, but is not defined as identical to friendship or as a friendly feeling, since the latter connotes intensity and intimacy (NE 1166b30-35). However, goodwill is a more fleeting and superficial sentiment than friendship, since agents possessing goodwill express good feelings towards, but are not motivated to act with or for, friends in particular situations (NE 1167a2). Aristotle highlights that, in order to be friends, the friends must be recognized and acknowledged as "bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other" (NE 1156b3-5). He claims:

> "But to those who thus wish good we ascribe only goodwill, if the wish is not reciprocated; goodwill when it is reciprocal being friendship. Or must we add 'when it is recognized'? For many people have goodwill to those whom they have seen but judge to be good or useful...These people seem to bear goodwill to each other; but how can one call them friends when they do not know their mutual feelings? To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other..." (NE 1155b32-1156a4)

Hence, Aristotle highlights the necessity of reciprocal, recognized, and mutual goodwill between agents in order for them to be labeled as "friends" of any type.

iii. Love

The notion of love as a characteristic of all Aristotelian friendships arises as Aristotle defines friendship in terms of the three grounds by which people love, namely (1) that having love for a lifeless object "cannot be called friendship because there is no mutual love;" (2) that love for a friend necessitates "wish[ing] what is good for his sake;" and (3) that love for those who wish good is not friendship, but merely "goodwill if the wish is not reciprocated" (NE 1155b27-34). In these terms, the love of lifeless objects cannot be labeled as 'friendship' since there is no exchange of mutual goodwill between the lover and the loved.

Additionally, the degree of unanimity, goodwill, and love between the friends depends paradigmatically on the good person's relation to himself, since "his friend is another self" (NE 1166a30-32). Depending on the extent to which the friend identifies his friend as "another self," there may be a higher degree of unanimity, goodwill, and love in the friendship since there is a higher recognition of a shared identity between the friends, where each views and sees part of himself or his personality within the other. Although the meaning of the expression is controversial, it can be agreed at least that Aristotelian friendships are determined by and extend to the way in which the friend relates to himself, and sees his friend

B. The Role of Love within Aristotelian Friendships

As noted in Section A, love is a significant component and determinant of all Aristotelian friendship types. Particularly, the three types of friendship—of utility, of pleasure, and of virtue—are different from one another in quality and are equal in number to the "things that are lovable." Although with each friendship type, "there is a

mutual and recognized love," it is the particular quality of the love which ultimately depends on the motivations of the agents and distinguishes one friendship type from another (, NE 1156a7-9). The motivations of the agents determine whether the friends are "loved for themselves" and whether the friendship pursued is that of character, of pleasure, or of utility.

In his discussion of love in *NE* VIII.2, Aristotle makes three claims about what is considered lovable, which have bearing on determining a particular friendship type. He claims:

> "For it seems that not everything is loved, but only what is lovable, and this is either good, pleasant, or useful. But it would seem that that is useful through which something good or a pleasure comes about; consequently, what is good and what is pleasant would be lovable as ends. Is it, then, what is good that people love, or what is good for them? For sometimes these are at odds; and the same goes for what is pleasant. It seems that each loves what is good for him, and that, although without qualification what is good is lovable, (what is lovable) to each is what is (good) for each" (NE 1155b18-25).

Here, Aristotle claims (1) that what is lovable must be good, pleasant, or useful; (2) that what is useful is that through which some good or pleasure comes about; and (3) that each person loves what is good for himself (Pakaluk, 1998, p.55). The labels of "*good, useful, and pleasant,* are meant to be the highest genera of features to be appealed to in providing an account of a person's love" (Pakaluk, 1998, p.55). What is considered lovable by the agents within a friendship hence determines their respective motivations for pursuing a friendship, and sets the premises for whether the friendship is one of utility, pleasure, or virtue.

i. Love in Virtue Friendship: "Loving the Friend for His Own Sake"

In discussing love within friendships, Aristotle claims that the agents' own nature and "state" determines the degree of love and whether the friendship is that of character, of utility, or of pleasure:

> "...if love were a passion, friendship a state, for love may be felt just as much towards lifeless things, but mutual love involves love and choice springs from a state; and [people] wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result/ of passion but as a result of the state. And in loving a friend, [people] love what is good for themselves; for the good [person] in becoming a friend becomes a good to his friend. Each then, both loves what is good for himself, and makes an equal return in goodwill and in pleasantness, for friendship is said to be equality, and both of these are found most in the friendship of the good" (NE 1157b25-1158a2).

Thus, with regard to virtue friendships, Aristotle refers to how the friends make a deliberate choice and judgment to love their friends, and emphasizes that the friends love each other for a particular reason or end. The love between friends of character, additionally, is defined as not being "of passion" but as a result of the "state" or disposition of both friends. This indicates that the character and nature of the friends themselves determines the degree of love within the friendship, since this will govern the friends' motivations and vision for the friendship, as well as their behavior and the degree that they treat each other as equals. Particularly, it will determine whether the love is genuine and reciprocated "equally" between the friends.

Furthermore, in distinguishing virtue friends from those of utility and character, with regard to love, Aristotle highlights differences between, the "object of love" in the three types of friendship (NE 1155b17). Such an "object of love" may be understood as

the primary motivator for the pursuit of the friendship. Within the (superficial) friendships of pleasure and utility, the "object[s] of love" include the external results and goods that the agents gain from each other during the friendship, for example, the material and social capital[4] from a politically useful partnership, or the laughter derived from the witty banter within a friendship of pleasure. Thus, although friends of pleasure and utility can be loved, to a certain extent, *for* themselves, they are not loved *in* themselves, as they have been befriended for "some peripheral [or] nonessential property that they happen to possess" (Stern-Gillet, 1995, p.39). The virtue friendship, however, has a less superficial "object of love," since this friendship occurs between individuals who are "good, and alike in excellence" and see each other as ends in themselves (NE 1156b8-10). The "object" of love for the true friends would be each other's characters, and the virtue friends would love each other fully for their own sakes.

What is considered lovable or as the "object of love," determined by the "state" or disposition of the friends, is hence important in classifying the nature of the agents, and governs the type of actions undertaken by the agents. The lovable object in a particular friendship serves to characterize the degree of virtue possessed by each and between the friends. It is love which Aristotle suggests is the excellence associated with friendships of virtue:

> "Since friendship depends more on loving, and it is those who love their friends
>
> that are praised, loving seems to be the characteristic excellence of friends, so

---

[4] Social capital, according to Ellison et al., broadly refers to "the resources accumulated through the relationships among people. For individuals, social capital allows a person to draw on resources from other members of the networks to which he or she belongs. These resources can take the form of useful information, personal relationships, or the capacity to organize groups" (Ellison et al., 2007, p. 1145-46).

that it is only those in whom this is found in due measure that are lasting friends,

and only their friendship that endures" (NE 1159a32-1159b1)

It is apparent that love, notably reciprocal love, is one of the key excellences associated

with virtue friendships, and serves as an indicator for their longevity and viability.

C. The Role of Virtue within Aristotelian Friendships

Along with love, virtue and the way in which it is chosen and cultivated is significant to

the agents within Aristotelian friendships. Aristotle defines virtue as "a certain

completion" in the *Physics,* when he claims that:

"...the virtue is a certain completion...for each thing is said to be complete when it

takes on its virtue—for then, it is most in accord with its own nature--- just as a

circle is complete when it has most of all become a circle and when it is best, and

a vice is a spoiling or a departing from this" (Weinman, 2007, p.21).

Here, virtue is described as not only a certain "completion," but as a state where

something is in "accordance with its nature." Moreover, an agent's virtuous disposition

is acquired through habit and nature, as Aristotle notes that "...virtuous character comes

into being as a consequence of habit, on account of which it even gets the name by a

small inflection from habit" (NE 110317-18). Nature, particularly an individual's

knowledge of self and soul, influences his sense of pleasure and pain and becomes an

additional determinant of whether the individual's character is "set on the right path"

(Weinman, 2007, p.74). As Aristotle claims:

"the whole concern both of virtue and of politics is about pleasure and pains,

since one who deals with these well will be good, and one who does so badly will

be bad" (NE 1105a11-13).

Here, the virtuous agent is cultivated, from his childhood, to be engaged in the practice and process of being good, and taking pleasure in the right sorts of actions (Weinman, 2007, p.74). In relation to our topic, this nature further determines the type of actions that the virtuous agent undertakes within friendships, and suggests that an agent possessing virtue would have to be consistent in thought and action, by virtue of being "in accordance with [his] nature."

i.   *Happiness and Self-Sufficiency*

Aristotle's discussion of virtue, as well as love and friendship, is further linked to his overarching claim that such values lead an agent towards acquiring *eudaimonia*. As the "chief good," happiness is characterized as something "evidently complete," "the end of all action," and "self-sufficient" (NE 1097b20-21). Aristotle describes the concept of self-sufficiency as that which, when isolated, "makes life desirable and lacking in nothing" as well as "the most desirable of all things." (NE 1097b15-17). Self-sufficiency, according to Suzanne Stern-Gillet (1995), applies not only to *eudaimonia* as the chief good, but has serious implications for friendship (p.127). The virtuous agent is deemed to possess a degree of self-sufficiency and "completeness" of their own accord. Additionally, though happiness is chosen "always for itself and never for the sake of something else" (NE 1097b6-7), virtue, along with the other excellences of "honour, pleasure, reason," is chosen not only for its own sake, but for the sake of happiness (NE 1097b2). Like virtue and virtuous actions, friendships of virtue, as outlined in Section B, are chosen for themselves and for the sake of the chief good of happiness.

ii. *Virtue in Virtue Friendship: "Choosing Virtuous Actions for Their Own Sake"*

It is evident that, unlike those of utility and pleasure, virtue friendships are unique since they are based on a degree of shared virtue between the agents. To summarize, friendships of utility are for the more commercially minded and those who seek some instrumental good, while pleasure friendships occur between those who seek seemingly pleasant goods, such as humor and wit. Virtue friendships, however, are based on a sense of shared knowledge of the excellence of the self and of the "other self" within the friendship. Particularly, virtue friendships:

> "...happen between people who are good and alike in excellence, because these wish well alike to each other qua good and they are good in themselves" (NE 1156b9).

Here, Aristotle stresses that the virtue friends are good and alike in excellence, are good in themselves, and possess some sort of inherent merit and virtue that goes beyond just being useful or pleasant to one other. Additionally, Aristotelian friendships of character are based on a "resemblance" of goodness between the friends, which Aristotle highlights when he claims that "all the[se] qualities...belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves" (NE 1156b13; NE 1156b22-23).

According to Paul Schollmeier, moreover, it is not necessary to be perfectly good or virtuous in order to have the friendship of character, which makes "good friendship...more common that one might have thought" (Schollmeier, 1994, p.73). However, it is important to recognize and be motivated by not only intent, but by the choice, to see and treat the friend as "another self." This is highlighted when Schollmeier (1994) claims that

"we thus see...and maintain good personal friendships because we find the happiness of other people to be choiceworthy" (p.73).

This concept of choice, then, applies to not only the virtuous agent-- who chooses virtuous actions for the sake of being good-- but to the virtuous friend who chooses to love and treat the friend as another self for the sake of the goodness, and viability, of the friendship.

iii. Virtue and Love in Virtue Friendships: Choosing Virtuous Actions for Their Own Sake as Analogous to Loving a Friend for His Own Sake

Within virtue friendships, the more virtuous the agents, the stronger and longer their relationships will be. As highlighted earlier, both sorts of relationships—that between the virtuous agent and the action, and that between one true friend and another-- entail the employment of certain excellences: the excellence of "virtue" for the virtuous agent, and that of "love" for the true friends. There is hence a parallel between the virtuous agents' finding virtue and virtuous deeds "lovable", and the true friends finding their friends lovable and as ends in themselves. The analogy between choosing virtuous actions for their own sake and choosing to love friends for their own sakes supports the notion that both love and virtue are necessary, significant, and distinguishing component of virtue friendships.

In his explanation of the actions of the virtuous person, Kraut (1976) likens "choosing virtuous actions for their own sake" to "loving a friend for his own sake" (p. 237). He arrives at this conclusion in his examination of the passages in *Ethics* II.4, which discusses the characteristics that a good person must have. In short, according to Kraut, Aristotle claims that it is not just the performance of virtuous actions, but the

motive underlying these acts, that is essential in the characterization of the agent as truly virtuous (Kraut, 1976, p.235). Kraut looks more closely at the use of the words *di'auta* ("of themselves") and their equivalents ("*di'hautous, kath'hautous*"), and comes to the conclusion that, just as Aristotle's description "of a true friend's motives rests on an explicit distinction between a person's incidental and inherent properties, so his characterization of a truly virtuous person implicitly presupposes a distinction between the superficial attractions of the moral life and its deep-seated, fixed nature" (Kraut, 1976, 237). Hence, Kraut makes the claim that the virtuous person actively chooses the life of virtue for the goal of pursuing the long-term satisfaction that it entails, rather than for superficial rewards, such as public recognition and honor. In short, Kraut relates the action of choosing virtuous actions for their own sake to the way in which the true friend "loves another [friend] for himself...for his character" (Kraut, 1976, p.236).

Similar to Kraut, Jennifer Whiting grounds her explanation of "choosing a virtuous action for itself on Aristotle's account of loving a virtuous person for himself" (Whiting, 2002, p.274). She claims that "choosing to perform virtuous actions for the sake of engaging in virtuous activity, where such activity consists in performing virtuous actions, is arguably a way of choosing virtuous actions for their own sakes," just as being a true friend to someone else would entail loving the friend for their own sake (Whiting, 2002, p.272). She highlights that the friendship occurring between virtuous people is that of the "true" kind when she claims that "the virtuous agents—and only virtuous agents—love one another for themselves" (Whiting, 2002, p.275). This is because, within Aristotle's account, such people are "of a certain sort" and love each other "insofar as each is just who he is [he(i) estin hoper estin]" (Whiting, 2002, p.275). In the more superficial friendships of utility and pleasure, there is no place for virtue since the

agents "do not love their friends simply for being persons of the relevant[5] sort," but rather of the "sort that coincides with what is useful or pleasant for them" (Whiting, 2002, p.276). Thus, the reasons that friends of utility and pleasure love and loved may be deemed as more superficial than those for which the friends of virtue are loved.

On reflection, the question arises as to the extent to which the analogy that Kraut and Whiting present works, and enhances our understanding of what it means not only to choose virtuous actions for their own sake, but to pursue a friendship of character and love a friend for himself. Both Kraut and Whiting discuss two elements which contribute and are necessary for the happy life—virtuous activity and friendship—and relate the notion of love to virtue and virtuous action. They further apply Aristotle's model of friends who love and treat one another as ends in themselves in order to explain the meaning and significance of choosing virtuous actions for their own sakes. To a degree, the use of such an analogy is appropriate, since there is a strong correlative, and perhaps causative, relationship between the cultivation of love and the cultivation of virtue, since each attribute contributes to and strengthens the other.

Just as friendships (depending on type) can have different motivations and result in either superficial or true friendships, the motivation behind pursuing virtuous actions can change over time, and thus cause a variation in both the perceived and authentic virtue of the agent. For instance, if a virtuous agent were performing a generous action to gain external recognition (such as the Humanitarian award), then neither the action nor the agent may be called *truly* virtuous. This is akin to how friendships of utility and pleasure, since they are pursued for more superficial and external goods rather than for

---

[5] In terms of knowledge of the 'relevant' sort, I am interpreting Whiting to mean knowledge pertaining to the agent's virtuous nature and sense of morality.

the friend "himself," are not true friendships. The friends of utility and pleasure are replaceable—discarded once they have been used—while the character friends are not disposable or replaceable, as they are the objects of love in themselves.

D. The Role of Shared Activity within Aristotelian Friendships

In terms of shared activity, Aristotle claims that, in the case of friendship, it is necessary to not only share reciprocal love and engage in virtuous action, but spend time and pursue activities with friends. This is because engaging in activities, regardless of the type of friendship, is necessary for the association to not be called a mere exchange of goodwill, as per the discussion in Section A. Aristotle claims, moreover, that performing the activities of friendship is an essential component for friendships to be maintained. For instance, although "distance does not break off the friendship absolutely, but only the activity of it," it may nevertheless contribute to deepening the absence of the friend, which may actually "seem to make [individuals] forget their friendship; hence the saying 'out of sight, out of mind'" (NE 1157b10-12).

Thus, in order to have a sustained and active friendship, it is necessary for one to regularly engage with the friend. Aristotle further claims that performing activities as a collective group, with friends, is necessary for friendship, since there is nothing

> "so characteristic of friends as living together (since while it is people who are in need that desire benefits, even those who are blessed desire to spend their days together, for solitude suits such people least of all); but people cannot live together if they are not pleasant and do not enjoy the same things, as who are companions seem to do)" (NE 1157b19-24).

Here, Aristotle is referring to a human need for companionship, as well as the necessity for agents to be pleasant to one another and share in enjoying the same things in order to be called friends. The significance of living together, spending time, and doing activities with the friend becomes more apparent when Aristotle claims that those who merely "approve of each other, but do not live together seem to be well-disposed rather than actual friends," exchanging goodwill rather than genuine love for each other's characters (NE 1157b17-18). The good friend, then, seeks to live with and actually lives with his friend "for he does so with his pleasure, since the memories of his past acts are delightful and his hopes for the future are good, and therefore pleasant" (NE 1166a24-26). In a true friendship, it would not be the case that true friends would leave or end their friendships once their goals have been achieved, since, by nature of their characters, their common motivation for the friendship is not material goods, but rather their own selves and characters.

Moreover, particular activities, entailing primary and secondary[6] happiness, are deemed to constitute particular friendship types. In discussing the types of activities that friends may engage in with one another, Aristotle claims

> "...and that which existence may be for individuals, that for the sake of which they choose to live, in that they wish to spend their lives with their friends. And therefore some drink together, and some dice together. Others join exercise together and hunt together, and others philosophize together. The individuals spend their days together in whatever they are most fond of in life" (Schollmeier, 1994, p. 73).

---

[6] Schollmeier defines primary happiness as acting in accordance with theoretical wisdom, while secondary happiness as acting in accordance with moral virtue and practical wisdom.

Philosophizing together, according to Schollmeier (1994), is an example of primary happiness since it pertains to and entails the agents' acquisition of theoretical wisdom, which Aristotle deems the as "best virtue[7]". Alternatively, exercising, hunting, and drinking together are examples of secondary happiness since they involve the manifestation and use of practical wisdom and, at times, "require courage" (Schollmeier, 1994, p.73). Nevertheless, according to Aristotle, the choice of the friendship-seeking agents is to seek those who, "being pleasant, are good, so they will have all the characteristics that friends should have" (NE 1158a26-28). Choosing to sit and spend time with each other on a frequent basis, and engaging in philosophical discussion, entails that friends are members of a friendship of character since, based on the characteristics of such friendships, the agents are virtuous by their temperament, share reciprocal love, and treat each other as ends in themselves.

i. The Influence of Friends' Love and Virtue on degree of Shared Activity in Aristotelian Friendships

Within all friendships, then, there is a symbiotic relationship between love, virtue, and shared activity, where love and virtue not only contribute to, but are developed by, shared activity between friends. Particularly,

> "Those who live together delight in each other and confer benefits onto each other" (NE 1157b7)

---

[7] In Book X, Aristotle discusses theoretical wisdom as the best virtue in claiming that "If happiness is an activity in accordance with virtue, happiness would be well said to be in accordance with the best virtue. And the best virtue would be that of the best part of us. Whether this part is intuition or some other part that in accordance with nature appears to rule and to lead us and to have thought of things noble and divine, or whether it is the divine itself or the mot divine part in us, complete happiness would be the activity of this part in accordance with its own virtue. That this activity is theoretical wisdom has been said" (NE 1177a11-18).

As a form of shared activity between friends, living together is not only an indicator that friends find each other pleasant (as they "delight in each other") and useful (as they "confer benefits onto each other"), but is a way in which love and virtue are manifested and demonstrated between the friends. However, the attribute of shared activity, although characteristic of all friendships, holds lesser weight in the friendships of utility and pleasure than in the friendships of character. Particularly, this is the case because these friendships differ in terms of their being "equal in number to the things that are lovable, for with respect to each, there is a mutual and recognized love" and the agents "who love each other wish well to each other in that respect in which they love one another" (NE 1156a8-10) Particularly, since the object of love itself is different between each type of friendship, the incentive for and time devoted to the friendship, and hence the subsequent time spent doing activities with the friend, varies between the three friendship types.

To highlight that the degree of love and motivation between the friends defines not just the friendship but the extent to which the agents choose to live with and perform activities together, Aristotle discusses the friendships of utility and pleasure in Book VIII. Particularly, he claims that, within the friendship of utility, such friends

> "...do not live [and engage] much with each other either, because they do not find each other pleasant, therefore they do not need such companionship unless they are useful to each other, for they are pleasant to each other only insofar are they arouse in each hopes of something good to come" (NE 1156a27-30).

As he highlights how the friends of utility "do not love each other for themselves, but in virtue of some good which they get from each other," it would be evident that once the good in question is acquired by both friends, the incentive to continue pursuing

anything further and continue performing activities with that friend would diminish (NE 1156a9-12). For instance, in the case of the relationship between host and guest, once the guest has been indulged and given shelter by the host, and the host has had the pleasure of the guest's company, the friendship is virtually at an end since it has served its purpose (NE 1156a30-31). Since this is a friendship of utility, "those who are friends for the sake of utility part when the advantage is at an end, for they were lovers not of each other, but of profit" (NE 1157a16). Thus, there is little need for further engagement, unless the opportunity or need to do so presents itself in the future.

Similarly, in the friendships of pleasure, the agents place emphasis on spending time and doing numerous activities together for the sake of the friendship, since it is through such engagement that they "attain the purpose of their friendship" (NE 1156b5). Such activities may take the form of playing cards together, enjoying witty conversation, or indulging in good cuisine together. Although "such friends of pleasure do wish to spend their days and lives together," they are unable to live up to this responsibility as they are governed by their passions, which lead them to "quickly become friends and quickly cease to be so" (NE 1156b4-5). Particularly with regard to young people, the greater part of the love involved in their friendship of pleasure "depends on emotion and aims at pleasure; this is why they fall in love and quickly fall out of love, changing often within a single day" (NE 1156b2-4). With such volatility, the friendship of pleasure deteriorates as the friends get older and "their pleasures become different and their friendship changes with the object [of love] that is found pleasant" (NE 1156b1).

Doing activities and spending time with the friends is not as significant for the pleasure or utility friendships as it is for those of character, since the former last as long as the friends remain useful and pleasant to each other. Both friendships of utility and

pleasure "are incidental and inconsistent" and are "easily dissolved if the parties do not remain like themselves, for if one party is no longer pleasant or useful, the other ceases to love [and thus, spend time and continue doing activities with] him" (NE 1156a19-21). Within virtue friendships, however, the friendship would be less likely to deteriorate completely if the friends were to cease being pleasant or useful. This is because, fundamentally, the "object of love" of virtue friendships does not consist of the external goods of pleasantness and utility, but entails the internal "goodness" of character that is shared and consistent between the friends.

E. The Impact of Love, Virtue, and Shared Activity on Duration of and Number of Friends within Virtue Friendships

i. Longer Duration

Along with being determinants of friendship type, love, virtue, and shared activity are influencers of both the duration of and the number of friends involved within the three Aristotelian friendship types. With regard to duration, the friends within the true friendship have one which contrasts with the more superficial and short-term friendships of utility and pleasure. As discussed earlier within this Chapter, and evidenced within the *Nicomachean Ethics,* the degree of love, virtue, and shared activity is higher within the true friendship. The higher degree of these values, according to Aristotle, leads virtue friendships to last longer, since "there meet in it all the qualities that friends should have," notably the qualities of "love and friendship…in their most and best form" (NE 1156b16; NE 1156b23-24). Aristotle's use of the term "best" to describe the qualities that virtue friends share suggests excellence within virtue friendships. As virtue is the excellence associated with virtue friendships, the friendship

"lasts as long as [both agents] are good" and permits the excellence of virtue to becomes "an enduring thing" (NE 1156b12). As a result, virtue friendships, in order to be sustained and maintained in the long run, necessitate that both friends be virtuous and consistent in their characters.

ii. Fewer numbers

Moreover, given that the degree of love, virtue, and shared activity is different between agents within the three Aristotelian friendship types, the argument may be made that there is a difference regarding the number of friends which are possible to be acquired and associated within each friendship type. Particularly, since virtue friendships are based on the degree and particularity of the love, shared goodness, and activity between the agents, such friendships would be expected to occur between a few people, and it would be unlikely that such friendships would be possible for one person to have with a large number of people. Aristotle claims that this is the case because the love fostered by virtue friendship, given that it is particular to the friends, can really only be felt and shared between a handful of people. He says:

> "Presumably, then, it is well not to seek to have as many friends as possible, but as many as are enough for the purpose of living together; for it would seem actually impossible to be a great friend to many people. This is why one cannot love several people; love tends to be a sort of excess friendship, and that can only felt towards one person; therefore great friendship too can only be felt towards a few people. This seems to be confirmed in practice; for we do not find many people who are friends in the comradely way of friendship, and the famous friendships of this sort are always between two people" (NE 1171a8-20).

Here, Aristotle defines love as a sort of "excess" and "great friendship" as one that leads to the manifestation and practice of such love. However, given that they are capable of being excessive in limited amounts, human beings are capable of feeling such love, and having "great friendships," with only "only person." Hence, the love that is felt towards several people is not to the same degree since it, by being spread to several people, is not capable of being particular. Rather, as Aristotle suggests and is mentioned in Section A, this type of "love" becomes universalized and serves as mere goodwill towards friends and humanity.

F. Conclusion

In summary, Aristotelian friends, in sharing the common qualities of love, virtue, and capacity for shared activity, are influenced by the possession and degree of these qualities in acquiring the three types of friendship. Additionally, within the friendships of character, since they are based on character (and, between virtuous agents, a "firm and unchanging character") they necessitate time and familiarity in order to develop, which can only be acquired through the friends' spending time and doing activities together. This is because, as Aristotle claims, "men cannot know each other until they have eaten salt together, nor can they admit each other to be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each" (NE 1156b27-30). There is consequently a physical element required to the friendships of character, an element which provides the friends the opportunity to see each other "in action" during morally challenging situations. An agent's character is revealed through actions which are done for their own sake, and it is only through spending time with friends that one can be sure of their motivations. It is only in real-life and morally challenging situations that individuals are

able to show their true characters, since the agent is actually tested and their value system and decision making process is brought to the fore. Friendships of character, ultimately, come to develop through those of utility and pleasure, given that the agents, by their nature and definition, are found to be pleasant and useful to one another. It is thus through a higher degree of love, virtue, and commitment to spending time and engaging in activity together, that Aristotelian friends move away from superficiality and deepen their bonds as virtuous people within character friendships.

II. Friendship within Social Networking Sites (SNS), notably
Facebook and Google Plus (G+)

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd, 2008, p.211). In reference to the users registered on their sites, both Facebook and Google Plus (G+) use the term "friend," a term which, as Boyd and Ellison claim, does not entail "friends" in the everyday sense. Instead, the term Friends is used to describe, in certain respects, the members of an imagined audience which guide behavioral norms online (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p 220). At the same time, however, the extensive use of the term "Friends" on sites like Facebook and G+ raises questions regarding not only their purpose and potential utility in cultivating associations and bonds between their users, but leads to further inquiry into their influence on the quality of the associations and "friendships" that they set out to create in the real world.

In this chapter, I seek to examine and characterize the notion of Friends, notably the users of the social networking sites of Facebook and Google Plus (G+), as well as to construct a working definition for what exactly a "friend" and "friendship" is within these online contexts. I will first provide a brief history of Facebook and G+ and, next, discuss the features that they possess in order to define their purposes as tools for enabling easy networking between individuals and creating an online community. I will conclude by providing a working definition for Friendship as a superficial connection

between online users, which will serve, in Chapter III, as a definition for comparison with that of Aristotelian friendships.

A. The History of Facebook and Google Plus (G+)

In order to understand the purpose of SNSs like Facebook and G+, it is important to consider their respective origins and history. In 2004, Facebook was created as a social networking site for Harvard college students by Mark Zuckerberg. However, as it began "supporting other schools and people," it expanded to become a service available to other communities, and enabled high school students and professionals inside corporate networks to interface with one another (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 218). Although it had initially been restricted to Harvard students (or those possessing a harvard.edu email address), it has become open for use by anyone with any email address since 2005. Research shows that over 52 million people worldwide have visited the site, and it is the sixth most trafficked website in the United States (Tong et al, 2008, p. 532). Additionally, it has "over 80 million active users across over 55,000 regional, work, high school, and college networks" (Lewis et al., 2008, p. 331).

In June 2011, G+ emerged as a social networking venture by the Google corporation. Akin to Facebook, the Google corporation has its roots within a college setting: it was founded by Stanford University graduate students Larry Page and Sergey Brin in 1998 (Madaras, 2011). According to a Google spokesperson, the inspiration for the G+ program came from the concept of being "in progress" and was seen as a facet which aligned with the Google corporation's "original, pragmatic purpose" in producing programs for quicker online access to information (Madaras, 2011). Similar to Facebook, G+ has become a popular site for social and professional networking,

reflected by the fact that it had 25 million visitors, with approximately 20 million registered users, in July 2011 (Wasserman, 2011). Thus, both Facebook and G+ have their origins in an environment looking to "progress" and change. Additionally, given this spirit of "progress" and their naissance within college settings, it may be deduced (and confirmed later in this Chapter, particularly in Section E) that such sites seek to, and may be tailored towards, engaging and influencing the ways in which youth communicate and keep in touch with one another.

B. Technical Features of Facebook and Google Plus (G+)

Since they were founded to facilitate interfacing between their users, both Facebook and G+ provide features through which users can engage with one another in an online setting. Through Facebook, users begin by creating free, password protected Profiles and fill out various details about themselves, such as their hometown, birthday, preferred activities, and interests. These Profiles and details are available to be viewed by others who use the site. The slogan on Facebook's Homepage is that it "helps you connect and share with the people in your life," and "is Free and always will be" (Facebook, 2011). It hence permits anyone with an email address to sign up and register as a user. Facebook users further communicate with one another by posting statements to each other's "walls," sending messages privately, or using the Instant Messaging and Chat function through the site (Tong et al., 2008, p. 532). Users are further provided with features like the ability to digitally "poke" Friends on their walls, "tag" Friends through Notes and Photos, and track the most recent news about their Friends and Friend additions through constantly updated News Feeds and Friend lists (Vidyarthi, 2010). Additionally, Facebook's Timeline feature, introduced in December 2011, enables

users to "tell their life story with a new kind of Profile" by displaying the elements of users' walls—wall postings, status updates, in a chronological timeline format (Introducing Timeline, 2011). All these features provide an enhanced online interfacing experience for Facebook users.

G+'s slogan, however, is "real life sharing, rethought for the web," which implies that it is, in a way, attempting to simulate and extend real life relationships online (Google+ sharing, 2011). Similar to Facebook's initial restrictions, membership is one of the main limitations of G+ since it permits only users with a Google Mail account (Gmail) to register, access, and use the service (Google+ sharing, 2011). G+ is thus more personalized than Facebook, given that only users with Gmail can access and use the site for interfacing.

Other aspects of G+ include Stream, Hangouts, Buzz, Sparks and Huddle. Stream, akin to Facebook's News Feed, is a collection of all recent updates made by contacts in a user's circle, while Hangouts is a group video conference and chat feature "which lets up to 10 people see and talk to each other at once" (Boutin, 2011). However, Sparks is an interest finder, and, by allowing users to add and save their interests and hobbies in the Sparks search engine, generates and sends users information which is pertinent to their preferences. Huddle offers text messaging, via cell phone, between persons or groups, and allows everyone selected to view and respond to the same messages. Additionally, a tool bar at the top of every screen includes links to their other application, allowing G+ users access to all their programs while only needing to login once. Gmail, calendar, documents, photos, reader, Web and other apps are at users' fingertips with just a click of a button (Boutin, 2011).

i.   The Friending Processes of Facebook and G+

On Facebook, to acquire Friends and be designated as a "Friend," an individual user directs the Facebook system to initiate a request to be recognized as someone's friend. This takes the touch of a button, during which a user goes onto the desired page of the Friend and click on a button to "Add" them as a Friend. It is a process which requires that the two parties—the friend request initiator and the friend request sender—agree. When individuals become friends, the system reveals their personal profiles as well as all their links to other members of their social networks. In this way, "new friendship links often experience a snowball effect, as they grow with users discovering overlapping friend networks" (Tong et al., 2008, p.532). At the same time, such Friends, once a request is sent and accepted, may themselves be placed into particular categories by the user, such as "Close Friend", "Acquaintances", "Family", or "Other" (Facebook, 2011). In this way, users can expand their online social networks and place their Friends into particular categories.

Unlike Facebook, there are no "Friend" relationships on G+ "that users feel socially obligated to accept" (Boutin, 2011). According to Boutin, on G+, "users' personal information, including whom they share certain news with, is private by default" until Friends are added into Circles (Boutin, 2011). The Circles, moreover, enable users to characterize their Friends and determine the content that is available for them, and the public, to view. As compared to Facebook, the "friending" process that users use on G+ is different: instead of being able to send Friend requests to particular users, and having those users confirm that they are indeed Friends and know each other, Friends on G+ are added to a particular "Circle" and gain access to whatever elements are associated

with the settings of that particular Circle. These serve as ways to share information with one's friends, family, contacts and the public at large, and serve as a sort of "management tool that's a necessary component of any social network — a way to organize (and recruit) fellow members of the service" (Levy, 2011). According to Jeff Jarvis, a blogger, the circles on Google+ are "just modern day mailing lists" as he, along with all G+ users, organizes his contacts into Circles, "with labels [ranging from] 'Germany,' 'World,' or 'Celebrity'" (De Castella, 2011). Other Circle labels, in which Friends may be placed, include 'Family,' 'Friends,' and 'Acquaintances.' (Google+ sharing, 2011). Thus, akin to Facebook, users on G+ can categorize their contacts and control the content displayed to particular users.

C. Purpose and Effects of SNSs: Enable Easy and Effortless Networking between Individuals

One of the effects of the features on Facebook and G+ is that these sites are made accessible, appealing, and easy to use for individuals looking to connect and network. In allowing users to create Profiles and virtually "type [themselves] into being" (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p.211), as well as "upload photographs, videos, and other multimedia content to enhance [their] individual Profiles," SNSs enable individuals to express themselves and their interests (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 213). Most SNSs "prompt users to identity others in the system with whom they have a relationship, and enable this network to be displayed publically" (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 213). Lastly, these sites provide a mechanism for users to control the privacy of their individual Profiles in public, as well as to display information about themselves. SNSs provide a means through which users may either send messages privately or "post" messages publically on their Friends' Profiles (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 213).

G+, additionally, is appealing to users due to its versatility, given that users can access other programs, such as their Gmail email account, documents and photos, by simply accessing the buttons at a bar on top of their screen, while logged into their G+ account. This "combined interface that includes all of Google's products promotes traffic to their sites" (Madaras, 2011). Since Google does not yet offer advertising on G+, it "intend[s] to make the entire Google experience better by including [the user], [the user's] relationships and [the user's] interests" in the hopes that "users will search more, share more, and spend more time on Google sites, which in turn will improve [the Google corporation's] existing monetization" (Madaras, 2011). According to the spokesperson for G+, the corporation, and site, realize that "today people are increasingly connecting with one another on the web...[b]ut the ways in which we connect online are limited and don't mimic our real-life relationships. The Google Plus project is our attempt to make online sharing even better. We aren't trying to replace what's currently available, we just want to introduce a new way to connect online with the people that matter to [users]." (Madaras, 2011)

Additionally, online social networking forums like Facebook and G+ have been found to be used to express and communicate true personalities, instead of "an idealized virtual identity" (Gosling, 2009) According to psychological research at the University of Texas at Austin, Facebook Profiles, "rather than serving as profile 'enhancers,' convey rather accurate images of profile owners, either because people are not trying to look good or because they are trying and failing to pull it off" (Gosling, 2009). After conducting research on 236 profiles of college-aged people from the United States and Germany, psychologist Sam Gosling and his researchers asked observers to rate the

profiles to see if there was any disparity between their impressions, the profile owners' self-idealization, and their actual personality (Gosling, 2009). He concluded that "personality impressions based on online social network profiles were accurate and were not affected by profile owners' self-idealization. Essentially, the profile personality expressed through these Profiles was compatible with the actual personality of the owners" (Gosling, 2009)

According to Gosling, this not only means that profile owners can let others know who they are (and satisfy their basic need to be known by others), but "that profile owners, and viewers, can feel that they trust the information they glean from social networks and build their confidence in the system as a whole" (Science Daily, 2009) More generally speaking, with its emphasis on user-generated content, Facebook is part of a larger online phenomenon that goes under various names, including "peer production," "Web 2.0," "micro media," and "Me Media." According to Cassidy, Facebook enables users to "fashion [themselves] in a new way in a new space...it's not about changing who [the user is]...[but] about emphasizing different aspects of [the user's] personality" (Cassidy, 2006). In terms of user feedback, Cassidy (2006) claims that "Facebook's members invariably cite its usefulness for keeping up with friends, but clearly one of the reasons that the site is so popular is that it enables users to forgo the exertion that real relationships entail." A recent Harvard graduate, cited in the article, claims that Facebook usage is "a way of maintaining a friendship without having to make any effort whatsoever," given that the "interface provides all the information [one] need[s] to do that: birthdays, pictures, message boards, contact info, etc" (Cassidy, 2006). Thus, Facebook and G+ Friendships are easy and effortless to maintain.

D. Purpose and Effects of SNSs: The Creation of a Digital Community and Promoter of Social Capital

Along with enabling easy and effortless networking between individual users, SNSs are unique since they allow individuals to access and connect offline with acquaintances, friends, and strangers. According to Boyd & Ellison (2008), since this process leads users' own social networks to become visible to fellow users, SNSs can "result in connections between individuals that may not otherwise be made" (p.211). Such sites further seem to produce a sense of an "imagined community," in which the users and individuals reveal information about themselves to the public (Acquisti et al, 2006). In this way, SNSs offer "exciting new opportunities for interaction and communication" and for potentially forming community groups online (Acquisti et al., 2006, p. 57). An online Facebook Group, or G+ Circle, then, may serve as a way of creating a community online and bridging online profiles and individuals. Essentially, this facet of SNSs ties into their role and purpose of helping users manage impressions, maintain relationships, and seek new contacts (Tong et al., 2008, p.532).

In looking at Facebook and G+, then, it may be deduced that SNSs serve as virtual social networks where an individual is able to present and maintain a personal image of him or herself for others to observe and interpret (Tong et al., 2008, p.536). They may be used by individuals for career and networking purposes, as well as to continue building on currently existing personal relationships. In terms of career networking, for instance, these sites can be used, particularly by aspiring creative artists, to get discovered as they display their work in the form of albums online. G+, additionally, can be used for business purposes as a way for entrepreneurs to advertise

their products. For example, on the G+ page itself, it is possible to conduct a business, post opportunities for sales on a Public Profile, and get messages with inquiries about it (Google+ sharing, 2011).

At the same time, however, according to Boyd & Ellison (2008), on many large SNSs, users and participants are not necessarily "networking or looking to meet new people." Instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network, which is articulated through their Friends lists. (p 211). In this way, such sites could help contribute to create a sense of community—for families, friends, and even colleagues in a more professional environment. As Cassidy clai1ms, "in 'the connexionist world' that is identified as central to modern work, a natural preoccupation of human beings is the desire to connect with others, to make contact, to make connections, so as not to remain isolated" (Cassidy, 2006).

According to Adam Joinson (2008), SNSs, like Facebook, serve as builders of "social capital" and have a "number of functions in offline life—for instance, providing social and emotional support, information resources and ties to other people" (p. 1027). According to Ellison et al., the Internet itself has been "linked to both increases and decreases in social capital," since it can, on the one hand, "detract from face-to-face time with others" (and hence decrease social capital), but "supplement or replace in-person interaction" and thus create "new forms of social capital" and facilitate relationship building (Ellison et al., 2007, p.1146). In this way, SNSs can help build communities and strengthen friendships, since "friendship ties require little effort or investment to maintain, while messaging with geographically distant friends is used to build social capital" (Joinson, 2008, p 1028). The results in Joinson's paper further highlight how

"the most important uses of Facebook tended to be related to the 'social searching' and 'surveillance' functions. Specifically, the use of the site to learn about old friends and maintain or re-connect relations scored consistently highly" (Johnson, 2008, 1030). This serves as evidence to the claim that SNSs are used to build communities and foster bonds online.

Regarding privacy, in a study conducted by Acquisti, users' awareness of the information they display as well as privacy concerns of Profile creators influence the content being displayed publically, since users became aware of the degree of control and management skills that they possess over their Profile content (Acquisti et al., 2006, p.57) Despite privacy concerns, however, SNSs lead individuals to join, produce, and contribute to an environment, and online community representative of the diversity of the globally connected community.

E. **Conclusion: Facebook and Google Plus (G+)'s Definitions of Friendship**

It is evident that SNSs effectively serve as online community builders, given their history, features and usage by individual users for both personal and professional purposes. Users on such sites been likened to individuals "hanging out at the mall or lounging on the quad" (Cassidy, 2006). Cassidy claims that "cruising" around on Facebook, or G+, has a certain "lack of purpose as compared to just hanging out in public, and it's hard to justify if you don't have a lot of free time" (Cassidy, 2006) At the same time, he claims that "it serves the essential purpose (for young people without jobs, families, and other social responsibilities) of seeing and being seen." He adds that although users "are with their Friends, [they are] also creating the possibility that

[they'll] bump into someone else, in which case [they] might meet them, or at least be noticed by them. So it's not about networking (which is more instrumental), or even about dating (which is far more specific), so much as it is about just mingling." (Cassidy, 2006). Thus, in some ways, Friendships on SNSs may be defined as interactions involving nothing more than access to an internet connection, an email address, and time. Additionally, as they are effortless, they may be characterized as more superficial interactions which individuals use for personal and professional purposes and function within the realm of an anarchic online community.

On a more general note, the eagerness of individuals to parade in public on the Internet still surprises many researchers. Duncan Watts, a sociologist at Columbia who has been studying social networks for a decade, says that the growth of sites like Facebook reflects a "dramatic shift in how young people view the Internet, since now everyone is used to the idea that we are connected, and that's not so interesting" (Cassidy, 2006). In fact, he claims that the popularity of SNSs like Facebook and G+ "[doesn't have anything] to do with networking at all. Its voyeurism and exhibitionism. People like to express themselves, and they are curious about other people" (Cassidy, 2006) With this, such research into SNSs may be used to contribute to the scholarship surrounding and the understanding of individuals' use of Google+ as a social networking tool, as well as make us aware of how the features on our personal webpages can influence the kind of message we're putting out there. Additionally, Christine Rosen (2007), in her essay "Virtual Friendship and the New Narcissism," questions the value of such technology, when she questions whether such "technology, with its constant demands to collect (friends and status), and perform (by marketing

ourselves), in some ways undermine[s] our ability to attain what it promises" and leads us away from acquiring "a surer sense of who we are and where we belong" (Rosen, 2007, p.16). Rosen hence brings up the question of how identities themselves are developed and portrayed on SNSs. This leads to a further discussion, as evidenced in Chapter III, regarding the extent to which SNSs serve as tools for fostering not merely Aristotelian friendships, but virtuous agents capable of virtue friendship.

III: Are Aristotelian Friendships and SNS Friendships Compatible? Are Friendships of Character cultivated through SNSs?

With regard to the question of whether Aristotle's three friendship types—of utility, of pleasure, and of character—are cultivated by and comparable to those of SNSs, we can probably give an Aristotelian answer: in a way yes, in a way no. As Shannon Vallor (2011) claims in her article "Flourishing on Facebook: Virtue Friendship and New Social Media," SNSs do enable users to demonstrate and potentially cultivate the values of reciprocity, empathy, self-knowledge, and the shared life, which underlie Aristotelian friendships. Thus, by serving to cultivate these, and other attributes of friendship as mentioned in Chapter I, SNSs facilitate Aristotelian friendships of utility and pleasure, since they enable users to acquire the relatively superficial knowledge, pleasure, and goods associated with such friendships.

However, I shall argue that, although they promote values associated with all three friendship types and provide an online forum for shared activity between friends, SNSs are not sufficient elements for the formation of and sustenance of Aristotelian virtue friendships. This is because sites, like Facebook and G+, are insufficient and inadequate tools in allowing for further development of the core values of and the acquisition of the relevant type of knowledge associated with virtue friendships. As discussed in Chapter I, the knowledge associated with virtue friendships is that of the agents' moral character, which demands an understanding and demonstration of the friends' choices and actions in morally challenging situations. Since SNSs are not forums for real-life situations which enable users to interact face-to-face and to be

virtuous through their actions, Facebook and G+ play a lesser role in cultivating friendships of character and do not go far enough in enabling their users to fully practice and acquire the values of virtue friendship.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the compatibility of Aristotelian friendships of utility and pleasure to friendships on SNSs, as defined in Chapter II. In referencing Vallor within this discussion, I will show that certain features of SNSs serve to cultivate the attributes of reciprocity, empathy, self-knowledge, and the shared life which, though connected to all three friendship types, do more to promote the superficial knowledge associated with Aristotelian friendships of utility and pleasure than the moral knowledge associated with those of character. Next, I will discuss points of incompatibility between Aristotelian virtue friendships and SNS friendships, and argue that online forums do not represent real life situations and SNSs function as inadequate environments for users to fully demonstrate, acquire, and share the relevant knowledge and moral core associated with virtue friendships.

A. **Points of Compatibility between Aristotelian and SNS Definitions of Friendship**

First, it is evident that certain features of SNSs, as described within Chapter II, provide users the tools to promote the values and attributes associated with all Aristotelian friendship types. However, as will be noted within each section, such values are cultivated to a limited degree by SNSs, which enable them to be sufficient tools for the promotion of the friendships of utility and pleasure, but not of those of virtue.

i. Cultivate Reciprocity

It is evident, given their purpose and use, that reciprocity is at the center of and cultivated by SNS Friendships. Vallor defines reciprocity as "a primitive, biological impulse that functions as the seed of human sociality, is the unifying feature of all forms of friendship and which, with proper moral and cognitive/perceptual habituation, matures into a social virtue" (Vallor, 2011, p.5) This is akin to Aristotle's notion of reciprocity which, particularly the reciprocal sharing of a good or goods, is the glue of all friendship. Within the friendships of utility and pleasure, reciprocity occurs by the exchange of goods and services between the agents, and elicits a particular level of utility and pleasure.

To what degree, then, do SNSs cultivate a degree of reciprocity between their users? According to Vallor, reciprocity occurs to quite an extensive degree and in many forms on SNSs. On Facebook, reciprocal exchanges occur from the initial process of Friending, where "friend requests" are sent out and accepted between users, to the exchange of comments on photos and statuses, and engaging in such activities as virtual food fights. Facebook users hence display reciprocity and express themselves through simple gestures as "liking" a Friend's status on a particular day, photos from a vacation, or posting words of encouragement on their wall. Although the friending process of G+ does not have to be reciprocal between users, there is a similar feature of "hanging out" and exchanging personalized virtual gifts. Although there is a lack of the physical element, such tools enable users to engage with and exchange ideas with each other. Within traditional friendships, or the ones that Aristotle refers to, reciprocity between friends would take the form of physical gestures or words being exchanged between

friends. For example, friends would do such things as celebrate each other's successes, and even exchange hugs or encouraging pats on the back to console one another during times of trouble or hardship. G+ enables users to do the same, as it provides features for users to post and share information and pictures about their lives. Such elements of SNSs do hence encourage reciprocity between users, and cultivate particular types of friendships.

ii. Cultivate Empathy through the Featuring of "Other Selves"

Along with cultivating reciprocity between users, SNSs enable the expression and cultivation of empathy online, another trait that Aristotle discusses as essential to the three types of friendship as well as for the good life. Vallor defines empathy as an emotive and perceptual capacity that, like reciprocity, "develops in most humans from a basic biological impulse, expresses itself fully in the highest forms of friendship, and when properly cultivated and expressed, constitutes a virtue" (Vallor, 2011, p.7). With regard to this definition, the meaning of "proper" cultivation and expression of empathy online is unspecified, as there are no clear standards of what may be considered "proper" online. Additionally, the formation and development of a potentially virtuous character has its origins in the ability to empathize and relate to both the suffering and joys of another person. Thus, the degree to which they enable users to engage in such activity would determine the extent to which Aristotle's three types of friendship are cultivated.

On Facebook and G+, it is evident that a "proper cultivation and expression" of empathy between users takes the form of wall posts expressing responses to each other's revelations and statuses. According to Vallor, this would entail a "flood of posts" on

Walls and comments on statuses, expressing grief, joy, encouragement or consolation (Vallor, 2011, p.8). While this runs contrary to everyday life, through which empathy can be expressed by a physical embrace or a pat on the back between friends, Vallor claims that users' reciprocal expressions of empathy online are not worthless or ethically insignificant because they serve as indicators of instant expressions of "commitment or virtuous disposition" towards the Friend (Vallor, 2011, p.9). My disagreement with this claim will become apparent in Section B.

iii. Cultivate Self-Knowledge

Thirdly, features of SNSs serve to promote a superficial sense of self-knowledge within their users. Particularly, as Aristotle claims, self-knowledge involves knowledge of one's place as a social being in the community and in the world. Vallor defines self-knowledge as "a cognitive/perceptual achievement that is essential to the good life [and] to proper relations with others," as well as a trait which can only be "reliably" attained through the exercise of friendship, particularly "complete" friendship (Vallor, 2011, p.9). With regard to SNS, Facebook and G+ do serve to promote a superficial sense of self-knowledge since users characterize themselves, and begin their Profiles, by displaying such traits as their values, likes, dislikes, political values, religious beliefs, favorite books, and music interests. However, an agent's interest in a particular musician or political party does not reveal the agent's sense of morality, or whether he or she will act and pursue "the right sorts of things for the right reasons." Such knowledge can only be acquired through direct and real-life engagement with the agent, as well as observations of whether his or her value system manifests itself through his or her actions and choices in the real world.

iv. *Cultivate the Shared Life*

In addition to promoting and cultivating reciprocity, empathy, and self-knowledge, SNSs serve to cultivate a sense of the shared life, which Vallor defines as "a social achievement that embodies the highest forms of friendship and community, and which grounds the concept of *eudaimonia* or 'human flourishing' (Vallor, 2011, p.12) With regard to Aristotle, the shared life involves shared activities of excellence, most notably living together. Within the context of online Friendships, SNSs do serve to cultivate a sense of the shared life, highlighted particularly through the features of Facebook and G+ which enable users to share news and information about themselves. Facebook's News Feed feature as well as G+'s Stream feature, in particular, serve as strong examples which enable users to receive publically shared status updates and "amusements," such as videos and pictures, from fellow Friends.

Moreover, SNSs are advantageous in serving as tools which can facilitate and, in some cases, expedite the process of networking, keeping in touch, and meeting new people. With regular access to the internet and people's individual Profiles, it is possible for Profiles, and the individuals associated with them, to be available consistently, at any time of the day, within an online forum. This correlates to Aristotle's discussion of the friendships of utility: the availability of Profiles on an online platform serves as a more useful tool in understanding users' various affiliations and positions with a particular professional, religious, or political organization.

v. *Cultivate Pleasure and Some "Good"*

As mentioned in Chapter I, there are contrasts in terms of the type of pleasure within the three types of friendship, a notion which, given the discourse thus far, has bearing

not only on Aristotelian friends, but on Friends within the context of SNSs. To summarize, the type of pleasure associated with friendships of utility and pleasure are those derived from the external goods and rewards received and exchanged between the friends. On SNSs, such friendships of utility are manifested through the display of network associations, professional associations, and cultural and religious associations, which can be harnessed and used for the advantage or benefit of other users. The pleasure associated with friendships of pleasure is that of external and internal goods, such as sense of humor, wit, and the aesthetic beauty of the friend. In SNSs, such pleasure is derived from the Friends' sharing of such "pleasant goods," which may come in the form of amusing photos, videos, interests in movies, books, and articles about the news. Thus, it is clear that SNSs, by enabling the exchange of useful and pleasant goods, namely information about other users' network associations and pleasant external goods, can and do enable the formation of superficial friendships of utility and pleasure.

B. Points of Incompatibility between Aristotelian and SNS Definitions of Friendship

However, despite the fact that they do promote certain attributes underlying all friendships and enable users to engage in personal or professional associations online, SNSs do not ultimately allow for the deepening of the essential values associated with Aristotelian true friendships. These are, from Chapter I, the higher degree of mutual love, virtue, and shared engagement in virtuous activity. This is because SNSs are limited in terms of their representation of real life, and hence do not enable users to accurately depict their respective moral nature online. Additionally, SNSs are designed for fostering quick, instant, and "effortless" relationships, a quality which is

incompatible with the longer time and patience required for virtue friendships to manifest between individuals.

i. *Limits to online forums: representative of, but not synonymous with, real life*

First, it may be argued that cultivating and sustaining true friendships online is difficult to achieve, given that that forum of interaction between individuals is not in a physical setting. This raises the question regarding the characteristics and quality of the activity that users on SNSs pursue. Although Facebook and G+ market themselves as forums through which it is possible for users to do quotidian activities, like "hanging out," exchanging gifts, and playing games, the nature of such activities is starkly different in quality online than it is offline. For example, the sanctions for doing commonplace activities, such as telling a secret, embarrassing, or yelling at someone (through exclamation points) online is different from those of real life. In the case of humiliating someone and hurting their reputation, the sanctions and implications are felt to a far greater degree, both by the person being humiliated and the person doing the act, in real life than in an online environment. Given that the sanctions and rules of the online community are different, and often more liberal, than those of real life, the users of SNS have to undergo a sort of paradigm shift and alter their behavior as they log onto their Facebook or G+ accounts. Thus, the characterization of what constitutes "action," let alone ethical action, is different online as compared to real life.

Additionally, online networking is governed by unwritten rules, laws, and conventions. Such online forums function in contrast to the real world in Aristotle's and today's time, where everything from clothing to speech is filtered and censored. The

degree of freedom online, then, is greater in terms of activity and communication. Contained within its own online bubble accessible to those with internet connections, usernames, and passwords, the world of social networking has its own particular sets of values and rules that come into conflict with those of the "real world" that its users live life in. This has an influence on friendship since users, following one another and engaging as they please within a virtually anarchic space, have the opportunity to display other sides of themselves, and blur the line between public and private. The general environment of the online social networking community hence is not one created to facilitate moral competition, which would occur between good people and friends of character.

Moreover, the computer screen, and the general anarchy of the online social networking community, serves as a mask for users to shield and even falsify their true identities. SNSs lead people to become somewhat anonymous and homogenized to the viewer. Although this applies to real life situations and quotidian interactions, it is more explicit online, when something, once posted or displayed, is permanent and able to be seen publically.

Furthermore, SNSs do not favor the nurturing of prospective friends of character since they promote friendships among numerous users, and numerous individuals. This contrasts with Aristotle's claim, as highlighted in Chapter I, regarding the particularity of true friendships, as well as the fact that it is impossible for friends to share the "excessive" love associated with virtue friendships amongst multiple people. Aristotle claims that:

> "Those who have many friends and mix intimately with them all are thought to be
>
> no one's friend, except in the way proper to fellow-citizens, and such people are

called obsequious. In the way proper to fellow-citizens, indeed, it is impossible to

be the friend of many and yet not be obsequious but a genuinely good man; but

one cannot have with many people the friendship based on excellence and on the

character of our friends themselves, and we may be content if we find even a few

such" (NE 1171a8-20)

It is apparent, then, that Aristotle's classic notion of virtue friendship is not supported

by SNSs' promotion of friendship amongst many people, and leniency with their

sanctions and implications for online activity.

ii. *Limits to online forums: Lower degree of time, effort, and investment*

In addition, the claim that, on SNSs, "friendship ties require little effort or investment to

maintain" is an aspect which contrasts with Aristotle's definitions of friendship. In the

Ethics, Aristotle claims that all friendship ties require time and familiarity, elements

which are not evident or guaranteed through SNSs. Although the majority of Friending

and activity happens between people who have met or corresponded in person at least

once, there may be, as Vallor further claims, potential for something more meaningful

through online social networking as an additional "activity," despite the fact that it is

online.

Nevertheless, Friendships on SNSs are "easy" and "effortless", while Aristotelian

virtue friendships necessitate initiative, focus, and time spent offline in the person's

company. SNSs are for entertainment: Profile photos, videos, sharing links to things like

cute kitten videos on YouTube or sharing articles in the NYT about current political

issues. As a result, the friends of utility and pleasure are replaceable and

interchangeable in a way that friends of character are not. In other words, friendships of character are more grounded in the uniqueness and particularity of the friends.

iii.   Limits to Reciprocity, Pleasure, and the "Good"

Additionally, there is a disparity in terms of the degree of reciprocity fostered online. Within the friendships of character, the reciprocity occurs not merely with tangible or transient goods, but with more "complete" goods being exchanged, such as enduring respect, love, knowledge, and virtue (Vallor, 2011, p.5). The third "complete" level of reciprocity, then, constitutes not merely a natural impulse, but a mature and habituated *virtue,* which is ethical in nature.

Regarding pleasure, additionally, the friends of character differ from those involved in friendships of mere pleasure and utility: the pleasure associated with friendships of character is not only a combination of the pleasure derived from those of utility and pleasure, but a byproduct of shared virtues and of seeing the friend as "another self." In SNSs, the virtues of a person, let alone if they are shared, is not as clearly manifested or able to be discerned from an individual user's Profile page. Even with private messaging through the email feature of both sites, or "face-time" facilitated through the video chatting feature on Facebook and video chat "Hangouts" feature on G+, there is still a clear lack of the physical component of being with a friend, an element which is critical in determining the type of person a friend may be. The pleasure associated with the friendship of character can only be derived by being in the physical presence and company of the friend. This shows the limitations in the type of knowledge and information accessible by SNSs. In short, the knowledge promoted by SNSs is just

news and superficial data, not actual knowledge of the individual and his particular values.

Along with not enabling individuals to share in each other's physical presence and "share salt together," SNSs are limited since they enable merely casual and fleeting interactions, interactions which do not lead users to see each other's characters. Notably, there are no morally challenging situations presented by SNSs, situations which push agents and really test their characters. In contrast with Aristotle's definitions, SNSs do not give an indication of the goodness or virtue of an individual. In Aristotelian terms, the good person is one in a state of moral competition with others, and one who would

> "do acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary die for them;...or throw away both and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining himself nobility; since he would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelvemonth of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones" (NE 1169a17-22).

The knowledge of whether an agent is truly virtuous, and would act "for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary die for them," is impossible to discern from an online Profile, no matter how comprehensive or detailed it may seem. It is knowledge which requires seeing the agent in action, in real life and in real time. Since SNSs do not allow for this physical component to appear, they do not serve as sufficient tools in permitting users to determine the fundamental moral underpinnings of their potential friends of virtue.

Additionally, the features which enable users to get to know one another on SNSs, such as status updates and wall postings, provide merely superficial knowledge and information that, although serving as entertainment and useful pieces of data for other users, do not really get at the agents' character, sense of morality, upbringing, or choice. As William Deresiewicz (2009) claims, sites like Facebook are limited and do not enable users to actually tell their stories accurately, given the "literal" limits they have on how much can be filled into a status update box or individual Profile (Dereieswicz, 2009). Such spatial limits cause the type of engagement between SNS users to stay in the realm of opinion or mere surface facts, which contrasts with Aristotle's notion that friends of character go beyond the realm of resemblance in opinion to unanimity of temperament and spirit. Thus, SNSs provide no sense of the knowledge of the relevant kind about the users, as well as no measure of their aptitude as virtuous agents undergoing real life moral dilemmas. The knowledge they provide is merely superficial and, on a certain level, pertains to arbitrary and insignificant interests. As they do not permit friends to experience each other's company, they do not enable them to derive knowledge about the character or virtues of a human being. In short, according to William Deresiewicz, "information replaces experience" on Facebook and G+ (Deresiewicz, 2009). Although SNSs may enable users to gain information about their Friends, they do not provide an avenue for the real life and significant experiences by which one is able to discern the personality of and be truly selective about our friends, and exercise judgment about them.

C. Conclusion: SNSs Show Potential, but are Limited and Insufficient in Cultivating Virtue Friendships

By enabling users to access one another instantly at the click of a button, it seems that SNSs can cultivate and extend the timeline of particular friendships and associations. This would occur since they enable users to have consistent access to each other in the setting of an online forum, and lead users to not forget one another as they may without such a resource. In short, this trend would enable friendships to continue growing even when users are physically separated and distanced from one another, going against Aristotle's notion of "out of sight, out of mind." Particularly, Friends continue staying in the realm of one's vision in the online social networking community through G+ and Facebook. Even if the friends are miles apart, even if they are oceans apart, as the saying goes, they can always be "close at heart" since they have a way of keeping in touch with each other and keeping up to date on the friends' news through things like status updates and updated Profile photos. However, given that they do not provide the type of knowledge associated with the moral underpinnings of Friends, SNSs prove insufficient as tools for cultivating and maintaining Aristotelian virtue friendships.

Concluding Judgments

Although SNSs play a role in facilitating friendships of pleasure and of utility, they do not ensure "true friendships" since such friendships necessitate a deep understanding of the friends' characters, an understanding that is not cultivated by an online social networking forum. However, this research raises moral and ethical questions regarding the role and true value of social networking sites in enabling us to foster, maintain, and strengthen our existing friendships in an ever technologically growing and evolving world (Vallor, 2011, p.1). It is clear, based on the evidence provided, that online social media has the capacity to support and strengthen friendship in certain respects, particularly when used to supplement rather than substitute for face-to-face interactions. On reflection, it is clear that transferring our offline selves, and projecting a seemingly similar, but dramatically different, online personality, can have immense consequences on not only the way individuals engage with one another on online and offline forums, but on the way individuals perceive one another and their identities as people (Vallor, 2011, p.1)

As Aristotle claims,

"For [individuals] apply the name of friends even to those whose motive is utility, in which sense states are said to be friendly (for the alliances of states seem to aim at advantage), and to those who love each other for the sake of pleasure, in which sense children are called friends" (NE 1157a26-1157a29).

These seemingly "faux friendships" are totally relevant and applicable to those of Social Networking Site Friendships, which do not entail anything more than superficial interactions and engagements, where the "friends" aim at gaining an advantage or indulging and benefitting from the useful or pleasant nature of the associations.

This inquiry contributes to the larger ongoing debate of the advantages and disadvantages of not only social networking forums like Facebook and G+, but of technology as a whole, on our understanding of human relationships and civic engagement. Although several make the argument that technological innovations, like the cellphone, email, and instant text and video messaging, have enabled the world to be "smaller" and for human beings to be "better connected" to one another over great distances, there are those who claim that such technology may lead individuals to take their technological usage to extremes and, rather than use such technology sparingly and as necessary, become too "plugged in," grow dependent, and become disengaged from civic society. Robert Putnam (1995) alludes to this idea in his book *Bowling Alone: the Decline of Social Capital in America*, where he claims that technology as a whole, which includes the realm of SNSs, has started a trend of making its users don "virtual reality" helmets, helmets which lead them closer to self-isolationism rather than engage with others on a deeper level (Putnam, 1995). Such a trend refers to the almost extreme individuality of the "me" media, which, rather than leading individuals to actively seek out and form partnerships and associations, creates technological hermits who have little understanding of the meaning, responsibilities, and commitment necessary for forging and maintaining true relationships

More globally speaking, proponents of the social benefits of technology claim that certain political movements, like the Arab Spring, were facilitated and only truly "possible" by the presence of Facebook. However, although there are arguments which discuss the advantages of technology, as well as claims that technological innovations like the Internet and SNSs can actually bring people together and foster partnerships and community, there remains the concern that people may become too "plugged into"

such technology and remain in a Platonic cave-like setting, trapped within their own worlds rather than out enjoying the sun. Additionally, according to Robert Putnam, the increased use of certain technologies, like television, has led to the decline of civic engagement and the formation of social capital in contemporary America, and has subsequently made "our communities (or, rather, what we experience as our communities) wider and shallower" (Putnam, 1995, p.74). This is because television, as well as online SNSs, the internet, and cell phones, enables individual tastes to be "satisfied more fully," since they provide a constant source of entertainment and intellectual stimulation for individuals. Nevertheless, these technologies function at the cost of the positive social externalities associated with "more primitive forms of entertainment," such as a casual and friendly walk and conversation through a park (Putnam, 1995, p.74). Thus, the argument can be made that Facebook and G+, although they promote an increased quantity of connections between individual, do not promote as high a quality of these connections.

Hence, it would seem that merely having online "face-time" through online social networking avenues is not sufficient for the cultivation of, engagement in, and sustainability of friendships of virtue and character. Such friendships depend on the agents' involvement in activities which go beyond situations requiring superficial "information gathering" and networking. Such activity, namely, consists of that involving choice and is of the virtuous kind in morally challenging circumstances, circumstances which are not created by the realm of social networking sites.

Ultimately, however, it is not about the technology itself, but about the choices that individuals make concerning the involvement of such technologies in their personal lives that determines, affects, and influences both their close and long-distance

relationships with one another. On both the personal and global level, it is this sense of personal choice that will affect not only individual characters, but will determine whether humanity is actually progressing or losing out on the intimacy and authenticity of personally fulfilling relationships.

Works Cited and Consulted

Acquisti, A., Gross, R (2006). *Imagined Communities: Awareness, Information Sharing, and Privacy on the Facebook.* Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg. 36-57.

Boutin, P (2011, September 20). *Google+ for Everyone: What you Need to Know.* New York Times. Retrieved December 2 2011, from http://gadgetwise.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/google-for-everyone-what-you-need-to-know/

Barnes, Jonathan (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle.* United States of America. Princeton University Press.

Boyd, D., Ellison, N (2008). *Social Networking Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship.* Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.210-230.

Cassidy, John (2006). *Me Media: How Hanging Out on the Internet Became Big Business.* The New Yorker.

De Castella, Tom (2011, July 20). *Google+ and the friends v. acquaintances debate.* BBC News Magazine. Retrieved March 14 2012, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-14202981

Deresiewicz, William (2009, Dec 9). *Faux Friendship.* The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Ellison, N., Steinfield, C., Lampe, C (2007). *The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites.* Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, 1143-1168.

Facebook: Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life (2011).

    Retrieved December 5 2011, from Facebook website www.facebook.com

Google+ sharing: Real life sharing, rethought for the web (2011). Retrieved November

    30 2011 from Google Plus website.

Gosling, Sam (Researcher) (2009, December 1). *Facebook Profiles Capture True*

    Personality, According to New Psychology Research. ScienceDaily. Retrieved

    November 30, 2011, from http://www.sciencedaily.com-

    /releases/2009/12/091201111154.htm

Introducing Timeline: Tell your life story with a new kind of Profile (2011). Facebook.

    Retrieved March 15 2012 from Facebook website

    www.facebook.com/about/timeline

Joinson, Adam (2008). *'Looking at', 'Looking up' or 'Keeping up with' People?*

    Motives and Uses of Facebook. School of Management--University of Bath. 1-10.

Kraut, Richard (1976). *Aristotle on Choosing Virtuous Action for Itself.* University of

    Illinois at Chicago Circle. 223-39

Levy, Steven (2011, June 28). *Inside Google+: How the Search Giant Plans to Go*

    Social. Epicenter. Retrieved December 2 2011 from

    http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2011/06/inside-google-plus-social/all/1

Lewis, K., Kaufmana, J., Gonzalez, M., Wimmer, A., Christakis, N (2008). *Tastes, ties,*

and time: *A new social network dataset using Facebook.com.* Elsevier: Social

Networks. 330-342.

Madaras, Michelle (2011, July 28). *Google is newest addition to social network.* The

Reporter Online. Retrieved December 2 2011 from

http://www.thereporteronline.net/atf.php?sid=25745&current_edition=2011-

07-28.

Pakaluk, Michael (1998). *Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics Books VIII and IX.* United

States of America. Oxford University Press.

Putnam, Robert (1995). *Bowling Alone: the Decline of America's Social Capital.*

National Endowment for Democracy and the Johns Hopkins University Press.

65-78.

Rosen, Christine (2007). *Virtual Friendship and the New Narcissism.* The New

Atlantis: A Journal of Technology & Society. 15-31.

Schollmeier, Paul (1994). *Other Selves: Aristotle on Personal and Political*

Friendship. United States of America. State University of New York Press.

Stern-Gillet, Suzanne (1995). *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship.* United States of

America. State University of New York.

Tong, S.T, Heide, B.V.D., Langwell, L.,& Walther, J.B (2008, April 29). *Too much of a*

Good Thing? The Relationship Between Number of Friends and Interpersonal Impressions on Facebook. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.

Vallor, Shannon (2011, January 8). Flourishing on Facebook: Virtue Friendship and New Social Media. Springer Science+Business Media. 1-15.

Vidyarthi, Neil (2010, March 15). *Opinion: The 7 Least Used Facebook Features.* AllFacebook.com. Retrieved March 15 2012, from http://www.allfacebook.com/the-7-least-used-facebook-features-2010-03

Wasserman, John (2011, Aug 02). *Google+ Hits 25 Million Visitors, Gets More Sticky [STUDY].* Mashable Social Media. Retrieved December 2 2011 from http://mashable.com/2011/08/02/google-plus-25-million-visitors/

Weinman, Michael (2007). *Pleasure in Aristotle's Ethics.* United Kingdom. Continuum International Publishing Group.

Whiting, Jennifer (2002). *Eudaimonia, External Results, and Choosing Virtuous Actions for Themselves.* Cornell University Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 55.2. 270-90.