

“OFTEN THE LACK OF CONVERSATION HAS ENDED A FRIENDSHIP” –
ARISTOTLE’S CONCEPT OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE MIRROR OF P4C

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Abstract:

The pursuit of happiness is at the center of Aristotle’s ethics. But since happiness is inconceivable without friendship, he devotes much space in his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the definition of friendship, “*philia*.” In the affairs of state, he even attributes a higher value to friendship than to justice, since it is through mutual good will that justice secures the good life for citizens. Based on his observations, Aristotle concludes that three different motives underlie friendship: utility, pleasure, and fascination with the character of the other. A friendship based on virtue or character is friendship for the friend’s sake. Here Aristotle’s *mesotes*-doctrine comes into play; according to its maxim, the path to a life of virtue and fulfillment is moderation. Similarity between two people in their virtues and values is required for the perfect friendship. For Aristotle, friendship, like other virtues, must become habitual through repetition. It is only practiced in daily association. Central here is the aspect of mutual aid. Participation in the life of a friend and the spatial proximity this implies are indispensable for a friendship, in Aristotle’s view. It was through precisely this motive triad that Aristotle set the course for further philosophical discussion in the West, though the discourse became ever more removed from daily life. In Stoicism, then, only the wise man was capable of friendship; in the Middle Ages it was only possible between man and God. Today Aristotle’s theory of friendship is once again a relevant point of departure. This is evident even in the concepts of children. Our contribution will present and analyze the philosophical conversations of kindergarten and primary school children on the complex “Who is a friend?” / “What does a friend do?” / “What do you do for a friend?” / “What do you like most in a friend?” / “What don’t you like at all in a friend?” Figures (such as hand puppets), pictures, and stories provided a basis for the community of inquiry.

Keywords: Aristotle; *Nicomachean Ethics*; *philia*; happiness; virtues; citizens; community of inquiry; concepts of children; play

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„Oft schon hat der fehlende Austausch des Wortes die Freundschaft vernichtet“ - Aristoteles' Freundschaftskonzept im P4C Spiegel -

Abstract:

Das Streben nach Glück ist der Mittelpunkt der Ethik von Aristoteles. Da ein Glück ohne Freundschaft aber für Aristoteles nicht vorstellbar ist, widmet er der Begriffsbestimmung von Freundschaft "*philia*" in seiner Nikomachischen Ethik einen weiten Raum. Im Staatswesen hat die Freundschaft für ihn sogar einen höheren Wert als die Gerechtigkeit, da diese durch das gegenseitige Wohnwollen für ein gutes Leben der Bürger sorgt. Aufgrund seiner Beobachtungen kommt Aristoteles zu dem Schluss, dass der Freundschaft 3 unterschiedliche Motive zugrunde liegen: der Nutzen, die Lust und die Faszination durch den Charakter des anderen. Die Tugend- oder Charakterfreundschaft ist die Freundschaft um des Freundes willen. Hier kommt Aristoteles' Mesotes-Lehre ins Spiel, deren Maxime zufolge das Maßhalten der Weg zu einem tugendhaften und erfüllten Leben ist. Sind sich zwei Personen in ihrer Tugendhaftigkeit bzw. ihren Wertvorstellungen ähnlich, so ist das die Voraussetzung für die vollkommene Freundschaft. Wie für jegliche Tugend gilt auch für die Freundschaft bei Aristoteles, dass sie durch wiederholtes Handeln zur Gewohnheit werden muss. Man übt die Freundschaft nur im alltäglichen Umgang. Zentral ist hier der Aspekt der gegenseitigen Hilfe. Die Teilhabe am Leben des Freundes und damit die räumliche Nähe sind nach Aristoteles für eine Freundschaft unerlässlich. Vor allem durch seine Motivtrias bestimmte Aristoteles die weitere philosophische Diskussion im Okzident, allerdings entfernte diese sich immer mehr vom alltäglichen Leben. So war in der Stoa konnte nur der Weise dazu fähig, eine vollkommene Freundschaft zu führen, im Mittelalter war diese sogar nur zwischen Gott und Mensch möglich. Heute wird Aristoteles Freundschaftstheorie wieder anschlussfähig. Das zeigen sogar die Konzepte von Kindern. Wir wollen in unserem Beitrag philosophische Gespräche von Kindergarten- und Grundschulkindern zu dem Komplex „Wer ist ein Freund?“ „Was tut ein Freund?“ / „Was tust du für einen Freund?“ / „Was magst du besonders gern am Freund?“ / „Was magst du gar nicht am Freund?“ vorstellen und analysieren. Als Grundlagen dienten der *community of inquiry*, Gestaltsimpulse (Puppen, die sich an den Händen hielten), Bilder und Geschichten.

Keywords: Aristoteles; *Nikomachische Ethik*; *philia*; Glück; Ethik; Tugendhaftigkeit; Bürger; *community of inquiry*; Konzepte von Kindern

“A menudo la falta de conversación ha terminado una amistad” –
El concepto de amistad de Aristóteles en el espejo de filosofía para niños

Resumen:

El propósito de la felicidad está en el centro de la ética de Aristóteles. Pero en tanto la felicidad es inconcebible sin la amistad, le dedica mucho espacio en su *Ética a Nicómaco*, a definir la amistad, *philia*. En los asuntos del estado, atribuye incluso un valor más alto a la amistad que a la justicia, desde que es a través de la mutua buena voluntad que la justicia asegura la buena vida para los ciudadanos. Basado en sus observaciones, Aristóteles concluye que tres diferentes motivos subyacen a la amistad: utilidad, placer y fascinación con el carácter del otro. Una amistad basada en la virtud o en el carácter es la amistad por el bien del amigo. Aquí la doctrina del término medio de Aristóteles entra en escena: de acuerdo con esta máxima, el camino a una vida de virtud y realización es la moderación. De manera semejante, entre dos personas se requiere virtudes y valores para una perfecta amistad. Para Aristóteles, la amistad, como otras virtudes, debe volverse habitual a través de la repetición. Sólo se practica en la asociación diaria. Aquí es central el aspecto de la mutua ayuda. La participación en la vida de un amigo y en el espacio próximo que ella implica es indispensable para una amistad, en la perspectiva de Aristóteles. Fue precisamente a través de esta tríade de motivos que Aristóteles estableció el curso de la posterior discusión filosófica en Occidente, aunque la vida cotidiana fue insistentemente retirada de la discusión. Después, en el estoicismo, solo el hombre sabio era capaz de Amistad. En la Edad Media, era sólo posible entre el hombre y Dios. Actualmente, la teoría de la amistad de Aristóteles es, una vez más, un punto interesante de partida. Esto es incluso evidente en los conceptos de los niños. Nuestra contribución presentará y analizará conversaciones filosóficas de niños de educación infantil y fundamental acerca del complejo “¿Quién es un amigo?” / “¿Qué hace un amigo?” / “¿Qué haces por un amigo?” / “¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de un amigo?” / ¿Qué es lo que no te gusta de un amigo?”. Figuras (como marionetas), cuadros e historias ofrecieron una base a la comunidad de investigación.

Palabras clave: Aristóteles; *Ética a Nicómaco*; *philia*; felicidad; virtudes; ciudadanos; comunidad de investigación; conceptos de niños; juego

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Frequentemente a falta de diálogo tem terminado uma amizade - O conceito de amizade de Aristóteles no espelho da filosofia para crianças

Resumo:

O propósito da felicidade está no centro da ética de Aristóteles. Enquanto a felicidade é incognoscível sem a amizade, ele dedica muito espaço em sua *Ética a Nicômaco* a definir a amizade, *philia*. Nos assuntos do Estado, atribui inclusive um valor mais alto à amizade do que à justiça, por que é através da boa vontade mútua que a justiça assegura a boa vida aos cidadãos. Baseado em suas observações, Aristóteles conclui que existem três diferentes motivos subjacentes à amizade: utilidade, prazer e fascinação com o caráter do outro. Uma amizade baseada na virtude ou no caráter é a amizade pelo bem do amigo. Aqui a doutrina do termo médio de Aristóteles entra em cena: de acordo com essa máxima, o caminho de uma vida de virtude e realização é a moderação. De maneira semelhante, entre duas pessoas exigem-se virtudes e valores para uma amizade perfeita. Para Aristóteles, a amizade, como outras virtudes, deve tornar-se um hábito através da repetição. Somente se pratica em associação diária. Aqui é central o aspecto da ajuda mútua. A participação na vida de um amigo e no espaço próximo que ela implica é indispensável para a amizade, na perspectiva de Aristóteles. Foi precisamente através desta tríade de motivos que Aristóteles estabeleceu o curso da posterior discussão filosófica no Ocidente, ainda que a vida cotidiana tenha sido insistentemente retirada da discussão. Depois, no estoicismo, somente o homem sábio era capaz de Amizade. Na Idade Média, a amizade era somente possível entre o homem e Deus. Atualmente, a teoria da amizade de Aristóteles é, mais uma vez, um ponto interessante de partida. Isto é evidente, inclusive, entre os conceitos das crianças. Nosso artigo apresentará e analisará conversas filosóficas de crianças do ensino infantil e fundamental acerca do complexo "Quem é um amigo?" / "O que faz um amigo?" / "O que fazer por um amigo?" / "O que você mais gosta de um amigo?" / "O que você não gosta de um amigo?". Figuras (como títeres), quadros e histórias ofereceram uma base à comunidade de investigação.

Palavras-chave: Aristóteles; *Ética a Nicômaco*; *philia*; felicidade; virtudes; cidadãos; comunidade de investigação; conceitos de crianças; jogo

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To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few 'friends'. But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as 'friendships', show clearly that what they are talking about has very little to do with that Philía which Aristotle classified among the virtues or that Amicitia on which Cicero wrote a book
C. S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*

Introduction

Friendship, “*philia*,” (Greek: φιλία) is at the center of Aristotle’s ethics. So he devotes much space in his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the definition of friendship. For Aristotle friendship was based on virtue. Here Aristotle’s *mesotes*-doctrine comes into play; according to its maxim, moderation is the path to a life of virtue and fulfillment. Similarity between two people in their virtues and values is required for the perfect friendship.

Aristotle concludes that three distinct motives underlie friendship: utility, pleasure, and fascination with the other’s character. With this triad of motives Aristotle set the course for later philosophical discourse in the West, though the discourse became ever further removed from everyday life.

Today Aristotle’s theory of friendship is once again a relevant point of departure. Thus for example Reisman und Shorr¹ drew upon the Aristotelian concept of friendship in their empirical investigations, and current definitions also remain in the realm of Aristotelian thought.

¹ Reisman und Shorr 1978.

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This is also evident even in the concepts of children. Like Aristotle, the children based friendship on virtue or character in friendship for the friend's sake. For Aristotle as for the children, friendship, like other virtues, must become habitual through repetition. It is only practiced in daily association. Central here is the aspect of mutual aid. Participation in the life of a friend and the spatial proximity this implies are indispensable for a friendship, in Aristotle's and the children's view.

Our paper will present and analyze the philosophical conversations of kindergarten and primary school children on the question-complex "What is friendship?"

1. The Meaning of Friendship

1.1 Empirical Investigation into the Meaning of Friendship

That friendship gives rise to deep emotional and cognitive satisfaction in children and adults is so obvious that this aspect is seldom mentioned in empirical psychological studies of friendship, although the feelings connected with friendship have social consequences. Since it has been recognized that peer friendships fulfill important developmental functions that cannot be taken over by parents or children of different ages, psychologists have paid special attention to friendship, and especially to lifelong friendship.

Special attention was drawn to mutual support in social learning, such as the control of aggressions, and to moral learning, as for example in the development of values. It was determined that friendships facilitate emotional adjustment, confidence building, role assumption and empathy, as well as the capacity for intimacy². Decisive here is the development of a positive self-image,

² Alisch, Lutz-Michael, 2006.

through the “consensual validation of personal worth”³. For isolated or traumatized children, friends are significant as “social rehabilitators”⁴.

To summarize, friends thus have the following functions:

“- They provide social contexts, in which fundamental competencies originate and are developed.

- They serve as emotional, cognitive, value-forming and social resources that improve individual integration.

- They are precursors of later relationships.”⁵

1.2 Aristotle’s Concept of Friendship

While the topos *friendship* seems to be one of the lost topics in ethics today, psychological findings agree with Aristotle’s assessment that friendship contributes to moral development and the stabilization of personality, and is one of the requirements for a successful life. So for Aristotle, the contemplation of friendship is a central theme in ethics, and he dedicates to it one-fifth of his entire train of thought in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

For this he gives two justifications: 1. “(Friendship) is a virtue or implies virtue” and 2. “is besides most necessary with a view to living.”⁶ But if the question concerning the conduct of life is indispensable for the “attainment of the highest human good,” that is, for the development of the *humanum*, then “it must be given a systematic significance within the ethical investigation.”⁷

Philosophers close to Fichte, such as Rudolf Eucken, the forerunner of life philosophy, and his students, rejected the friendship concept of Aristotle as obsolete, because in it the “idea of humanity” acquired just as little significance as the “individuality, the spiritual distinctiveness of each person” (Schulz, 2000, p. 139). In response it can be said first of all that for Aristotle, through striving for the

³ Sullivan, 1953, quoted in Youniss 1980.

⁴ Furman, Rahe, Hartup, 1979.

⁵ Wagner, 1991, p. 14 / Keller, 1996 / Alisch, 2006.

⁶ NE Book VIII; Ch.1 [1155a, 3-4; 4-5].

⁷ Siemens, 2007, p. 20.

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highest good, virtue, "the idea of humanity" is inherent in each person, and that he especially commends "the general love of humanity"; and second, that this highest good becomes operational in many ways, an idea he takes up in his critique of Plato in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For this reason he can afford to argue here on a very high level of abstraction, and doesn't need to go into the friends' precise qualities of character in which virtue is substantiated. But that he was actually understood this way is shown by the development of his concept by Cicero, who points out the virtues deduced from the highest good in individual pairs of friends, using famous citizens of Rome. Anglo-Saxon philosophy, on the other hand, has again been occupied for about the last 20 years with the Aristotelian concept of friendship, since it found in the definition of "philia" an early interpretive framework for the question of self-interest and the consideration of others' interests. Of course one also takes note of the political dimension, thematized by Aristotle at the end of his remarks. In our context, neither this nor his remarks concerning the treatment of "inequality" in friendship will be dealt with, since we will choose primarily the texts and trains of thought having affinity to those of children today.

... without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods;... Or how can prosperity be guarded and preserved without friends? The greater it is, the more exposed is it to risk. And in poverty and in other misfortunes men think friends are the only refuge. It helps the young, too, to keep from error; ... it stimulates to noble actions...⁸

For Aristotle *friendship* is not just an arbitrary variable one can strive for or just as well do without, but rather essential for life, and in its absence a life must be regarded as "a failure." For Aristotle, this is related first of all to the fact that he cannot imagine a moral development of character without correctives and feedback from friends, and second, this understanding is determined by the old classical theorem of "kalokagathia," that the "good and beautiful" belong together.

⁸ NE Book VIII; Ch.1, [1155a].

According to this there is a connection between the good and the beautiful, between the ethical and the aesthetic, between the “moral” and the “sensual” qualities. “Friendship as a virtue gives a subtle radiance to life and is revealed in a ‘style of existence.’”⁹

But it is not only necessary but also noble; for we praise those who love their friends, and it is thought to be a fine thing to have many friends; and again we think it is the same people that are good men and are friends.¹⁰

Since *friendship* is connected with “virtue,” for Aristotle the prerequisite is moral competence, which requires practice and the mutual help of the friends. In this context the constitutive question arises of self-love and love for the friend; that is, the question of what it means to love the other for himself instead of appreciating him for “contingent” and “selfish” reasons. For many philosophers, the Aristotelian discussion of friendship provided a welcome occasion for further reflection on the moral-philosophical controversy between egotism and altruism in their conceptual distinction. Even though Aristotle never thematized either conceptually or objectively what we understand as “altruistic strivings,” the discussion of “love for a friend for his own sake” can be understood as a form of striving that is revealed in “interpersonal action” as “morally excellent”.¹¹

Friendship can thus be seen as the result of a moral self-education. In this the high value of the friends for one another consists in the support they offer in the development of personality and the achievement of a good life. And so the formation of a friendship is dependent on both candidates desiring an ethically oriented self-determination:

Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good themselves. Now those who wish

⁹ Wils, Jean-Pierre: *Freundschaft, Ethik und Unterricht*, Heft 1, 1998, S. 2.

¹⁰ NE Book VIII; Ch.1, [1155a].

¹¹ Schulz, 2000, p. 142.

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well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good – and goodness is an enduring thing. And each is good without qualification and to his friend, for the good are both good without qualification and useful to each other. So too they are pleasant; for the good are pleasant both without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and others like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good are the same or like. And such a friendship is as might be expected permanent, since there meet in it all the qualities that friends should have.¹²

For Aristotle friendship is not based on a superficial confluence of interests and enthusiasms, but is “internalized in a radical way as a quality of the soul,”¹³ as a highly demanding way of demonstrating good will and communicating emphatically and constructively with the friend. This fulfills a genuinely human task, regarded by Aristotle as inherent in the soul, the striving for virtue. Recognized in friendship is the *person* of the other, which is respected, fostered, and loved for its attitude and orientation. The give-and-take of friendship occurs within a mutual caring for “virtue” as the highest fulfillment of life:

...but mutual love involves choice and choice springs from a state of character; and men wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of feeling but as a result of a state of character. And in loving a friend men love what is good for themselves; for the good man 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.¹⁴

Of course only the true or perfect friendship is required to fulfill these strict criteria. As an observant student of nature, Aristotle accepts humans as they are, their *physis*, and thus also friendships occupying a less noble plane, such as those originating in pleasure or utility:

¹² NE Book VIII; Ch.3, [1156b].

¹³ Wils, Jean-Pierre: Freundschaft, Ethik und Unterricht, Heft 1, 1998, S. 2.

¹⁴ NE Book VIII; Ch. 5, [1158a].

Friendship for the sake of pleasure bears a resemblance to this [perfect] kind; for good people too are pleasant to each other. So too does friendship for the sake of utility; for the good are also useful to each other.¹⁵

But while these sorts of friendship are subject to many disruptions, and also end with the conditions that made them necessary, a genuine friendship, being defined by trust, is also able to withstand conflicts, such as, for example, slander:

... it is among good men that trust and the feeling that 'he would never wrong me' and all the other things that are demanded in true friendship are found. In the other kinds of friendship, however, there is nothing to prevent these evils arising.¹⁶

This exacting form of friendship is only possible with very few others, since it would be almost beyond imagination

for many people at the same time to please the same person very greatly, or perhaps even to be good in his eyes. One must, too, acquire some experience of the other person and become familiar with him, and that is very hard.¹⁷

But should such a friendship become well-established after a long period of time, (as when the friends have "eaten a bushel of salt together"¹⁸, it can be disrupted by changes in character, or fade away due to spatial separation:

"Often the Lack of Conversation Has Ended a Friendship".¹⁹

1.3 A Modern Definition of Friendship

This initial brief introduction to Aristotle's concept of friendship, which is characterized by the deep, caring, empathetic encounter between two people, already reveals its similarity to the understanding of friendship today. Although today the mutual benefit does not resonate in support of the soul's striving for virtue, this is nonetheless implicit in the reciprocity of respect and solidarity. We

¹⁵ NE Book VIII, Ch. 4, [1157a].

¹⁶ NE Book VIII, Ch. 4, [1157b].

¹⁷ NE Book VIII, Ch. 6, [1158a].

¹⁸ NE Book VIII, Ch. 3.

¹⁹ NE Book VIII, Ch. 5, [1157b].

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offer the following brief modern definition from the internet encyclopedia Wikipedia as documentation:

Friendship is a term used to denote *co-operative and supportive behavior* between two or more people. In this sense, the term connotes a relationship which involves mutual knowledge, esteem, and affection and respect along with a degree of rendering service to friends in times of need or crisis. Friends will welcome each other's company and exhibit loyalty towards each other, often to the point of altruism. Their tastes will usually be similar and may converge, and they will share enjoyable activities. They will also engage in mutually helping behavior, such as exchange of advice and the sharing of hardship. A friend is someone who may often demonstrate reciprocating and reflective behaviors. Yet for many, friendship is nothing more than the trust that someone or something will not harm them²⁰

Value that is found in friendships is often the result of a friend demonstrating the following on a consistent basis:

- the tendency to desire what is best for the other,
- sympathy and empathy,
- honesty, perhaps in situations where it may be difficult for others to speak the truth, especially in terms of pointing out the perceived faults of one's counterpart,
 - mutual understanding.
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2. Children Philosophize on the Question: What Is Friendship? Who Is a Friend?

"Without friends no one would choose to live."²¹ This is also the thesis of the children at the Himmelszelt Kindergarten, Karlsruhe, Germany who philosophized about friendship in 2004, of the 4th graders at the Peter-Hebel-

²⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendship> 1.5.09.

²¹ NE Book VIII, Ch. 1, [1155a].

Schule, Karlsruhe, Germany, who philosophized about friendship in 2007, and of the students at the University for Children, Bretten, Germany, "*studium puerorum sapienticum*" (Kinder- und Jugend-Uni Bretten - Kompetenzzentrum für Hochbegabung) who philosophized about friendship in 2009.

4th -graders at the Peter-Hebel-Schule, Karlsruhe, Germany:

(33) Ladem: You are glad, you are glad to have a friend.

(34) Dany: Happy.

(35) Jule: You aren't alone.

(36) Julia: You're happy when he comes.

(37) Elvira: Then you aren't alone and you really like someone...

(38) Sophia: You have the feeling, whenever things are bad for you, that you always still have a friend, someone who will make you feel better. That is, you have the feeling that someone will always stand by you.

(39) Jan: Yes, that's right.

(40) Johannes: So what Sophia said, that's right.

(41) Ladem: I think it's good that you...., because, that you have a friend you can talk to about everything.

A person spends time with a friend, engaging in activities which represent what is of highest value in life, and for children this means playing together. Philosophical theory concerning the art of living views all of life as play, in which the "I" appears as a player, lays down rules, chooses play partners and places, and encounters chance, adversity, or fateful events in a way that is playful, or in other words self-determined.²² Friedrich Schiller, in fact, suggested that humans are

²² Wilhelm Schmid; *Leben als Spiel? Philosophische Überlegungen zur Lebenskunst*. In: Eva Marsal & Takara Dobashi: *Das Spiel als Kulturtechnik des ethischen Lernens*. Münster 2005, S. 19-29.

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"only entirely human when they are playing,"²³ and so had his audience participate in *play* in his project of enlightenment. Although children have no access to these concepts, all of their manifestations of life are nonetheless accompanied by *play*, and thus that person is a friend who plays with them on their level. This kind of friendship, as Aristotle puts it, is the one based on equality, "for the friends get the same things from one another and wish the same things for one another, or exchange one thing for another..."²⁴

"Playing together" and the associated development of values that takes place in games organized around imagination or rules serve as an operational definition of friendship / a friend. That this has already been internalized as a concept in small children becomes clear in an argument, in which one boy, using this concept, wants to prove to another boy that they are still friends. To demonstrate this we cite a section of dialogue from a film transcript with kindergartners²⁵ who are philosophizing together on the question "What is a friend?"

Children of the Himmelszelt Kindergarten, Karlsruhe, Germany:

Researcher: "Now you have told about some things you do with a friend: you play with him, etc. Can we now summarize what a friend is? Whom do you consider a friend?"

The children point to their friends and say "He/she is."

When Niki points to Mohammed, he shakes his head and says "no."

Researcher: "Wait a second. Are you saying you are not his friend?"

Niki leans toward Mohammed and says, "But we play together. You are my friend."

²³ Schiller, F.(1793/94). 1959. Bd. 5, 15. Brief. „Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen“ (1795).

²⁴ NE Book VII, Ch. 6, [1158b].

²⁵ P4C in the Kindergarten „Himmelszelt“, Karlsruhe, Germany: Juli 2004.

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Researcher: "Niki says you play together and so you are friends. Do you also think so, Mohammed?"

Mohammed shakes his head.

Niki: "Or are you joking? You've always said you are my friend."

Mohammed says nothing and looks away.

Researcher: "Are you his friend or aren't you? Tell us."

Mohammed: "No."

Researcher: You are saying you aren't his friend. Why aren't you?"

Mohammed: "I already have a friend."

Researcher: "Oh, you already have a friend. What's his name?"

Mohammed: "Philipp."

Researcher: "Philipp. And what do you do with Philipp?"

Mohammed: "Play outdoors."

Researcher: Aha! You play outdoors with him."

Niki to Mohammed: "I play with him too. Philipp, you, and I, we all play outdoors."

Researcher to Niki: "So you think all three are friends because you play together/"

Niki: "Outdoors."

Both parties use "playing together" as evidence of friendship. Since the children are very young (3-4 years old) precise verbalizations are a problem for them, especially in dealing with difficult situations. Clearly, Mohammed finds it awkward to disappoint Niki by declining to be his friend. But he stands by his belief that one can have only one friend.

Whereas Aristotle only suggests indirectly that there can only be one true perfect friend, and Cicero, who follows Aristotle, refers only to noteworthy pairs of friends, Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533 - 1592) in his *Essay on Friendship* deduces logically that it is impossible to have more than one true friend.

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[Image 1]

The friends Harmodios and Aristogeiton attempted to murder the Athenian tyrants Hippias and Hepparchos in 514 B.C. Statues by Kritios and Nesiotes (Roman copy)

Primary school children in the 4th grade still associate the friend with the person they get to know at play and can best play with, as is shown by the research project Children Philosophize about the Meaning of Play.²⁶

(9) Johannes: Well, I meet..., whenever I get to know a friend, I really always do that while playing or something, I always ask if I can play too or something like that.

²⁶ (2005-2014) The following children's dialogues on the theme "Friendship Play" were taken from transcripts from the year 2005 (Peter-Hebel-Schule, Karlsruhe, Germany)

As Aristotle suggests,²⁷ one shares the world with the friend, and also the newly created worlds of imagination.

(11) Maja: Sometimes I also imagine with my friend that we are some kind of animals in the wilderness, and we jump around on the beds and then that is like a tree.

The fantasy worlds can also touch on reality, and allow the children to anticipate empathetically a future (adult) world that is otherwise concealed from them, and about which they are very curious. Additionally, in play they can come to grips with their visions and values:

(23) Elvira: Sometimes I play with my friend that we're grown up or something, it sounds kind of silly, that I work in an office, and then you actually feel as if you were a grown-up.

(24) Sonja: Well, then you feel...since there are children who really want to be grown up...not me, though. But [...] and then you can also imagine what it's really like with grown-ups.

(114) Amanda: Or when I play with my friend, and she always says, but it really isn't like that, then ... oh, we don't always have to play what's real. You can also use your imagination. A little imagination never hurt anyone. For example when you are an actress, then you can really imagine it.

Along with the pleasant emotions that come from the suspenseful pleasure of anticipating the future, or innocent "as-if" scenarios such as the role play "family dog," the children also produce frightening situations, since the support of friendship makes them feel strong. These broaden the spectrum of experience and satisfy the children's sense of adventure in a "non-hazardous" way.

Ten-year-olds at the University for Children, Bretten, Germany

²⁷ NE Book 8, Ch. 5.

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(135) Hassak: So for example, when my friend and I pretend one of us is a dog, it's fun, and then you feel as if you really had a dog. Then I feel happy.

(137) Dennis: Once my friend and I played that she was a dog, and then I always said "sit" and then she really sat down, and if I said "shake" she really gave me her hand and everything, and that was fun.

(126) Elvira: Sometimes it's fun, but sometimes you can play dangerous things too, and then you can get scared.

(128) Gina: So when I was playing with my friend, after we went to bed at night, she put a plastic spider on my stomach. Then I screamed and was really scared, it was such a gigantic plastic spider. I thought it was a real one. Then my Mama came in and asked "What's going on here?" and then I said "Nothing."

Practice in "virtue" and the struggle with it, the striving of the soul after the good, is seen in the way *winning* – *losing* is handled. Here two ego-interests collide: the wish for victory and the desire for harmony with the friend. Especially in this transaction the children arrive at an independent formation of values. Through the dialogue, the personal meaning of victory is altered; the children in their community of inquiry work out the idea that the game as such is important, not winning. Above all, the moral requirement is raised here that *losing* must not lead to breaking off the game. Instead, the loser should be happy along with the winner.

4th -graders at the Peter-Hebel-Schule, Karlsruhe, Germany:

(67) Maja: And why did he lose the game?

(68) Sonja: Not everyone can win.

(69) Giovanna: It could also be that he lost because he didn't think about it, and just thought, oh, I'm winning, I'll just do this and this.

(70) Luise: It's actually not all that important, but if you're always losing, then at some point it isn't so much fun any more.

(71) Harry: So actually, when you play a game it doesn't matter if you win or lose, because the most important thing is playing. And it's fun anyway.

(72) Felix: It has to be fun.

(73) Ole: The main thing is, it's fun, since always winning, like Luise said, isn't so much fun, and the most important thing about a game is that you always have fun.

(74) Miro: Actually it's the same with running races. Being in the race is the important thing.

(75) Luise: You should also be happy for the other person, for example when your friend wins.

(76) Miro: You can't say oh, now you won. Now I don't like you any more. That's mean.

(77) Elvira: Then playing is no fun any more, if your friend says "Oh, now you won, now I'm going to be difficult. Then it's no fun any more to win.

Afterward the children explore the question whether "playing together" could also threaten friendship, and they come up with the following arguments:

The friendship is in danger when the other person

- feels betrayed,
- has been deceived by false promises of play,
- is a bad loser,
- wants to hurt the other person with insults,
- or is deceived in the "positive" sense by the other not claiming a potential

victory.

(78) Luise: So when one person is always cheating and you notice it and say why are you cheating and he says I wasn't cheating, that can ruin a friendship.

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(79) Miro: Or if a person always says yes, I'll play with you, and then they never do it, that also breaks up a friendship.

(80) Felix: But if you're playing together, when you [...] somehow get into a fight, it's kind of stupid when one person has won and the other one hasn't, you're supposed to be happy for the winner, too.

(81) Elvira: And when you're playing something together you shouldn't insult the other person, like, um with "you are so bad and I am better."

(82) Ole: And when you are always winning, if you just keep on winning, then it's also dumb; someone could say, now I'll try once to lose so I can show the other person that you don't mean it in a bad way when you win, sometimes I do that with my mother.

(83) Giovanna: Yes, but then they didn't really win, no, the other person didn't really win, and if he knows that you lost on purpose, then he doesn't feel so good, because then he didn't really win.



Children's Friendship²⁸

For the children, then, as for Aristotle, the threat to friendship is related to the fact that one of the two partners has not (yet) attained a moral plane that would allow for a symmetrical ethical exchange to occur and for always paying

²⁸ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freundschaft> (vom 1.5.2009).

empathetic attention to the friend's interests, attending to them in a reflective way. For the friendship to endure, there must be a "likeness of those who are like in virtue"²⁹. Like Aristotle, then, the children too understand friendship as supportive in forming the ethical self.

Thus they feel called upon by friendship to render help, even in difficult situations:

(54) Ladem: So if I have a friend, I want to help when he has a problem.

(55) Dennis: For example, when my friend is sitting on the toilet and there's no more toilet paper.

(56) Linus: Well, I've often helped Miro, too. With him the chain used to come off his bike a lot.

(58) Miro: Whenever I shift down, that's when it happens, the chain pops off, and we're always riding together, and he puts the chain back on for me. Now he's shown me a trick so I can do it for myself.

(59) Lea: It was last year in the winter when my friend slipped and fell with his bike because there was so much snow on the ground, and then I, um, got off my bike and picked up his school bag for him and put it in his basket again, and he said thanks and rode off..

(60) Ladem: I wanted to say the same thing, that maybe now they are getting to be better friends.

Friendship is strengthened by helping one another. This help consists not only of moral support or active assistance, but also material support, which, however, must be balanced out through reciprocation.

(62) Johannes: For example, when you...sometimes I lend my friend something or he gives me a loan; when you want to buy something, you can borrow money and then give it back again the next day.

²⁹ NE Book VIII, Ch. 8, [1158b 10].

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(63) Ladem: Well, lending money, I hold off a bit on that, because you never know if you'll get it back again, even when it's my friend, but in spite of that.

(64) Lea: Sophie and I, we always take turns, sometimes I buy her something when she doesn't have money, and in return she buys me something, and that way we always take turns.

(65) Elvira: Friends are always good to each other.

But most of all the children find it important to resolve conflicts with their friends:

(80) Johannes: Sometimes there's an argument.

(81) Elvira: Me and my friend, we fight, but then we make up and get along again.

Together the children search for ways to resolve a conflict between friends:

(170) Researcher: Now how can Lisa and Tobias resolve their conflict? Lisa stepped on Tobias' toy knight and broke it. What do you think? Before you said that a part of friendship is fighting. What do you think? What can they do now? Right now they are angry with each other. Lisa is going home sad and Tobias is furious. What are the possibilities? Ladem?

(171) Ladem: Well I think, for example, it would be possible for Lisa to go back to Tobias and apologize, and they could talk again, like, how they could make things ok again, then I would say, come on, we'll fix the knight, we'll glue it back together or something, so that the knight gets put back together.

(172) Dennis: Then Lisa could have said, come on, Tobias, I'll put your knight back together, then, to thank her, Tobias could say come on, now we'll play something else. Then they would be friends again.

(173) Johannes: anyway, Tobias should apologize first because he had the wrong reaction. That's why she did it. Tobias could still say to her, it's not so bad, I can buy a new one again.

(174) Oskar: Actually it seems to me, I think, that if she'd said she would put it back together, Tobias would be so angry, maybe he wouldn't even have listened to her.

(175) Researcher: Hm. He'd still be so mad. What do the others think? Do you think this can't be resolved, that the friendship is over, is that what you think?

(176) Oskar: No, I think more that they should get together again in a few days, and then like each other again.

(177) Miro: I think fights go away after a while.

(178) Elvira: I think a friendship isn't good if you are fighting right away. I think you should get along with each other.

From the many dialogues, we have chosen those in which children developed their central theories in relation to friendship:

1. Friendship brings happiness and makes life worth living.
2. Friendship only thrives within an ethical framework.
3. Friendship means helping one another.
4. Friendship requires the resolution of conflicts.

These premises are not only found in the Aristotelian concept of friendship, but for example also in the concept of the Romantics. But since theirs is more oriented toward the union of souls, as well as "self-discovery" and "self-recognition" in the alter ego, it does not correspond to the activity-centered needs of children, who wish to construct and balance out a common set of ethical rules and values.

Conclusion

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Few philosophers have established the concept of friendship in their ethics as persuasively and essentially as Aristotle, who constructed it by going from simple to highly complex entities. He begins his writings on friendship with natural conditions, such as friendship in the animal kingdom, for example that of birds for their young; which also occurs in the human realm as friendship towards descendents and thus as love for "beings of the same heritage," as "a sense of belonging," and praised as "general love for humanity"³⁰. Moving forward, this general love of humanity is expressed in conscious, autonomously chosen form in the lasting encounter with a friend who is loved for his own sake, or with friends in relationships based on exchange of utility or pleasure. But Aristotle also integrates forms of political rule into his concept of friendship, thus breaking out of the framework of both prior and subsequent thought. If one transposes his thought from antiquity, making it relevant to the present time, his concepts offer many impulses for extracting the ageless *humanum* and relating it to the concepts of children, within whose world the friend represents an asset which is both necessary and desirable.

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