

Happiness and the human-nature connection

**An exploration of the necessity of a connection with nature for a
happy life through the examination of Aristotle's virtues of courage
and friendship**

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Abstract

In modern society, we are increasingly disconnected from nature. This disconnect could have negative implications for our everyday lives, not just in terms of psychology, but also in our ability to lead a happy life. In this thesis, I will answer the research question: is a connection with nature needed for a happy life? I will use the virtue ethics of Aristotle and the corresponding concept of happiness to answer this question. Particular attention will be focused on cultivating the moral virtue of courage and engaging in a friendship with nature. In the first chapter, I will explore the meaning of virtue ethics and the surrounding debate. I will also discuss the concept of nature connectedness by environmental psychologist Schultz (2002). In the second chapter, I will examine the requirements for virtuous activity and establish that situations in the modern-day city may not be readily available to everyone, and situations in nature can complement the situations found in the city. I will illustrate this by giving an example of rock climbing. In the third chapter, I will analyze the Aristotelian concept of friendship. I will conclude that to engage in an equal friendship with nature it needs to be a thinking, reasoning entity capable of understanding the other party in the friendship. Because a friendship with nature is, at this moment, not possible, I propose a metaphorical friendship as an alternative to solve this issue. Finally, I will conclude that a connection with nature is not needed to be virtuous or live a happy life, but that a metaphorical friendship with nature can help with the cultivation of the moral virtues.

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Introduction

We are spending increasing amounts of time indoors in comparison to our evolutionary human ancestors, even though the natural world, with its trees, rivers, and mountains are a fundamental part of our being. This is an interesting transition from a species that has been living in the natural world of vast wilderness since their primitive beginning millions of years ago. Now, an increasing amount of empirical evidence is telling us that to be healthy, both mentally and physically, we need to strengthen our connection with the natural world that surrounds us and shaped us into the species of human beings we are today (see Seymour, 2016). These recommendations often come from either psychology and the Japanese art of forest bathing (Shinrin-yoku) or popular science non-fiction books that tend to have all the answers and memoirs that describe a journey of self-discovery. However, the positive views regarding the influence of a connection with nature on our wellbeing often depend on empirical evidence or a hedonistic conception of what happiness is, that is, the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. But if we are to understand the relationship between nature and happiness, it may be interesting to look at a philosophically strong concept of happiness, like the Aristotelian virtue ethics, which ties happiness to moral excellence and contemplation.

In this thesis, I will answer the research question: is a connection with nature needed for a happy life? To answer this question, I will focus on Aristotle's virtue ethics and the corresponding concept of happiness, in particular on cultivating the moral virtues and engaging in a friendship with nature. The Aristotelian concept of happiness is called eudaimonia. It is, in short, the highest human good that must be wanted for itself and requires virtuous activity in accordance with reason (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a2-15). First, I have to clarify what kind of nature will be discussed throughout this thesis. By nature, I mean anything from the wilderness that has been left untouched by humans, to a few trees and some grass in a local park. People can even benefit from some plants in their living room, but that is not what I will focus on. Thus, by nature, I mean the type of nature one can physically immerse oneself in with activities like gardening, walking, hiking, climbing, and being in nature and experiencing the surroundings. I will also refer to these kinds of nature as the natural world, natural environment, natural surroundings, or something similar.

The relationship between virtue ethics and a connection or friendship with nature has, to my knowledge, only been analyzed relating to the climate change problem and environmental ethics. There seem to be no philosophical examinations of the influence of a connection or friendship with nature on the Aristotelian concept of a happy life. Moreover, in debates surrounding environmental ethics, philosophers argue for nature having intrinsic value rather than instrumental value and, therefore, we should acknowledge our moral obligations to the preservation and conservation of the natural world (Brennan & Lo, 2015). In short, instrumental value means that the thing is useful as a means to achieve other ends. Intrinsic value means that the thing has value in its own right independently of others and is, therefore, an end in itself (Brennan & Lo, 2015). However, in the essence of intrinsic value lies that there are no relationships required to other entities. I aim to state the importance of a relationship between human and nature from the perspective of humans, but also the perspective of nature. Both can be seen as having intrinsic value, but the value of these also lies in them having a relationship. If we want to move past instrumental and intrinsic value, we should move past an understanding of nature as an object and move towards nature as an entity in itself that is part of a holistic system in which everything is connected. Only then can we build a lasting relationship with nature that can be mutually beneficial, and only then can we engage in a connection with nature, which can help us cultivate our moral virtues. For, if we regard the whole of the natural world as having relational value and value on its own, one can learn from nature and cultivate one's moral virtues in accordance with nature.

One of the more promising ways to add that relational value to our connection with nature is to examine the Aristotelian virtue of friendship, in particular, a friendship of the good which is based on a mutual tendency to act according to the virtues, which is necessary for humans to have a happy life (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156b7-9 and I.13 1102a5-6). A friendship of the good bypasses the problem of instrumental and intrinsic value while adding that relational aspect. This thesis will, therefore, give a different perspective on what a good life is in relation to the natural world. An emphasis on whether a connection with nature can be beneficial to a happy life can give us insight into the classic Aristotelian virtue ethics and add to a more elaborate version in which modern values, such as going back to the roots of

our fundamental being, are included. Aristotelian virtue ethics is primarily concerned with the highest human good and how we are to live a life of eudaimonia. This focus on a holistic concept of happiness and morality, rather than one part of virtue ethics or an account of how to read Aristotle, makes the virtue ethics of Aristotle suitable for analysis in this thesis. I will focus on the moral virtues as the intellectual virtues, like practical wisdom, are acquired through teaching, experience, and time, while the moral virtues are acquired as a result of habitual behavior in situations that call for moral behavior (*Nic. Eth.*, II.1 1103a14-19). This thesis is about whether a connection with nature is needed for a happy life. To answer that question, I need to look at what that friendship with nature can look like and how one can benefit in cultivating the moral virtues from that connection.

To answer the research question, I have divided this thesis into three chapters. In the first chapter, I will explain the theory of virtue ethics and attempt to cover the debate surrounding environmental ethics, the virtue ethical language, and the virtue of friendship. I will also discuss the psychological nature connectedness model by environmental psychologist P. Wesley Schultz, whose inclusive approach is similar to what I propose in chapter 3. I will use this theory in chapter 3 to examine what a friendship with nature can add to the cultivation of moral virtues and a happy life.

In the second chapter, I will examine requirements for virtuous activity and determine that because happiness consists of virtuous activity instead of inactivity, our living conditions should give us plenty and varied situations to train our moral behavior in so we can develop our moral virtues. There are situations one encounters in nature that can complement the situations in the city, and it can, therefore, have a positive effect on one's moral development. To make these claims clearer, I will elaborate on the moral virtue of courage throughout this chapter and give an example of a situation that calls for courage that can be found in modern cities and in nature, rock climbing. Due to the scope of this thesis, I will not elaborate on any of the other virtues. An in-depth analysis of the cultivation of the other moral virtues in connection with nature could be an interesting exploration for further research.

The third chapter will consist of an analysis of the Aristotelian concept of friendship and its implications on the cultivation of the moral virtues for a happy life. Here, I look at three different forms of Aristotelian friendship: friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure, and friendship of the good. I argue that the first two friendships are based on an idea of instrumentality and using the other friend for one's gain. Therefore, only a friendship of the good, based on the importance of two people of equal moral standing, qualifies for a friendship which values each friend for its own sake. However, Aristotelian friendship also comes with three conditions and, thus, nature needs to be a thinking entity with an understanding of the other friend in order to participate in an equal friendship, i.e., nature needs to be a subject and needs to be able to reason. I argue that nature cannot fulfill these conditions and propose a metaphorical friendship with nature that still gives both parties the benefits of actual Aristotelian friendship, but does not require nature to be a reasoning subject.

The conclusion will answer the research question and state that while happiness and being virtuous are possible without having a connection with nature, this connection or a metaphorical friendship gives other opportunities for developing the moral virtues and living a happy life. In the conclusion, I will also position this thesis in the debate surrounding friendship with nature, and reflect upon the limitations of this research and the theory of virtue ethics.

Chapter 1: A theoretical background

This chapter will provide the theoretical background on which the rest of this thesis is based. First, I will define the main concepts of Aristotle's virtue ethics. This part will answer the questions of what the highest human good is and how we are to live according to the highest human good. I discuss the distinction between moral virtues, intellectual virtues, and how they relate to each other, how to cultivate the right behavior through upbringing and laws in the city-state. That habitual behavior in accordance with the virtues and the golden mean will result in the development of a good character. I attempt to reconstruct Aristotle's virtue ethics by reading the *Nicomachean Ethics* and referring to the relevant commentaries by Brown and Kraut. In the second part, I will attempt to provide an examination of the debate surrounding environmental virtue ethics and environmental virtues. Since there seems to be no specific literature on the topic of my thesis, this section will focus on the relationship between environmental virtue ethics and a connection with nature. I will also look at interpretations of the Aristotelian virtue of friendship and explain briefly how my interpretation of friendship contributes to the debate on a connection or a friendship with nature. In the third part, I will examine the psychological theory of nature connectedness by environmental psychologist P. Wesley Schultz (2002), which will serve as a definition for a connection with nature and provide some insight to understand a metaphorical friendship with nature. This chapter will provide a broad overview of virtue ethics. The critical analysis of moral virtues will be covered in chapter two, and the virtue of friendship will be discussed in chapter three.

1.1 An understanding of virtue ethics

For Aristotle, the study of ethics is meant to examine what the good life is and how people should live in harmony with the good. According to Aristotle, the good life consists of the highest human good, commonly perceived as eudaimonia (*Nic. Eth.*, I.4 1095a19). We need to understand that it is hard to find an English word that captures the full meaning of the ancient Greek word and concept of eudaimonia. Generally, it is translated as happiness, but some have suggested that flourishing or fulfillment is more fitting as happiness may be perceived as a mental state rather than rational activity (Brown, 2009, p. x). Thus, there appears to be a stark difference

between hedonic and eudaimonic happiness. The former is merely the mental state of happiness that occurs when one strikes a balance between the enjoyment of pleasure and the absence of pain, e.g., the feeling of happiness because one experiences something superficial such as eating ice cream (Brown, 2009). The latter form of happiness, however, is the end in itself that all human activities should aim at, utterly self-sufficient and, therefore, comprises the essence of happiness, rather than “some plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth or honour” (*Nic. Eth.*, I.4 1095a22-23 and I.7 1097b20-21). Aristotle does emphasize the importance of pleasure to human life but states that pleasure should never be the end that all human activity is aimed at (Kraut, 2018). Since eudaimonic happiness entails much more than just pleasure alone, and hedonism is only concerned with the balance between pleasure and pain, I will accept the translation of eudaimonia as happiness and the highest human good.

While according to Aristotle, everyone agrees that eudaimonia is the highest human good and that this “highest of all goods is achievable by action” (*Nic. Eth.*, I.4 1095a16), what exactly happiness is, is not perceived the same by everyone. The many agree that living well consists of a life of pleasure, wealth, or honor. They take happiness to mean health if they are ill and wealth when they are poor. The wise agree that happiness involves something that cannot be grasped by mere humans but is something to strive for (*Nic. Eth.*, I.4 1095a19-27). To know how to live a happy life, one must first know what happiness consists of. Aristotle defines happiness based on the human function. Aristotle explains that happiness is closely tied to the human function and argues that the human function is to live a life of rational activity in accordance with virtue, that is, moral excellence (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1097b20-1098a15).

This answer to the question of what the highest human good is raises the question of how we are to live according to the highest human good. There is more to it than just carefully considering every action in advance. Virtues are certain character dispositions, like the disposition to act courageous, be truthful, or use practical wisdom, that should be pursued when seeking to attain a happy life according to Aristotle’s concept of happiness. To be disposed, then, is “to feel and act ‘in an intermediate way’; virtues are ‘mean’ or ‘intermediate’ states [...] in the sense of *appropriate* or proportional” (Brown, 2009, p. xiv). One acts virtuously when

one acts “at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, [that] is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue” (*Nic. Eth.*, II.6 1106b20-23).

Concerning virtues, Aristotle makes the distinction between moral virtues and intellectual virtues, which are based on respectively the irrational part of the soul in which emotions arise and the rational part of the soul which, ideally, has the irrational part of the soul in its grasp (*Nic. Eth.*, I.13 1102a28-1103a10). Moral virtues are acquired through practice and habit, and intellectual virtues are acquired through education, learning, and attaining knowledge, which will involve gaining experience and the passing of time (*Nic. Eth.*, II.1 1103a14-19). Aristotle mentions that a happy life is a virtuous life in accordance with reason (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a14-15). The ability to reflect upon the moral virtues through reasoning comes from the employment of the intellectual virtues, which gives you the right knowledge necessary to determine what a virtuous act is in each situation (Brown, 2009, p. xv-xvi). For a complete account of how to live a happy life, we should study the relation between moral and intellectual virtues, as the rational part of the moral virtues is derived from the reason that is acquired through the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom (Kraut, 2018). However, this thesis will mainly focus on the moral virtues as a connection with nature is more similar to the practical dimension of moral virtues, and a friendship with the good requires virtuous activity rather than gaining knowledge on the intellectual virtues.

According to Aristotle, some think that we are, in essence, good people. The essence or basis of the good, however, is acquired through a good upbringing rather than the good being present in our fundamental being. A good upbringing establishes the foundations of knowledge of the virtues and, combined with the right external circumstances like the opportunity to devote your life to living virtuous, sets the youth up for a bright future. Without this good upbringing in the virtues, youngsters would not be able to foster and cultivate the right behavior. After this promising upbringing, one is to mirror the virtuous man’s behavior to develop proper moral habits even further. The education that has begun in their upbringing will advance until they become the virtuous person that others look up to and mirror their behavior on. This continuous and habitual behavior in accordance with virtues and

reason allows us to develop our moral character, which we need for a happy life, not in an instrumental way, but because acting virtuously is the essence of a happy life. As ethics and politics are closely related, Aristotle argues that the function of the law of the polis or city-state, is to support the right upbringing (*Nic. Eth.*, II.1 1103a19-1103b26 and X.9 1179b5-1180a6). The person acting in accordance with virtue and reason practices virtuous behavior and habituates this proper behavior through the laws, while those who misbehave should be subjected to punishments and penalties. Those whom Aristotle deems to be “incurably bad should be completely banished” (*Nic. Eth.*, X.9 1179b5-1180a10).

Thus, a virtuous person is disposed to act according to the virtues without an internal battle of whether the upcoming action is the right action in this situation. Only when someone is able to act corresponding to the golden mean, between cowardice and rashness, wastefulness and stinginess, and acts without hesitance, is one the master instead of the student.

1.2 The debate on environmental virtue ethics and the Aristotelian concept of friendship

Since the debate on environmental (virtue) ethics and the human-nature relationship is broad and spanning several decades, I will focus on some of the more prominent figures in the debate and their interpretation of environmental virtues. I will examine their analysis of the relationship between environmental ethics and virtue ethics. Next, I will reflect on the use of the virtue of friendship in environmental ethics and state how my interpretation and use of Aristotelian friendship differs from the method in environmental virtue ethics.

Environmental ethics aims to understand the human-nature connection relating to morality, with environmental virtue ethics as the branch that attempts to determine moral character virtues of environmental ethics. Research by Louke van Wensveen (2000) shows that the discourse used by environmentalists is riddled with the language of the virtues. Van Wensveen analyzed the post-1970s environmental literature and found that this literature, which was mostly written from a philosophical or ethical perspective, made extensive use of virtue language. Van Wensveen argues that virtues play an integral role in environmental ethics and cannot be

neglected (Cafaro, 2001). The analysis of Van Wensveen shows that to answer the research question if a connection with nature is needed for a happy life, environmental and ecological virtues should be carefully considered, for, I argue, it is the human-nature relationship that can be of assistance in a happy life, considering the world that is increasingly detached from nature.

Virtue ethicist Sandler (2013) also stresses the importance of characterizing environmental ethics in terms of moral virtues. Environmental virtue ethics can be used to address particular environmental problems or challenges like global warming and the decrease of untouched wild nature or wilderness (Sandler, 2013, p. 1670). Sandler also explains that three categories of environmental virtues, which are not mutually exclusive, are found in the most prominent environmental virtue theories: environmentally justified virtues, environmentally responsive virtues, and environmentally productive virtues. The first can be defined as a virtue having at least a part of environmental goods and values. It does not matter if the values are instrumental or intrinsic. Examples of this type of virtue are caring for living things or moderation regarding the depletion of resources (Sandler, 2013). Environmentally responsive virtues are virtues in the field of action-reaction regarding the natural world, such as compassion, which is only operative when actions or decisions bring about the suffering of others (Sandler, 2013). Environmentally productive virtues have to do with the protection of the natural world and the promotion of environmental ends. One example Sandler mentions is perseverance in promoting one's environmental values for the protection of the natural world (Sandler, 2013). While these categories are primarily focused on categorizing environmental virtues and vices, Sandler gives examples of what we can learn when we form a connection with nature, such as the environmentally responsive virtue of compassion, which we encounter when we engage in a friendship with nature.

However, not everyone is convinced of the added value of virtue ethics to environmental ethics as the focus remains on the other two classes of normative ethical theories, i.e., deontology, and consequentialism. Peter Singer's account of environmental ethics (1975) draws from the utilitarian theoretical framework and defends a hedonistic approach to environmental ethics, focusing on the capability of experiencing pleasure and pain. The corresponding central environmental virtue and

vice are compassion and cruelty (Sandler, 2013). Alternatively, a biocentric Kantian approach, such as the one from Paul Taylor (1986), concentrates on the environmental moral virtue of respect for nature with as contrast the vice of nonmaleficence towards the things that are alive (Sandler, 2013). A fixation on these theories makes for a very different outcome. But if we are to connect the importance of the human-nature relationship present in environmental ethics with a strong concept of happiness, we need to recognize the contribution that virtue ethics has made to environmental ethics in the last decades.

One way in which virtue ethics has contributed is by providing a strong base for a caring human-nature relationship. The Aristotelian virtue of friendship, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, was employed by environmental ethicists to indicate the value of protecting the environment. Geoffrey Frasz (2001) has called for friendship as an environmental virtue to help address the environmental issues that span multiple generations and nonhuman animals. The reason Frasz urges us to develop a friendship with the natural world is that we already express feelings of love to our loved ones and already care for them in a similar way. A friendship with the land can, Frasz claims, ensure we go further in our preservation and conservation measures and override our interests to protect our environment. If we cultivate a friendship with the land, based on the environmental virtue of friendship, we can give those future generations a happy land that is similar to human happiness (Frasz, 2001). Bryan Bannon has a similar idea to friendship with nature. He argues that the virtue of friendship ought to be our ethical ideal that, in turn, can inspire the shift toward a new paradigm of nature preservation (Bannon, 2017).

However, these interpretations and applications of the virtue of friendship focus mainly on how the natural environment and future generations can benefit from this relationship. There seems to be little attention for the actor himself, not from an anthropocentric approach of the superiority of humans, but from the perspective of how to understand friendship with nature and how *both* parties can benefit. The current interpretation of the virtue of friendship within environmental virtue ethics lends itself well for an interpretation that focuses on the happiness of human beings without denying that nonhuman animals are less important or contradicting the

unique relationship between environmental ethics and virtue ethics. This thesis aims to contribute an alternative interpretation of Aristotelian friendship as a model that involves the relational aspect of a connection with nature. The instrumental-intrinsic value discourse is, at this moment, deficient in grasping that relational aspect and the Aristotelian friendship of the good can, perhaps, provide some insight.

1.3 Nature connectedness theory

In psychology, there is an abundance of research that proves the physical and mental health benefits of spending time in nature. Several studies have shown that nature connectedness can have significant positive effects on people's hedonic or eudaimonic wellbeing (see Pritchard, Richardson, Sheffield & McEwan, 2020, for an extensive overview). However, there have also been reports that it may be difficult to prove a causal effect between nature connectedness and improved wellbeing (Seymour, 2016). Here, I will discuss the nature connectedness theory of Schultz that will be used to define a connection with nature and, in chapter 3, to understand what a metaphorical friendship with nature could entail. This theory can contribute to a better understanding of our connection or metaphorical friendship with the natural world.

In *Psychology of Sustainable Development*, psychologist Schultz argues that “[the] human survival is directly tied to our relationship with the natural environment” (Schultz, 2002). These words are about our survival as a species related to the depletion of natural resources, but they resonate with the human-nature relationship and happiness as well. Schultz is a big advocate of a more inclusive relationship with nature and captures this sentiment in his psychological nature connectedness model.

The model is a psychological analysis of the degree of inclusion and consists of three components: connectedness with, caring for, and commitment to nature (Schultz, 2002). “*Connectedness refers to the extent to which an individual includes nature within his/her cognitive representation of self [emphasis from author]*” (Schultz, 2002, p. 67). Schultz accepts that the self “is a person's thoughts and feelings about who they are” (Schultz, 2002, p. 67). The self includes the physical body, social identities, and what leisure activities one undertakes (Schultz, 2002). If

we are to include nature within the cognitive self, it would most likely be in nature's leisure activities. The central aspect of caring for nature is the feelings of intimacy and affection with the other. This relationship can become a more emotional bond when human and nature spend more time together (Schultz, 2002). The commitment to nature is about the willingness to protect the natural environment that comes with a deepened bond. The person who has a committed relationship with nature is likely to act in the other's best interest (Schultz, 2002).

Chapter 2: Courage and the modern-day city

In this chapter, I will argue that because happiness consists of virtuous activity as opposed to inactivity, we should have the opportunity to encounter plenty and varied enough situations to train our moral behavior to develop our moral virtues. There are situations one encounters in nature that can complement the situations in the city, and it can, therefore, have a positive effect on one's moral development. To clarify these claims, I will give an example of an activity in nature that requires courage, rock climbing. I will not elaborate on any of the other virtues, as it is beyond the scope of this thesis. This may prove to be an interesting exploration for future research.

In the first part, I will examine the importance of adopting a virtuous attitude, for without it an action cannot be labeled as a virtuous activity. Next, I will look at what factors are considered in the virtuous decision process of choice and avoidance of actions. I will conclude with an analysis of the role of pleasure and pain in the context of the virtues of moral excellence. In the second part, I give an overview of courage and draw a contrast between courageous situations in the polis and the modern-day city by looking at the different forms of courage. In the third part, I state the importance of virtuous *activity* as opposed to inactivity, which is necessary to develop the moral virtues, for happiness is rational activity in accordance with virtue (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a13-15). Next, I will argue that situations in the modern-day city are not readily available for everyone, for some require payments or education to be able to participate. The natural world, then, can provide complement situations that can help develop our moral virtues. In part four, I will illustrate this argument with the example of rock climbing and courage, which I use as a representation of similar leisurely activities in nature that train virtuous behavior.

2.1 An overview of the virtuous attitude and the virtuous decision process

In this part, I will explore the importance of the moral agent's attitude and state that in order for an action to be characterized as virtuous, one must adopt this attitude. Next, I will discuss the factors one must consider when identifying morally good and bad actions and whether an action should be performed or not. I will end with an examination of the role of pleasure and pain in the virtues or moral excellence.

First, let us recall briefly what virtue is and how to create a virtuous life. “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it” (*Nic. Eth.*, II.6 1106b36-1107a3). Furthermore, there should be a strong foundation of knowledge and moral virtues in upbringing, and virtuous activity should then be mirrored after a virtuous role model. With time, one will be habitually disposed to perform virtuous behavior and acquire a moral character. If all circumstances are right, one will fulfill the ultimate goal of happiness: eudaimonia.

However, you are not out of the woods with just habitual behavior in accordance with virtue and reason (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a15). For, someone can perform a virtuous act without being virtuous, either by chance or by mirroring themselves after a virtuous person (*Nic. Eth.*, II.4 1105a22-23). For that reason, one must also have the right *attitude* when carrying out an action for that action to be counted as virtuous behavior. Aristotle presents three conditions the actor has to adhere to for something to be considered a virtuous act: “in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character” (*Nic. Eth.*, II.4 1105a31-34). Acting virtuously means that the virtuous action is performed precisely as the virtuous person would do in accordance with the right attitude (*Nic. Eth.*, II.4 1105b5-11). For only when one does this, can they be a person of truly virtuous behavior.

When one has embodied the right attitude, one must consider the objects of choice and avoidance to evaluate whether an action is a virtuous act or if one should steer away from that action because it is a bad one. Aristotle proposes that the factors that tell us that we should perform a certain action are: 1) the noble, 2) the advantageous or beneficial and, 3) the pleasurable. The objects of avoidance are: 1) the base or low, 2) the injurious or harmful and, 3) the painful. These six objects are to be evaluated according to practical wisdom for every action in order to determine whether an action is good or bad and, therefore, what the result of the action will be on our moral character (*Nic. Eth.*, II.3 1104b29-34). People who live a life devoid of virtue would most likely only chase the positive factors in the pursuit of pleasure and

the avoidance of pain. But, as Aristotle mentions, these show that virtue and vice are about the same things (*Nic. Eth.*, II.3 1104b29-1105a4). These objects have relative worth to each other and include hierarchical relationships that only the virtuous people are able to recognize. Virtuous people can, for example, accurately measure the difference in an activity that has to do with bodily pleasures and pleasures because an action is good.

Since the bad people cannot weigh the hierarchical preferences, they tend to make choices that encourage their internal battle and do not develop their moral virtues in the right way towards the intermediate, but in the wrong way towards vice (Jimenez, 2018). Pleasure and pain, for instance, are with us from our infancy and are not easily set aside. To despise pleasure as if it only belongs to a life of beasts would be a foolish affair. Because pleasure and pain are ingrained in our human nature, it is harder to fight with pleasure than anger (*Nic. Eth.*, II.1 1095b20-21 and II.3 1105a2-10). Nevertheless, we should not have to combat our pleasures as long as we have the right attitude towards pleasure and pain (*Nic. Eth.*, II.4 1105a30-34). Instead, we are to live with pleasure and pain as “for this reason also the whole concern both of virtue and of political science is with pleasures and pains; for the man who uses these well will be good, he who uses them badly bad” (*Nic. Eth.*, II.3 1105a10-13). Even though the focus of virtue ethics is not on happiness and pleasure as a mental state, pleasure and pain are a vital part of moral excellence. When one experiences pleasure when carrying out a virtuous activity it “is a sign that the virtuous disposition has been acquired” (*Nic. Eth.*, II.3 1104b3-4). So, virtuous people will properly evaluate the hierarchical relative worth of each object of choice and avoidance. When the action is performed with the right attitude, virtuous people will cultivate their moral virtues.

2.2. An explanation of the case study: courage in relation to the modern-day city

As this argument is concerned with the virtue of courage, it is only appropriate to give an overview of how this virtue works, for this virtue seems closely related to life in the polis. Courage deals with feelings of fear and confidence. The mean of courage or confidence is in between the defect that displays cowardice and the

excess that displays rashness. The aim of courageous behavior is the noble end at which all virtuous behavior is aimed. The things we fear are things of evil, but the things outside our control, that stem not from vice, we should not fear. Of all the evils such as disgrace, poverty, disease, and friendlessness, death is the most fearful thing of all (*Nic. Eth.*, III.6 1115a5-18). For fear is the expectation of evil, and “death is the most fearful of all things; for it is the end, and nothing is thought to be any longer either good or bad for the dead” (*Nic. Eth.*, III.6 1115a27-28). Death by war would be the noblest death, for those are honored by cities and rulers alike. The one who is fearless in the face of the noblest death will be called brave (*Nic. Eth.*, III.6 1115a30-34).

Apart from the truest form of courage, there are five kinds of courage subordinate to bravery in the face of death by battle. (1) The courage of citizen-soldiers is most like true courage. Citizen-soldiers are inspired to deal with the fears. They aspire to gain honor or want to evade punishments by law for being a coward (*Nic. Eth.*, III.8 1116a15-21). (2) Experiential courage manifests itself in professional soldiers or other people in other dangers. These soldiers become cowards when they come across a situation that they had not encountered before, for their bravery was based on the assumption that they were stronger or higher in numbers. The citizen-soldiers would rather face death than retreat while the professional soldier would fear death more than the evil of disgrace (*Nic. Eth.*, III.8 1116b4-23). (3) This form of courage is concerned with the passions, or emotions and feelings. This person is passionate about something and rushes towards the thing they are passionate about. The courageous person is passionate as well. If the person with this kind of courage would adopt the right attitude towards virtuous behavior and commit oneself to behavior for the right reasons, this would be true courage (*Nic. Eth.*, III.8 1116b24-1117a5). (4) The courage that is carried out because the previous attempts went well is confidence based on the wrong assumptions. For, courageous behavior should be performed from a noble end. When the sanguine person is confronted with his shortcomings, he turns into the coward he always was (*Nic. Eth.*, III.8 1117a10-17). (5) The ignorant are not aware of the dangers of a situation. When the dangers become known, the ignorant person’s bravery turns into cowardice (*Nic. Eth.*, III.8 1117a23-30). As we have continuously

seen, the polis is engrained in Aristotle's ethics. In all the forms of courage, the polis is the domain in which the first seeds of virtue are planted and which helps to nurture the seeds into mature virtues whose possessor is a virtuous person. Due to its nature as a community, the polis provides situations in which virtuous behavior can be trained.

If we were to translate these five kinds of courage to the modern-day city, the truest form of courage and the first form of courage would be almost non-existing, for this would mean that conscription and the compulsory attendance of conscription were in place, which is usually only the case in times of war. If one refuses military service, one would be shamed for being a coward and sent to prison. Therefore, these modern-day citizen-soldiers would also have to abide by the law of conscription to gain honor and prevent punishments for evading conscription. The second form of courage would be the soldiers who voluntarily enlist for the army and act like cowards when encountering a new situation or unpredictable circumstances, like an ambush. The third form of courage can be described as blind courage in which one does not think about the consequences of one's actions, like when one has had too much to drink and professes his love to someone. If this person had done so from the right attitude just as a courageous person would, he would be courageous for the right reasons. The fourth form of courage could be that one was lucky in the first courageous situation and gained false confidence because of that, like pitching an idea to the company you work for when it happens that just the right people are present that like the idea. It may not be a good or executable idea which you will discover at the next pitch for people higher up. You then return to being the coward you have always been. The fifth form of courage could be someone ignorant who learns that you could break a leg when exercising in the gym and, consequently, chickens out.

2.3 Virtuous activity and the city

As I discussed briefly in 1.1, happiness consists of virtuous activity, and this is the human function that separates human beings from animals. So for the human function to be executed, one must perform rational activity in accordance with virtue rather than the inactivity of happiness or pleasure as a mental state. This is why we

must strive for more than a feeling of pleasure and exercise the highest human good, happiness, through *activity* rather than the *inactivity* that some people experience when being fearful (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a12-17). For, as Aristotle mentions, “it makes, perhaps, no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state of mind or in activity. For the state of mind may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well” (*Nic. Eth.*, I.8 1098b32-1099a3). So, without *activity* in accordance with virtue and reason, one cannot build the moral virtues necessary for achieving the end goal of eudaimonia.

In the polis, there are different situations that one can use to continuously exercise the habits that are necessary for the eventual possession of the moral virtues. I will mention some situations here briefly. As is well-known, Athens and other Greek city-states were frequently at war. This provides the perfect opportunity to develop the moral virtue of courage. But because it was so expensive, only the Greek aristocrats could afford to go to war as they had the resources to join and had no land and crops they had to tend to (Serrati, 2013, p. 324). Another option is politics or rhetoric, in which one has to stand up in front of a crowd and argue for the important things. Criticizing the status quo, either in writing or in person, may also be a fearful encounter that can have serious repercussions such as being ostracized or banned from the city. It was Aristotle who thought that the virtuous should rule over the city instead of the many who will rule unjust and deviant (Simpson, 2013, p. 107). One thing we notice is that the situations are not the same for everyone. Farmers may be more susceptible to the dangers that nature has to offer, but the Greek aristocrats are not. These aristocrats, who are Aristotle’s audience for his ethics and politics, are the ones who have the time and resources to devote themselves to a virtuous life (Brown, 2009, xiii). They could seek out the situations that poor people were exposed to due to the very essence of their work and means of life. As mentioned before, a few of the ways in which we encounter situations that call for courageous behavior in modern-day cities, are through activities we need to pay for, like bungee jumping from a high bridge, or through work that may require education or talent, like being a caretaker for lions or race car driver.

Other fearful situations that people in the polis or modern-day city can encounter are of a different, more passive kind. An example of this is being fearful of becoming the victim of theft or murder. This is a fearful situation in which the passions, that is, emotions and feelings, are present but which do not allow acting in a way that is corresponding to the virtues. One can avoid the bad part of the city to feel safer or to prevent getting mugged, but it can always happen anywhere you are, even if you behave consciously to avoid it. And plain avoidance of fearful situations is not the kind of activity one needs to aim at. For, the person “who faces and who fears the right things and from the right motive, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confidence under the corresponding conditions, is brave; for the brave man feels and acts according to the merits of the case and in whatever way reason directs” (*Nic. Eth.*, III.7 1115b16-20). The right attitude and way of deciding whether a situation is worth to face in the pursuit of courage are essential for virtuous *activity* rather than *inactivity*. The person who deals with this situation by avoidance is the coward described in the fifth form of courage, that is, not courageous at all (*Nic. Eth.*, III.8 1117a23-30).

Moreover, Aristotle mentions we should not fear the things we cannot control or are outside the limits of virtue and vice (*Nic. Eth.*, III.6 1115a5-18). For actions of adultery, theft, or murder are bad in themselves and “simply to do any of them is to go wrong” (*Nic. Eth.*, II.6 1107a18-19). So, we should not fear the possibility of adultery, theft, or murder as they are outside our control. Instead, we should focus on virtuous *activity* corresponding to the virtues and aim for the intermediate of courage. For if we achieve the intermediate of courage, we have a courageous character and are continuously able to act courageously and possess the virtue of courage.

It seems that not all situations are available for everyone in the modern-day city. When life was simpler, like in the Greek polis, everyday life for the poor citizens would have consisted of situations where they had to do things they were not comfortable with, either with behaving courageously or one of the other virtues. They needed to take care of themselves and provide food for themselves, which meant going outside the safe city-borders to the surrounding lands or trading with people they might not have known. The aristocrats would have had the choice to devote their lives and time to become a more virtuous person and would have had

opportunities like going to war. Life in the modern-day city is much more sheltered. One needs to actively seek out situations in which one can train one's moral virtues. One needs to enlist in the army, become a firefighter or police officer, work with youth in correctional facilities, go boxing, or one of the many other activities that one can carry out in order to become more courageous. There seems to be one difference between situations that call for courageous behavior in the polis and the modern-day city: one needs to actively seek out situations to train moral behavior in, which then may or may not require payment or education to be able to participate.

There being some situations which do not call for moral *activity*, should not be a problem. However, cities do not seem to be a fruitful training ground to develop moral virtues anymore as the situations that traditionally led to the truest courageous behavior are usually not relevant at this time. Furthermore, situations like war, politics, and starting a revolution were not for many citizens in the polis in the first place. So if we take into account that Aristotle claims that happiness consists of rational *activity* in accordance with virtues, and there is not enough variation in the type of situations that call for courageous, virtuous activity, we might need to seek elsewhere to complement our moral education (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a2-18 and I.13 1102a5-6). Nature, then, is a more accessible, free way to encounter situations that call for moral behavior. Even if one does not have the means to engage in expensive hobbies like climbing, which I will use as an example later, one can immerse oneself in nature.

According to Aristotle, not everyone has the same fears. Some are a coward in the face of battle but face the situation head-on when they are about to lose all their money. Some may be brave in social situations and do not think twice about starting a revolution but are afraid of dogs. But the things that are beyond human strength, everyone fears (*Nic. Eth.*, III.6 1115a20-24 and III.7 7-13). Situations that are in our human grasp reveal that not everyone is fearful or confident in the same circumstances. If they are, they "differ in magnitude and degree, and so too do the things that inspire confidence" (*Nic. Eth.*, III.7 1115b10-11). So the magnitude and degree of fear and confidence differ from person to person and from situation to situation. A great variety of situations that call for courageous behavior, then, can challenge the person that is determined to be a virtuous human.

2.4 The case study of courage: the example of rock climbing

An example of an activity that is not present in cities and can challenge our moral disposition to be courageous is rock climbing. It may not be the most fitting courageous activity for everyone, as the people who are afraid of heights will train their virtue of courage more than people who are not afraid of heights or climbing at all. For them, a different activity, like a week of survival camping in the wild while living off the land, may be more fitting. Rock climbing is a representative of other leisurely activities one can undertake in nature that help cultivate moral virtues.

Some have said rock climbing is a form of humans wanting to dominate the natural world (Warren, 1990). However, as we have seen, it is all about adopting the right attitude towards the virtuous activity, part of which is performing an action for the right reasons. The following citations illustrate the difference in virtuous attitude and its impact on this person's ability to develop the moral virtue of courage. Here, the person has no virtuous attitude and, therefore, displays an attitude of the dominance of the natural world:

I climbed with intense determination, using whatever strength and skills I had to accomplish this challenging feat. By midway I was exhausted and anxious. [...] I fell. There I was, dangling midair above the rocky ground below, frightened but terribly relieved that the belay rope had held me. I knew I was safe. I took a look up at the climb that remained. I was determined to make it to the top (Warren, 1990, p. 251).

The next time this person went climbing, the attitude of dominance was replaced with a more virtuous attitude of awe and wonder for the natural world:

I looked all around me—really looked—and listened. [...] I closed my eyes and began to feel the rock with my hands—the cracks and crannies, the raised lichen and mosses, the almost imperceptible nubs that might provide a resting place for my fingers and toes when I began to climb. At that moment I was bathed in serenity (Warren, 1990, p. 251).

This citation shows that having the right attitude towards a situation and the action one can perform makes all the difference between feelings of anxiousness and fear, and seizing this great opportunity to embark on a journey with the rock towards the cultivation of the moral virtue of courage. So, humans wanting to overcome the challenge the mountains pose is not a problem when behaving from a virtuous attitude. We have seen, if one has the right knowledge, chooses rock climbing for its own sake, and does so from a firm and unchangeable character, one is in the right attitude to use a rock climbing situation to cultivate their moral virtue of courage (*Nic. Eth.*, II.4 1105a31-34). This person would have to carry out the courageous activity of rock climbing “for the sake of the noble, for this is the end of virtue” (*Nic. Eth.*, III.8 1115b12-14).

When considering these choices of facing and avoiding actions, one may lean towards avoidance since many people think climbing is risky business, and climbers are at risk for injury or death. Therefore, rock climbing may be labeled as a bad situation to develop one’s courage as it is rash behavior to risk your own life and the life of your climbing partner. However, when applying your practical wisdom and considering everything that lies behind the choices, one will take a different approach. Climbing is noble if it encourages the development of moral virtue, in this case, courage, and it does so. That also makes it beneficial and pleasurable, for it is in one best interest to aim for moral excellence, and climbing stimulates this interaction with the virtues. It is a fearful situation but, in such a way, fearful that it is manageable to confront those fears of heights or injure yourself by making the right choices corresponding to the situation. It may not be wise to climb with someone as a partner who does not have the relevant papers or experience. But if one has the proper materials that are in good condition and an experienced climbing partner who provides safety measures and belays you, you can train your courage without being excessively confident or rash. Climbing is about being aware of the dangers of what can go wrong, just as Aristotle requires when one chooses a virtuous activity to train their virtues.

Besides connecting with nature when rock climbing, one connects with one’s climbing partner. In both relationships, side effects are at play, which makes climbing even more rewarding, morally speaking. One builds a trusting relationship with the

one that is belaying you and the rock, which protects you from the elements and allows you to train your courage. Climbing in an indoor hall, however, can also protect you from the elements, and you do not need to bond with nature to do that. But a climb in an indoor hall is quite different. When climbing inside, one follows the route of the colored holds while the outside climbs are just about you, your climbing partner, and the rock. It is that extra dimension of being outside in the elements, in nature, engaging with nature, that gives the virtuous activity of rock climbing the challenge of the unpredictable. This unpredictable aspect can add to the moral virtue of courage, for the added risk and the unpredictable challenges your attitude and courage more than merely ascending an indoor route of, on average, 15 meters. The big walls, for instance, in Yosemite National Park, in their sensational essence, bring about sheer awe because of their size and history. It gives you a perspective of your place in the world. Rock climbing as described in this paragraph is an example of a virtuous activity that would not have been possible if it were not for the rock and the connection one has with it.

The illustration of rock climbing has demonstrated that leisurely acts in nature are a great way to train virtuous behavior when the right attitude is adopted, and one is adequately prepared and aware of the dangers. So the natural surroundings outside the polis or cities may be an excellent way to complement the moral education we get in the city because the terrain is far-reaching, and the situations are plenty, varied, and unpredictable.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that there may not be enough situations in the polis or modern-day society to develop the moral virtue of courage, and one can complement this by seeking a connection with nature. Virtuous activity is finding the right balance in doing the right thing in every situation, adopting the right attitude, and carrying out virtuous activity as the virtuous person would, for letting yourself be guided by pleasures results in excess and being too strict results in a defect (*Nic. Eth.*, II.4 1105b5-10 and II.3 1105a2-16). Without virtuous *activity*, we would not be happy, for happiness is activity in accordance with the appropriate virtue (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a14-15). The situation in which we would have gained the truest courage in the

polis on the battlefield is no longer prominent. Other situations, like boxing or being a police officer, are not readily available for everyone due to it being too expensive or requiring the right education. As I have attempted to illustrate, there are many diverse and unpredictable situations that one can encounter in one's natural surroundings that are less available in the city, like rock climbing, or other situations to immerse oneself in nature. The natural world can then provide complementary situations that are available for more people to develop their moral virtues.

Chapter 3: Aristotle's virtue of friendship

In the human relationship with the natural environment, there is always the inclination to want control and power over the natural world. From our earliest years onwards, humans used raw materials, set trees on fire to create fertile lands, and depleted natural resources. That drive for dominance of the natural world only enlarged when we had access to more technology, and there were more people to feed. The perspective of nature having instrumental value does not seem right for a living entity. This is in stark contrast with the environmental movement of the last decades in which activists fight for the people acknowledging the natural world as having intrinsic value, or value in and of its own (Butler & Acott, 2007). If nature is recognized as having intrinsic value, there could be more awareness and consideration for ecological concerns like climate change and loss of biodiversity. However, neither of these value-driven angles fit the relationship between human and nature and its effect on human eudaimonia. Even though there are some problems with reciprocity and nature as a subject, Aristotle's model of friendship can be a promising alternative to the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse, for as we shall see, a friendship of the good entails valuing each friend for their own sake. Moreover, this concept catches the importance of the relational aspect that we need in order to engage in a mutually beneficial relationship with nature. Nature can benefit in terms of care and our commitment to our 'friend', and we can benefit in terms of situations to complement the city-situations to help cultivate our moral virtues. The difficulties of reciprocity and nature as a subject, which are necessary for Aristotelian friendship, will be clarified in 3.3. By subject, I mean some sort of thinking, reasoning entity with a certain understanding of the other.

This chapter will explore the Aristotelian concept of friendship from a relational perspective rather than an anthropocentric angle that focuses on the superiority of humans over the natural environment or an intrinsic perspective, which cuts all ties between humans and the natural world. By analyzing the human-nature relationship from the relational perspective, I consider the possibility of a friendship connection with nature, for the development of our moral virtues may benefit from such a connection. This chapter will consist of two sections. First, I will examine Aristotle's concept of friendship to understand how we should perceive a connection with

nature (3.1-3.3). Second, it seems that the problems of reciprocity and nature as a subject cannot be overlooked. This section will discuss what a friendship with nature *can* look like and what the implications are for our connection with nature and the cultivation of our moral virtues (3.4).

In part 3.1, I will define the virtue of friendship and critically examine how the virtue of friendship behaves as opposed to the other moral virtues. Next, I will determine the characteristics of Aristotelian friendship and if Aristotle deems it possible to engage in a friendship with innate objects or non-human animals. Lastly, I will explain why friendship is necessary for a virtuous life.

In part 3.2, I will look at three kinds of friendships as a possibility for a friendship with nature: 1) friendship of utility, 2) friendship of pleasure, and 3) friendship of the good. I will discuss these types of friendships and analyze whether they could be a good fit for our connection with nature. I conclude that while a friendship with nature based on utility or pleasure is possible, that is a friendship based on instrumentality and, therefore, we should not pursue these types of friendships if we want a mutually beneficial connection with nature in which we can develop our moral virtues. In a friendship of the good, each friend does value the other friend for its own sake, but we run into the problem of the necessity of reciprocity and nature as a subject.

In 3.3, I will discuss these problems and analyze whether nature can be the sort of entity with which we can form a friendship. I will give a critical note on friendship with nature and refer back to Aristotle's conditions for friendship, as stated in part 3.1. I argue that, according to the conditions explained in 3.1, for a meaningful friendship to occur, both parties need to be a thinking, reasoning entity with some understanding of the other friend that is capable of reciprocal behavior on an equal basis. The importance of reciprocity and nature as a subject cannot be neglected in Aristotelian friendship and, therefore, we cannot have an equal friendship with nature.

In part 3.4, I propose a metaphorical friendship to deal with these problems. I will reflect on Schultz's nature connectedness theory (2002) to examine what benefits a friendship with nature can bring to both human beings and the natural world itself. The friendship model is still promising if we want to understand our

connection to the natural world surrounding us and improve our relationship with nature. The metaphorical friendship I propose takes all the benefits from the Aristotelian model of friendship and acknowledges that friendship is merely a figurative way of speaking rather than an actual friendship with nature.

3.1 The Aristotelian concept of friendship

The virtue of friendship comes from the Greek word of *philia*, which has not the same as meaning as we have come to know it. When referring to *philia*, besides our chosen friends, it also entails family, business-partners, and fellow-citizens (Brown, 2009, p. 252). Aristotle even gives examples of parents and children, husband and wife, or the ‘friend’ that is the cashier in the supermarket on the corner (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.7 1158b12-18 and VIII.14 1163b29-31164a1). Friendship can also be maintained between the polis of Athens and a polis or tribe far away (VIII.5 1157a26-28). Thus, there seems to be a broad idea of what friendship entails, and there may be some prospect for a friendship with nature.

Aristotle reveals at the beginning of book VIII on friendship that friendship may not be a virtue at all, for “it is a virtue or implies virtue” (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.1 1155a4). Friendship behaves differently than the other virtues. The moral virtue of friendliness is a character trait that is concerned with being kind and sociable and can be developed by oneself with continuous habitual behavior in situations concerned with social interaction (*Nic. Eth.*, IV.6 1126b30-31). Performing virtuous activity thus is in your control. The ‘virtue’ of friendship, however, is the highest external good and relies on the willingness of other people to become part of the friendship (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.9 1169b8-10). The social dimension of virtue ethics is evident in the ‘virtue’ of friendship. One needs people to mirror their virtuous behavior after, and one can mirror themselves independently from other people. However, you need more interaction to be able to call someone your friend. Due to the unique nature of the ‘virtue’ of friendship, I will refer to it as a concept rather than a virtue.

The Aristotelian concept of friendship comes with three conditions the friendship needs to comply to: 1) friends must wish their friends well for their own sake (mutual goodwill), 2) they must recognize each other's feelings of friendship, and 3) the friendship must come from the useful, the pleasant, or the good (*Nic. Eth.*,

VIII.2 1155b27-1156a5). Here, Aristotle mentions that reciprocity, or the mutually recognized goodwill, is a necessary condition for friendship and that the feelings of goodwill need to be recognized by the other person as well. This is where our two biggest problems lie for the natural world is, as far as we know, neither able to have feelings of the reciprocal sort nor is nature a subject, which seems essential for interpreting a connection as a friendship. I will come back to this in part 3.3.

Aristotle criticizes a friendship with innate objects. This rejection of love for innate objects is illustrated with his example of wine: wine cannot love you back, and you can only wish it well because you want to drink it as opposed to wishing it well for its own sake (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.2 1155b28-31). There has been discussion on whether you could pursue an Aristotelian friendship with non-human animals. Fröding and Peterson (2011) state that Aristotle was clear that such a friendship could not exist, but that, upon considering new empirical findings of animal cognition, they found a friendship can exist between human and non-human animal. They do not specify which kind of friendship. Aristotle never explicitly mentions a friendship with nature. Although it can serve as an excellent alternative to the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse, it may prove challenging to overcome these conditions.

As mentioned above on various occasions, the happy life and the highest human good consist of virtuous activity (*Nic. Eth.*, I.13 1102a5-6). Aristotle states that it is not clear for everyone why one needs friends when you can live a life in accordance with the virtues. You may think you don't need friends because you are happy, but friendship is necessary for a happy life and achieving eudaimonia (*Nic. Eth.*, IX.9 1169b3-16). "For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods [...]; for what is the use of such prosperity without the opportunity of beneficence, which is exercised chiefly, and in its most laudable form towards friends?" (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.1 1155a5-9). Moreover, friendships are the social interactions necessary for a person to develop the moral virtues and, at the same time, a virtue or implied virtue as well (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.1 1155a4). "Now if he were a solitary, life would be hard for him; for by oneself it is not easy to be continuously active; but with others and towards others it is easier. [...] The man who is to be happy will therefore need virtuous friends" (*Nic. Eth.* IX.9 1170a5-7 and 1170b18-19).

Aristotle goes so far even to say that if everyone had a friendship of the good, there would be no need for laws, for friendship is the truest form of justice. People also have more moral obligations towards friends than towards strangers, “and it is nobler to do well by friends than by strangers [and for that reason] the good man will need people to do well by” (*Nic. Eth.*, IX.9 1169b12-14).

To sum up, in order to engage in a friendship with nature, the friendship needs to adhere to the conditions of mutual goodwill, being able to understand each other's feelings, and it must come from the useful, the pleasant, or the good. A friendship that complies with these conditions is what one needs to have the social interaction necessary for the cultivation of moral virtues.

3.2 Three forms of friendship and the possibility of this kind of friendship with nature

The three kinds of Aristotelian friendships are based on utility, pleasure, and the good or the virtues (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3). In this part, I will discuss the three kinds of friendship to examine whether friendship with nature could entail one of these friendships or whether there are any problems. I will not focus on the recurring problems of reciprocity and nature as a subject. This will be discussed separately in part 3.3. Note that examples may not be as sound as they should be because of the lack of reciprocity in a human-nature friendship.

The first friendship Aristotle mentions is a friendship of usefulness or utility. A friendship of utility is between two people who are aware that they are only friends for as long as the purpose of the friendship still exists. The friendship is built solely on what these friends get from each other *for themselves*, and do not necessarily want to spend time with each other. When the usefulness of the friendship has ended, this fragile friendship is disbanded (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156a10-20).

Aristotle does not give much in-depth attention to the friendship of usefulness, for there are other friendships that are preferable. An example of a friendship of usefulness with nature could be someone living in a remote area who needs to tend to the vegetable garden because they cannot get the vegetables they need from the store. This person hates gardening and derives no pleasure from it whatsoever, but needs to solely for the reason that they have no other choice. This is where the

importance of having the right virtuous attitude is evident again, for this person cannot deepen the moral virtues without having the right attitude. The usefulness of the garden is that it is cared for. When the person moves to a village, perhaps because of old age and the dangers of living in the wilderness, the useful friendship of the human and their natural surroundings expires. The most obvious problem with a friendship of utility with nature is that both of the parties in a friendship of utility are of instrumental value to the other rather than both parties having value in and of itself. This is not the kind of connection we are looking for as we are trying to find an alternative to the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse.

The second friendship is based on pleasure or feelings of pleasantness. This friendship is between people who like the other person for their ready-wittedness, which is, interestingly enough, also a moral virtue, based on leisure and amusement. This is, however, a friendship that is solely focused on amusement and pleasure rather than the cultivation of the virtue of ready-wittedness. The friendship of pleasure is a friendship of young people who only let their emotions guide their pursuit of what is pleasant *to themselves* such as they do want to spend time together (*Nic. Eth.*, IV.8 1127b35 and VIII. 1156a12-1156b6).

Since a friendship of pleasure is based on feelings and emotions, it is difficult to give an example of a friendship with nature. The ability of trees and plants to have emotions is widely debated in the corresponding academic fields. Some have said that plants and trees have no central nervous system and are, therefore, unable to experience pain, anger, sadness, happiness and the like (Calvo, Sahi, & Trewavas, 2017). However, those are human emotions and feelings we want to ascribe to these living entities and that is precisely the anthropomorphic perspective and discourse I want to part with when thinking about what a connection of friendship with nature could look like. As of this moment, we cannot comprehend all of the complexities of the natural world or fully understand their world on their terms. Even if we were able to grasp the emotions and feelings of nature as they would perceive themselves, suppose they have some idea of an identity of the self, we would probably not be able to understand each other on our terms as we don't have a way to communicate how we perceive ourselves. Perhaps that leaves us with a sort of innate understanding of who or what we are or feel, even though we are not able to

communicate to each other in the way two people in a friendship of pleasure are. This is all speculation based on nature having some sort of way of reasoning which, if they have a way of reasoning, we haven't discovered yet.

The third friendship is a friendship of the good between two people with similar proportions of the good and dispositions to virtue in them and is, therefore, the perfect friendship. These friends are good in themselves and for the other, both without qualification (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156b7-16). "Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of their own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good—and goodness is an enduring thing" (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156b9-13). A friendship of the good is perfectly tailored to the conditions I discussed in part 3.1. The essence of the friendship is the mutual goodwill that originated from a focus on the good, with as side effects utility and pleasure, for virtuous people receive pleasure from being virtuous, which is the sign that one has acquired the virtuous disposition (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156b13-18 and II.3 1104b3-5). The friendship of the good is the epicenter of the social interaction that is necessary for the cultivation of the moral virtues, for both friends are virtuous in varying degree and can mirror oneself after the, in that specific virtue, more virtuous person. Such friendships are very rare as there are not many people with such high standards for virtuous behavior. They must also trust each other and have a certain degree of familiarity before they can admit to one another that they wish to be friends for a friendship to arise (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156b24-32).

For a friendship with nature to be a friendship of the good, both parties must be equally virtuous and must be good in themselves and for the other without qualifications or requirements. This is the only friendship that is not based on instrumental value of both parties and is, therefore, the only friendship that is conceivable when looking for an alternative to the instrumental and intrinsic value perspective. This is the only friendship that is fully committed to the condition of mutual goodwill, which is, in my opinion, essential for a connection or friendship with nature, as with mutual goodwill the value of both parties are in and of themselves rather than the parties being of instrumental value to one another. However, it is one thing to perceive nature as a subject, but a whole other thing if we are to perceive

nature as being virtuous, which is another step further than nature as a subject. As this is a remark related to nature as a subject, I will this point further in 3.3.

3.3 A critical note on friendship with nature

In this part, I will examine the Aristotelian condition for friendship of reciprocity and nature as a subject. Reciprocity and subject are closely related in Aristotelian friendship as it requires the same things of the people, or in this case nature, and comes down to the same question: can we have a friendly connection with nature on the other side of the friendship? An in-depth analysis of the Aristotelian concept of friendship, then, raises the question of whether nature can be the sort of entity with which we can have a friendship. Aristotle does not explicitly mention the subject or reciprocity, so I will focus on the conditions for friendship mentioned in 3.1 to establish what is necessary for both parties when building a friendship. This should give us some idea of whether we can engage in a friendship with nature and, accordingly, benefit from that friendship by cultivating our moral virtues.

The problem that arises when thinking about friendship with nature is that both parties in the friendship need to be a subject, for you cannot have a friendship with lifeless objects (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.2 1155b28-31). Nature, for one, is not lifeless at all, nor is it a material object that one can use for one's gain. The instrumentality we are trying to avoid in this endeavor is in the very essence of objects. This also raises the question of whether nature can be a subject, as nature is very different from human subjects in many aspects.

Here, the necessity of both parties to be subjects refers to the idea that to have a meaningful friendship based on mutual and equal value, one needs to be some sort of thinking entity with the ability to reason and to have a certain understanding of the other party involved in the friendship. The reciprocal friendship requires the same as well as an equal basis of utility, pleasure, or the good, for only then can the benefits be mutual (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.7 1158b17-21). Aristotle's conditions for friendship, discussed in 3.1, also state the importance of both parties being a subject and being able to have their part in a reciprocal relationship. To sum up the conditions again: a friend needs to be able to assert goodwill to the other friend, he must be aware of the feelings of the other about the friendship, and the friendship

must come from the good, for the other two friendships are dismissed based on instrumentality (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.2 1156a3-5 and 1155b19). So a friend should be able to think about the other friend in some way, should be able to communicate these feelings of friendship, and friendship should be a mutually beneficial relationship based on habitual virtuous behavior. It seems, then, that both parties need to have similar qualities as humans. What makes humans unique is their ability to reason, and this is also what is necessary to comply with the conditions of friendship. Aristotle's human-to-human friendships also need to adhere to these conditions, and, as we have seen, the human function is rational activity, and the good is rational activity in accordance with virtue (*Nic. Eth.*, 1098a2-15).

These conditions of friendship are in one way or the other based on the assumption that both parties have reason and can act accordingly. For one to wish their friend what is good for his own sake, one must have an understanding of who the other person is, what his or her disposition to the virtues is, and what is good for them based on his or her character. What is good for one person, e.g., to be in a mutual friendship, may not be good for another, e.g., the friend who should be in another friendship, because that is a better fit. These are only some of the things that need to be considered when one is in a friendship with another party, for the condition of mutual goodwill requires both parties to be aware of the other's feelings. Additionally, the parties need to spend time with each other to build a trusting and familiar relationship (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156b25-29). In my opinion, these things are included in being a thinking entity capable of rational thought, as a thinking entity understands what is necessary for a friendship to succeed. Moreover, to live a happy or good life, i.e., to live according to virtue, one needs to apply that very same reason to determine what the intermediate of virtues is in order to become more virtuous (*Nic. Eth.*, II.6 1107a1-3). To have a friendship of the good, the only friendship that is not based on the instrumentality of both parties, nature needs to possess reason to establish what exactly virtuous activity is. If nature does not possess reason and is not virtuous, we cannot engage in an equal friendship with nature, which is necessary to reject the instrumental and intrinsic value discourse and enter into the relational appreciation of both friends.

The requirement of reciprocity in Aristotelian friendships is a problem for a human-nature friendship in two ways. First, for a friendship to be reciprocal, both parties need to be equally virtuous, pleasurable or useful, or the 'inferior' party needs to love the 'superior' friend more proportionate to the level of superiority of the better friend (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.7 1158b24-29 and VIII.13 1162b2-4). A friendship with nature needs to be a friendship of the good, for in the other two friendships lies the notion of the instrumentality of one or both parties, which we do not aspire in friendship with nature. However, nature is not a virtuous entity, even if we perceive nature as a subject. As we have established, for something or someone to be virtuous, one needs to have the disposition to act rationally in accordance with virtue, and nature is, as far as we know, not able to have that attitude. When equality in equal measures of the good is not possible, "[...] equals must effect the required equalization on a basis of equality in love and in all other respects, while unequals must render what is in proportion to their superiority or inferiority" (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.13 1162b2-4). When there is a big difference between virtue, vice, wealth, or something else, there is no expectation of a friendship (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.7 1158b24-1159a4). That means for the friendship to be equal and reciprocal, nature has to love us humans more, for we are more virtuous, but that is not possible either.

That brings me to the second reason why friendship with nature cannot be reciprocal. When we think about reciprocity, we think of the human concept of reciprocity, which we subsequently need from a friendship. But if we want to regard nature as having value of its own and want nature to enter the friendship on mutual ground, we cannot expect the human concept of reciprocity or love to apply, for then we adopt the anthropomorphic and anthropocentric viewpoint which we want to reject. However, if an equal friendship requires to refrain from using all anthropomorphic ideas, we would not be able to have a mutual friendship at all, for all our interaction with others contain human concepts or ideas. So, if we want to have a mutual friendship, we should let go of the idea of rejecting all human concepts, like reciprocity and subject, and accept that an Aristotelian friendship may not be possible.

As we have seen, nature is not an instrumental object that we can use for our gain, nor is it a subject similar to human beings for nature does not possess reason

or an understanding of who or what others are. I propose, then, that we can only *regard* nature as a subject and, in that sense, a different kind of subject than a human subject. Because nature lacks, as far as we know, the capacity of reason and understanding, nature cannot be an equal partner in a mutual friendship as it cannot comply with the conditions of Aristotelian friendship. So, there is some sort of contradiction in friendship with nature: a friendship with nature needs to be of the good kind for us to reject the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse, but nature cannot adhere to the conditions of friendship. Even if we would take nature to be a similar kind of subject as humans, it still could not fully participate in a friendship of the good because it lacks the disposition and capacity to come to an equal moral position with people, which is necessary for us to refrain from the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse. Words or contrasts like superior-inferior or instrumental-intrinsic is exactly the discourse we want to avoid in our search for the possibility of an equal, mutual friendship with nature. If we want to move towards a friendship with nature based on the worth of each party on its own, the friendship should be equal, for ascribing value of superiority over another is not a good foundation for a friendship with nature. It seems, then, that we need to consider a friendship with nature without the human concept of reciprocity, as nature is not capable of this, and with a sense of equality that grasps the relational aspect of a connection with nature rather than an instrumental or intrinsic value discourse.

3.4 A metaphorical friendship with nature

One of the most important prerequisites of Aristotelian friendship is that there needs to be some form of reciprocity, and for that reciprocity to occur, your supposable friend needs to be a reasoning, thinking entity that is in some way able to have feelings towards you. Since nature is not a material object we can use for our self-interests and nature cannot possess reason, as far as we know, we must consider if there are other fruitful ways to refer to our connection with nature as a friendship. In this part, I will propose a metaphorical friendship that moves away from these problems and the instrumental and intrinsic value discourse and emphasizes the relational aspect of a connection with nature. By metaphorical, I mean “a *figurative* [use of words] as opposed to *literal*” (Hills, 2016), which shows that

metaphors are a symbolic way of saying something. I will reflect on Schultz's nature connectedness theory and state that a metaphorical relationship can be based on its three components: connectedness with, caring for, and commitment to nature (Schultz, 2002).

Even though we cannot engage in a proper Aristotelian friendship with nature, this concept does have some interesting features in it that can help us understand a connection with nature, what it should look like, and how this can benefit the cultivation of our moral virtues and achieve a happy life of eudaimonia. Besides the three conditions for friendship, Aristotle talks about companionship, spending time together, loving the friend for the good they are in themselves, and that friendships of the good are not incidental, but deliberate and essential (*Nic. Eth.*, VIII.3 1156a27-28, 1156b7-24). These elements are also present in the caring for nature component of nature connectedness. Caring means building a bond and feelings of intimacy and affection with nature. Spending time together can create this sort of bond or metaphorical friendship (Schultz, 2002). Even though a metaphorical friendship with nature will not be reciprocal, we can still exercise the conditions for friendship from our part of the friendship. For we wish nature good for its own sake, we can take care of nature as if it is our friend, and nature takes care of us, in some form, by helping us to develop our moral virtues, like courage. All of these features are found in the component of commitment to the natural world which means we act in the best interest of nature.

We do need to be aware that we cannot have that reciprocal friendship with nature we may have with other humans, but nature is still there for us. Nature is available for everyone, it just can't react. It can listen to our problems, but not give advice. Even though the conditions for an Aristotelian friendship are not there, we can still have that feeling of friendship towards nature, even if nature cannot respond to our feelings. But if we regard nature *as if* it is our friend, that reciprocity and both friends being a subject that is necessary for Aristotelian friendship is not necessary, for the friendship is only metaphorical for us both to benefit from.

Let us look back at the citation in chapter 2 on rock climbing. At first, the person had an attitude of dominance in which he or she wanted to conquer the mountain. Later, the person discovered that when he or she stood still and paid

attention to the surroundings, he or she created a bond with nature which helped him or her adopt the right attitude and develop the moral virtue of courage (Warren, 1990, p. 251). This is an excellent example of what a metaphorical friendship with nature should look like. The person was understanding and aware of the one-sided friendship and accepted this. Thus, the person was able to connect in an interesting way which resulted in the following passage:

I began to talk to the rock in an almost inaudible, child-like way, as if the rock were my friend. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for what it offered me—a chance to know myself and the rock differently, to appreciate unforeseen miracles like the tiny flowers growing in the even tinier cracks in the rock's surface, and to come to know a sense of *being in a relationship* with the natural environment. It felt as if the rock and I were silent conversational partners in a longstanding friendship. I realized then that I had come to care about this cliff which was so different from me, so immovable and invincible, independent and seemingly indifferent to my presence. I wanted to be with the rock as I climbed. Gone was the determination to conquer the rock, to forcefully impose my will on it; I wanted simply to work respectfully with the rock as I climbed. And as I climbed, that is what I felt. I felt myself *caring* for this rock and feeling thankful that climbing provided the opportunity for me to know it and myself in this new way [emphasis from author] (Warren, 1990, pp. 251-252).

We can learn a lot from a friendship connection with nature, like compassion or courage. We can engage in a way of life focused on the greater good and the bigger picture rather than the individual way of life we have adopted in modern-day cities. It can be humbling to spend time with nature, for a one-way friendship with nature means that we must understand what the other party is and understand the complexity of where we come from and our fundamental relationship with our natural surroundings dating back millions of years. Connectedness with nature also means that our emotional bond is embedded in our cognitive self and our idea of who we are (Schultz, 2002). We may also be able to take this knowledge and implement it in

our relationships and friendships with other humans. A gardening friendship can teach us patience for some seeds that may need some extra time to develop under the ground before it is ready to show itself to the world. It also teaches us to take care of and pay attention to our natural surroundings, just like you would in a human-to-human friendship, for not every seed, plant, sapling, or tree thrives under the same conditions. If we are too busy to spend time with nature, we can welcome nature back like an old friend for, if we take good care of the natural world, it will always be there for us to return to.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to show what kind of form a connection with nature could take and the implications this would have for our endeavor to reject the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse. A connection is an Aristotelian friendship when it complies with the necessary conditions of mutual goodwill, both parties having some sort of understanding of each other, and the friendship with nature must originate in a friendship of the good. This is the only friendship that is conceivable when looking for an alternative to the instrumental and intrinsic value perspective and the only one where both parties have value in and of themselves rather than the parties being of instrumental value to one another. However, we cannot that nature cannot, as far as we know, be reciprocal, understand the other party, or wish the other party goodwill. Therefore, a friendship with nature should be considered with a sense of equality, which grasps the relational aspect of a connection with nature rather than an instrumental or intrinsic value discourse. A metaphorical friendship can, therefore, serve as an alternative to Aristotelian friendship. Our focus on the relational aspect in a connection with nature bypasses the issues that arise when thinking of nature as having instrumental or intrinsic value. A metaphorical friendship, as opposed to an Aristotelian friendship, can help both parties to benefit from a close connection, humans by experiencing nature and cultivating the moral virtues, and the natural world because part of being a friend is to take care of each other.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to answer the question: is a connection with nature needed for a happy life? I used the virtue ethics of Aristotle to examine the possibility of a virtuous friendship with nature and how nature can contribute to a virtuous life. Chapter one provided a theoretical background that served as a foundation for the rest of the thesis. I examined the highest human good and how we are to live according to the highest human good. Next, I discussed the debate surrounding environmental ethics, the language of virtues, and the Aristotelian virtue of friendship. Finally, I considered the nature connectedness theory by Schultz (2002), which I used in chapter three to reflect upon my statements on friendship. In the second chapter, I argued that situations in the modern-day city are not as readily available as in the polis and that the natural environment could provide complement situations to train one's virtues in if one deems fit. In the third chapter, I argued that only a friendship of the good would qualify for the mutual friendship we seek with nature, but since nature is, as far as we know, not a thinking, reasoning entity, we cannot engage in a friendship of the good with nature. However, we can regard nature *as if* it is our friend, circumvent the problems of reciprocity and nature as a subject, and still benefit from our relationship with nature to cultivate our moral virtues.

According to Aristotle, happiness is rational activity in accordance with virtue (*Nic. Eth.*, I.7 1098a12-15). So for nature to play a part in a happy life, it needs to support the cultivation of moral virtues. One way this could be achieved is by having a friendship with nature, for Aristotelian friendship captures that relational aspect one needs in order to develop the moral virtues in social interaction with the other friend. A friendship of the good can be an alternative to regarding nature as having instrumental value and using it for our gain, and intrinsic value that regards nature as having value in its own right independently of others. Regarding a friendship with nature as a figurative friendship can help us to reflect on our current instrumental-intrinsic value discourse and consider other ways to debate about the value of nature. In a friendship of the good, both parties are considered to have value on their own while maintaining that relational significance towards human beings. However, as we have seen, a friendship of the good is not possible with

nature as this friendship does not comply to the conditions of an Aristotelian friendship of mutual goodwill, both parties having an understanding of the other party, and a friendship originating in utility, pleasure, or the good.

But, if we perceive a friendship with nature to be a metaphorical friendship, we *can* have a friendship from which both parties can benefit. Human beings can benefit from being in nature, experiencing nature, and caring for nature, all from the perspective of a loving friendship. I argued that friendship with nature is important and that caring for the environment is important, not from the perspective of the suffering of the natural environment, but from the perspective of a positive human-nature relationship contributing to achieving the end in itself that all human activities should aim at (*Nic. Eth.*, 1094a1-3). Similarly, the natural world should also benefit from this relationship, for we take care of the environment as if it is our friend.

By focusing on the relational aspect and the feasible elements of Aristotelian friendship, we opened up the chance to connect with nature and let nature help us in our search for moral virtues. We can go climbing in modern-day cities in state-of-the-art climbing halls. We can go to indoor skydiving. We can be courageous in the city by facing the right fears, from the right virtuous attitude, at the right time, and develop our moral virtues indoors or in cities. All we need are situations that call for courageous behavior, and we can encounter those situations anywhere if we are participating in life. Complementing situations that call for courageous behavior in the city with situations in nature that require courage can help with the improvement of the moral virtue of courage, but it is not needed or necessary. Still, if we regard our connection with nature as a metaphorical friendship, we may find that companionship and spending time together with nature are helpful in the development of our moral virtues. It may not be a necessity to engage in a friendship or connection with nature, but we can participate in the experiences we have with nature to deepen our moral virtues and care for nature from a relational, friendly perspective.

This thesis was an attempt at a critical note on the instrumental and intrinsic value discourse. Furthermore, the aim was to provide a different perspective on a connection with nature than from the environmental ethics view that we need to protect nature from human beings to prevent climate change or the loss of

biodiversity. Frasz and Bannon's interpretations of friendship with nature were primarily focused on this goal to save nature from its demise by human hands and preserve nature for future generations. While I do not deny that this is a noble goal, I am merely suggesting another way to look at friendship with nature. So, as I stated, my ambition is to criticize the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse and state that a metaphorical friendship between humans and nature can be beneficial to both.

After carefully examining this thesis, I have concluded that the Aristotelian concept of friendship may not have been the best way to criticize the instrumental-intrinsic value discourse and argue for the importance of a mutual connection with nature for the cultivation of our moral values. If we take away the conditions for Aristotelian friendship, discussed in 3.1, there is not much left of friendship, for it seems that a reciprocal subject was more important than initially thought. What may be interesting for future research is a more extensive review of a connection with nature and other virtues like temperance, justice, or friendliness instead of friendship. Another option would be to analyze the same question from another theoretical background, like deontology or consequentialism, for no doubt, they have interesting other conclusions than this thesis. For now, we can engage in a metaphorical friendship with the natural world around us from the relational perspective of virtue ethics and the Aristotelian virtues of concepts of courage and friendship.

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