

Should We Share Misfortune with Our Friends? Mixtures of Pleasure and Pain in the Context of Aristotle's Theory of Friendship

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This paper explores Aristotle's claim that, while we should be ready to assist our friends in their misfortunes, we should not share our pain with them and instead share only good things. I analyze the role this idea plays within Aristotle's overall theory of friendship, particularly his argument that sharing pain with friends brings us pleasure but causes them pain. Further, I examine Aristotle's broader understanding of pleasure and pain, including their interplay and his view on the nature of their mixture. I show that Aristotle's discussion of feeling both pleasure and pain when sharing misfortunes with friends has deeper ontological implications, rooted in his theory of mixture (*mixis, krasis*). Aristotle's claim that we should avoid sharing pain with friends, I argue, reflects not only his conception of what constitutes a noble friendship but also his understanding of the ontological incompatibility of pleasure and pain as a true mixture.

Keywords: Aristotle – friendship – pain – pleasure – mixture of pleasure and pain

Introduction

In this paper, I focus on Aristotle's astonishing claim that we should not share our pain and misfortune with friends. I shall first address several essential ideas underlying Aristotle's account of friendship. Then, I will discuss pleasure and pain in more general terms and, finally, I will attempt to answer the question of why we should not share pain with our friends. These elucidations will help us to address broader questions about Aristotle's theory of mixtures of pleasure and pain in the final section.

I. Friend as the Other Self

The importance of friendship for the good life of individuals and the city as a whole is not Aristotle's invention. In ancient Greek thought, friendship was highly valued, and its importance for humans to flourish was emphasized. Mutual support, usefulness, pleasure, sharing values, and improving one's character, etc., were seen as stemming from friendship.¹ In his discussion of friendship, Aristotle summarizes and develops many of these features; however, he adds several new emphases. For him, friendship is a "virtue – of a sort (ἀρετή τις); or tied to being a good person" and it is natural and "absolutely necessary" for our life, since it enables us to act virtuously towards our friends and family and profit from their good actions towards us:² "People are social beings. It's our nature to share our lives with others" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.9, 1169b18 – 19). On the political level, Aristotle emphasizes that "friendship seems to hold cities together" and "at any rate, what they [lawmakers] mostly aim for in their citizens is a harmony (which is basically the same thing as friendship), and they try above all to eliminate civil strife" (*Eth. Nic.* 8.1, 1155a22 – 26).³ Aristotle aptly distinguishes three types of friendship according to the three "objects" that friends share in them, namely usefulness, pleasure, and goodness.⁴ The first two kinds are friendship only to a limited degree, which usually do not last very long, since as soon as the profit or pleasure ceases, there is no reason for the friendship to continue.⁵ Aristotle also divides friendships according to the (in)equality of the people participating in them (ruler and subject, master and slave, husband and wife, parent and child) and shows risks stemming from unequal friendship.⁶ His argumentation leads to emphasizing that the "perfect friendship is friendship between good people, where being good people is precisely the thing they have in common. They want what's good for one another because, and in so far as, they're good people" (*Eth. Nic.* 8.3, 1156b7 – 10).⁷ Also, the perfect "friendship means being

¹ See e.g., Konstan (1997). For friendship in Plato and Aristotle, see Fortenbaugh (1975) Annas (1977), Cooper (1977a, 1977b), Walker (1979), Sherman (1987, 1989, 91 – 118), Millgram (1987), Price (1989), Cocking (2014), Utz (2003), Biss (2011), Carreras (2012), Perälä (2016).

² *Eth. Nic.* 8.1, 1155a3 – 6. Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 9.9, 1170a1, *Eth. Nic.* 1.8, 1099b2 – 6, 3.6, 1115a10 (we fear being without friends – ἀφιλιῶ), *Pol.* 2.5, 1263b5 – 7, *Eth. Eud.* 7.1, 1234b31 – 1235a1. If not mentioned otherwise, the translation of *Eth. Nic.* is from A. Beresford (2020).

³ Cf. *Pol.* 2.4, 1262b6 – 24, 3.9, 1280b29 – 40, 4.11, 1295b22 – 23, *Eth. Eud.* 7.1, 1234b22 – 24.

⁴ *Eth. Nic.* 8.2, 1155b19 – 21, *Eth. Eud.* 7.2, 1236a31 – 32. On sharing with our friends, see *Eth. Nic.* 9.2, 1165a29 – 30, *Eth. Nic.* 9.12, 1171b35 – 1172a1, cf. *Pol.* 2.5, 1263a30.

⁵ *Eth. Nic.* 8.3, 1156a32 – b3, 8.5, 1157b13 – 17, *Eth. Eud.* 7.2, 1236a33 – b1.

⁶ *Eth. Nic.* 8. chapters 7, 8, 11, 12, 14. Cf. *Pol.* 1.6, 1255b11 – 15, *Eth. Eud.* 7, chapters 3 and 4.

⁷ Cf. *Eth. Eud.* 7.2, 1236b1 – 6.

equals – and being similar. And the best case is between friends who are similar in their goodness” (*Eth. Nic.* 8.8, 1159b2 – 4).⁸ Friendship is not an emotion or feeling of love or goodwill we simply express towards a friend: it is a virtue (*Eth. Nic.* 8.3, 1157b32).⁹ If friendship is a virtue, it is not enough to *have* it to be a good friend; it is necessary to exercise it by *acting* as a good friend (see *Eth. Eud.* 7.2, 1237a31 – 33). Such an action takes place in sharing not only pleasure with our friends but also pain. However, Aristotle underlines several difficulties stemming from sharing pain with our friends, concluding that, actually, while we should be ready to share our friends’ misfortunes and help them to overcome them, we should not share *our* pains with them (*Eth. Nic.* 9.11, 1171a27 – 1171b22).

Friendship is a peculiar virtue; even though the other moral virtues also have their social aspect (I am generous towards the poor, I am brave in defending my compatriots, etc.), in the case of friendship, sociality is essentially ingrained in it.¹⁰ I cannot be a friend without there being someone to be a friend with. Even in the lower types of friendship based on profit or pleasure, the relationship must be to some extent mutual (even though the love between the mother and the child, for example, is asymmetrical). This feature is of course best seen in the perfect friendship based on virtue and goodness. We love our friends and they love us; the relationship is mutual and equal. A third characteristic must be added: the perfect friendship is pleasurable. Surely, there are moments when it is also painful (when our friend is sick, when we are afraid for them, etc.), but overall, it must essentially be pleasurable. However, the reason for this is not that its object is pleasure, which would be the case in a pleasure-based friendship where the friends just drink together or have casual sex. The perfect friendship is pleasurable because it is a virtue, and exercising one’s virtue, according to Aristotle, brings pleasure (*Eth. Nic.* 1.8, 1099a7 – 11, 1099a20 – 25, 7.14, 1154b20). Acting virtuously, in general, does not mean that I must fight my impulses and inclinations to do something noble, yet difficult and unpleasant; it means, rather, to act gladly and freely, since our inclinations are habituated to virtuous activity (*Eth. Nic.* book 2, particularly chapter 1). We may share various things with our friends – money, the household, pleasure, pain, etc., but for Aristotle, what we share in the perfect friendship is nothing other than life: “Also, we exercise friendship by sharing

⁸ Cf. *Eth. Eud.* 1238b16 – 17.

⁹ Cf. *Eth. Eud.* 7.1, 1234b27 – 28.

¹⁰ Concerning this point, see Sherman (1987, 601 – 602).

a life (συχῆν). So it's no surprise that that's what friends aim to do" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.12, 1171b35 – 1172a1).

If we are sharing our life and Aristotle presumes that some pleasure stems from such sharing, we should start by asking what our life consists of: "And people define being alive, for all animals, by their capacity (δυνάμει) for perceiving, and for human beings, by their capacity for perceiving or thinking" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.9, 1170a16 – 17). In these activities, perceiving and thinking, we are not only aware of the things around us or possible, future, past, or imaginary things, we are also by implication aware that we are alive and active in the world, and "to be aware that you're alive is something that gives you pleasure in itself, since being alive is a natural good, and to be aware that you hold that natural good gives you pleasure" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.9, 1170b1 – 3). If you are a good person who lives a virtuous life and is aware of it, you love existing; it gives you intrinsic pleasure, since life itself is pleasurable. Aristotle supports this argument with another claim, this time including being active in general (perceiving, thinking, acting): "[E]xistence (τὸ εἶναι) is something desirable for everyone; something we all love. But we exist by being actualized. By being alive and by doing (ἔσμεν δ' ἐνεργεῖα, τῷ ζῆν γὰρ καὶ πράττειν)" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.7, 1168a5 – 7).

So, in actualizing our life, in living up to the capacities we have as human beings, in perceiving the world, thinking about it and being active in it, we are doing something pleasurable, since the activity itself is pleasurable. And if friendship is a necessary and natural thing to do in life, a life deprived of it would be less perfect and less pleasurable. Being a friend and acting accordingly contributes to our virtuous and pleasurable life.

If it did only this, however, it would not differ much from other virtues where one acts with regard to something good. A friend is substantially different from the poor whom you have helped out of generosity, or the weak whom you've defended against the oppressor. In contrast to that, "a friend is another self" (ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός) (*Eth. Nic.* 9.4, 1166a30 – 31). Since the perfect friendship is based on sharing the good of equal virtuous people, my relationship with my friend's pleasure and pain is similar to the one I have with my own pleasures and pains: "Also, you sympathize with your own pains and pleasures (συναλγεῖ τε καὶ συνῆδεται) more than with anyone else's" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.4, 1166a27 – 28).

I am aware of my pleasures and pains; the capacity to feel them, after all, is, according to Aristotle, one of the most basic features of human (and animal) life (*De an.* 2.2 413b24, 2.3 414b3 – 5, 3.11 434a2). It is natural to seek pleasure

and to avoid pain, and even though these natural impulses must be refined and directed by moral education (not every pain is bad and avoidable, and not every pleasure is good and to be pursued) (*Eth. Nic.* 2.4, 1104b16 – 20, 1105a3 – 7), it is not our task to live an ascetic life utterly devoid of pleasure and pain. We should rather aim at living a life of virtuous activities in accordance with the reason which brings us intrinsic pleasures and enables us to sustain necessary pains (*Eth. Nic.* 1.8, 1099a7 – 11, 1099a20 – 25, 7.14, 1154b20).

In perfect friendship, our friend enables us to be aware of a new dimension of goodness and draw pleasure from it, namely his own life. If he really is “another self,” in being aware of his life, I experience pleasure similar to the pleasure I experience in being aware of my own life. Naturally, I want both our lives to be as perfect as possible, since the pleasure drawn from them will be greater and purer than the pleasure felt in the less perfect life. Even though pleasure is not the principal reason for our friendship – it is the shared goodness – it follows the actualization of perfect friendship (Sherman (1987) 597, 600, 607). A friend is someone “who, because they love you, shares your pains and your joys. Again, that’s especially true of mothers with respect to their children” (*Eth. Nic.* 9.4, 1166a7 – 8).¹¹ If a friend stayed by us only in the good times, we would not think very highly of him, after all as is generally stated: *A friend in need is a friend indeed.*

So far, I have underlined several ways in which friendship contributes to our pleasure. However, if I share my friend’s pains, does it mean that I feel pain myself? And when I share my pains with a friend, does that mean that I am causing him pain? Aristotle discusses this problem at length in the ninth chapter of the ninth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹² He starts with the following commonly accepted statement (*endoxon*): “In fact, just the mere presence (ἡ παρουσία αὐτή) of our friends, both in times of good fortune and in adversity, gives us pleasure. We get relief from our distress when friends share our pain” (*Eth. Nic.* 9.11, 1171a27 – 29).

In times of distress, we get relief if our friends are around and share our pain. Aristotle accepts this observation and offers two possible explanations: It can be the case that the presence of our friend brings us relief in that the friend helps us carry the burden of our misfortune. Our pain is thus less intensive, or we are less aware of it because the friend takes a part of it on himself. Another possibility is that the mere presence of our friend brings us pleasure, so we

¹¹ See also *Eth. Eud.* 7.6, 1240a33 – b40.

¹² For a parallel passage in the *Eudemian Ethics*, see *Eth. Eud.* 7.12, 1245b26 – 1246a25.

experience both the pain caused by misfortune and the pleasure caused by the presence of our friend. The whole experience is thus less painful than it would be without the presence of our friend. These two possibilities are not exclusive; they can be perceived as two perspectives on the experience of sharing pains with friends. The second possibility, however, is discussed by Aristotle in some detail in the following passage:

But the presence of friends seems kind of a mixed experience (ἡ παρουσία μικτή τις). On the one hand, just seeing your friends is a pleasure, especially when you're having a hard time, and acts as a support; stops you feeling too distressed. A friend is a thing with the power to make you feel better, by the mere sight of them and by what they say, if they're good at saying the right thing. Because a friend knows your character, and knows what pleases you and what pains you (*Eth. Nic.* 9.11, 1171a34 – b4).

In the presence of our friend, we are undergoing a mixed experience (μικτή τις); there are two parts in the mixture here: pleasure and pain. Just seeing our friend helps; he works as a support and is able to help us to alleviate our misfortune. He helps us not only because it is pleasurable to see him, but also because of what he says and does. Since he knows us, he also knows our pleasures and pains, and can better understand what is going on. What can help us more than other people who do not know us so well? One could think that the second part of the mixture, pain, is the pain caused by the misfortune we are sharing with our friend. However, this is not so. The pain Aristotle has in mind is pain arising from our act of sharing: "On the other hand, the awareness that your friend is upset (λυπούμενον) at your misfortunes is painful (λυπηρόν). Nobody wants to be a cause of pain to their friends" (*Eth. Nic.* 9.11, 1171b4 – 6). In sharing our misfortune, we are causing pain to our friend. Since he loves us, he will naturally feel worried about us and, since he is 'the other self' of us, he will feel the pain and pity much stronger than if we were not his friend. Thus, in sharing our misfortune, we are experiencing quite a complex situation: there is our initial misfortune, e.g., illness. Then there is the pleasure of our friend being present, alleviating our initial pain, and helping us to cope with the illness. And, finally, there is the pain we feel from sharing the misfortune and thus causing pain to our friend. We are thus experiencing a mixture of pleasure and pain which is caused by sharing our initial pain with our friend.

Before we focus more on this mixture, let us finish the discussion of what we should do in such a situation if we are a good person. First, no one wants to cause pain to their friend, so we should practice restraint in sharing misfortunes.

The opposite is a sign, according to Aristotle, of “females, and womanish men” (*Eth. Nic.* 9.11, 1171b10 – 11). “People who are tough by nature” (*Eth. Nic.* 9.11, 1171b9 – 10), on the other hand, are restrained in sharing pains, and share only, or most of all, good things:

So I'd say what you should do is this: be eager to invite your friends to share in your good fortune...but be reluctant to invite them into your misfortunes...But when it comes to going to people's aid, I'd say the reverse applies. If your friends are in trouble you should go to their aid without being called, and eagerly (ἄκλητον καὶ προθύμως) (*Eth. Nic.* 9.11, 1171b12 – 21).

Since we love our friend, we want good for him, and thus we share the good things happening to us with him. So, we should share the good fortune as much as possible and the bad as little as possible. On the other hand, when a friend is in need, we should readily come to his aid, not worrying about the potential distress we may feel from it.

We have seen that Aristotle elaborates on the traditional view of friendship about sharing good and bad. He is also aware that friends should share their pains and that in some relationships (for example mother-child), it is non-problematic (*Eth. Nic.* 9.4, 1166a7 – 8). In the perfect friendship of virtuous equal people, however, sharing pain is trickier because, in doing so, we are causing pain to our friend. And since the price of gaining relief for ourselves consists in causing pain to those we love, we should abstain from it. Also, if we take seriously the claim that the friend is “another self,” we are, in some sense, causing pain to ourselves as well. And since pain is in general something bad and avoidable (*Eth. Nic.* 7.13, 1153b1 – 4, 8.5, 1157b13 – 17), causing it to oneself would be unnatural. Even though the true friend would readily share our pains, we should be restrained in inviting him to do so, since it would cause a new pain. This particular observation has some interesting consequences for better understanding Aristotle's theory of pleasure and pain in general and the way he uses the notion of mixture. In the next section, I hope to shed light on these two problems.

II. Mixtures of Pleasure and Pain

For readers of Plato's dialogues, it is no surprise that pleasure and pain are closely related.¹³ Sometimes Plato says that pleasure follows pain, for example

¹³ See for example *Phd.* 60b1 – c7, *Grg.* 496e4 – 497a6, *Resp.* 586b7 – c5, *Phlb.* 35e9 – 36a12, 46c6 – d2, 47d5 – 48a10, 64d9 – e3, *Symp.* 188a4 – b3, *Ti.* 82a1 – 4, *Leg.* 5. 732d8 – 734e2. For secondary

when the bounds are taken off of Socrates' legs in the prison; sometimes pleasure and pain are mixed and experienced at the same time (*Phd.* 60b1 – c7, Cf. *Phlb.* 35e9 – 36a12). In his discussions of pleasure, Plato almost always mentions its connection to pain.¹⁴ It is interesting to notice that for this connection, Plato can use a notion of mixture *κρᾶσις* or *μίξις* (*mixis*, *krasis*). Although he may of course just say that pleasure and pain are somehow related or that one follows the other (and sometimes he does so), the notion of mixtures allows him to express this relationship more precisely, using technical terminology which was both comprehensive for his readers and well established in other genres of the “scientific” literature of his time.¹⁵ This being said, it is at first glance surprising that Aristotle does not do it as well. Let there be no mistake – Aristotle knows about the notion of the mixture and uses it in many branches of his philosophy, mostly in passages devoted “to health and conditions of life and prosperity.”¹⁶ See for example the account of health in Aristotle's *Physics*: “Thus bodily excellences such as health and fitness (*ὑγίειαν καὶ εὐεξίαν*) we regard as consisting in a blending (*ἐν κρᾶσει*) of hot and cold things in due proportion (*συμμετρία*), in relation either to one another within the body or to the surrounding” (*Ph.* 7.3, 246b4 – 6).¹⁷

Aristotle is even more precise than Plato in the usage of *mixture* in distinguishing between a generic *mixis* and a more specific *krasis*.¹⁸ While the former can be used for blends in general, the latter is only for the well-mixable things, i.e., liquids.¹⁹ If Aristotle knows about this conceptual tool and its aptness for explaining the various phenomena of his philosophy, why does he not also use it in his descriptions of pleasure and pain? It is hardly conceivable that he would not know about Plato's use of it, since his criticism of the Platonic

literature, see Delcomminette (2003), Erginel (2006, 2019), Evans (2007), Frede (1992), Warren 2014 (21 – 51).

¹⁴ For a discussion of this feature of Plato's writing about pleasure and pain, see Linka (2023a).

¹⁵ See the references to using these notions in the Hippocratic corpus: e.g., *Nat. Hom.* 3 (6.36 – 38 L = 170.7 – 172.12), 4 (6.40 L = 172.13 – 174.3 Jouanna), chapters 7 and 9; *Aer* 9 (2.38 L = 208.17 – 209.7), 10 (2.42 L = 212.1 – 6 Jouanna), 12 (2.52 – 54 L = 220.5 – 10 Jouanna); *Vet. Med.* 3 (1.576 – 578 L = 122.8 – 123.3 Jouanna), 5 (1.580 – 582 L = 124.13 – 125.5 Jouanna), *Vict.* 1.3 (6.472 – 474 L = 126.5 – 19 Joly – Byl), 1.6 (6.478 L = 128.24 – 130.8 Joly – Byl).

¹⁶ See Bartoš (*forthcoming*). H. Bartoš summarizes four contexts in which Aristotle uses the word denoting mixture: a) the body and its parts, b) in things that enter the body, such as the air, water, and nourishment), c) environment (weather conditions, seasons, and climate), and d) the soul. See *ibid.*

¹⁷ Translation Hardie and Gaye (modified).

¹⁸ *Top.* 4.2, 122b26 – 33, Cf. *Top.* 4.2, 123a4 – 5, *Gen. corr.* 1.6, 322b8 – 9.

¹⁹ For the notion of mixable components, see *Gen. corr.* 1.10, 328b20 – 22, *Top.* 4.2, 122b26 – 33.

conception of pleasure aims, *inter alia*, at the *Philebus*, where the mixture of pleasure and pain is prolific (*Eth. Nic.* 10.3 1173a28 – 31).²⁰ Another possibility is that Aristotle does not use the notion of mixture in a metaphorical manner. It is certainly true that in the majority of cases, *kraseis* and *mixeis* are used in biological treatises about material phenomena. There are, however, a few passages in the *Politics*, describing various political constitutions, where the notion of mixture has its say. The aristocracy of the Carthaginians or Spartans is a mixture (μίξις) of various principles, wealth, virtue, and people (*Pol.* 4.7, 1293b14 – 18).²¹ Another constitution, namely polity, is a mixture of oligarchy and democracy (*Pol.* 4.8, 1293b33 – 38). In characterizing polity, Aristotle says that it originates from the “mixing and reorganisation” (εἰσὶ δὲ ὄροι τρεῖς τῆς συνθέσεως καὶ μίξεως) (*Pol.* 4.9, 1294a35 – 36) of legislation principles of democracy and oligarchy in three ways, namely payment for holding a political office, criteria of membership in the political body and election system (*Pol.* 4.9, 1294a30 – b13). In order to make a good constitution, and thus a good mixture, it is necessary to aim at “what is common to both constitutions and a mean (τὸ μέσον) between them” (*Pol.* 4.9, 1294b5).²² Aristotle also states what the sign of a good mixture is: “The defining principle of a good mixture (τοῦ δ’ εὖ μεμειχθαι ὄρος) of democracy and oligarchy is when it is possible to speak of the same constitution both as an oligarchy and as a democracy” (*Pol.* 4.9, 1294b13-17). A good mixture, in the case of a political constitution of polity, is thus characterized by a proportioned presence of features of both initial constitutions, democracy, and oligarchy. If one of the initial constitutions prevailed, e.g., in the question of the election system, the mixture would not be good, and the stability of the political system would be in danger.

This short excursus into the *Politics* shows that Aristotle uses the notion of mixture even outside the biological discourse and that he in fact retains the idea of the *good* mixture. Thus, a metaphorical way of using the mixture should also be open for pleasure and pain. However, Aristotle does not go in this direction. There seem to be two reasons why Aristotle does not speak about mixtures of pleasure and pain. One of them is connected to his understanding of mixture, the other to his understanding of pleasure and pain.

First, in order to mix two things (or possibly more), these things must be mixable, i.e., capable of making a blend that constitutes a new thing. In mixing wine and water, a new thing is created, and the initial constituents are no

²⁰ Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 7.11, 1152b13.

²¹ Translation Reeve.

²² In the context of biology, this principle is expressed in *Gen. corr.* 1.10, 328a26 – 32.

longer discernible. Then it is a perfect mixture, a *krasis*. But even in the less perfect mixtures, *mixeis*, a new thing arises, even though its parts can be discernible, for example, the human body, where particular elements manifest themselves more or less in various parts of the body (the flesh is more earthly, the breath airier).²³ If, however, we would try to mix things that are not mixable because they are structurally different, no new thing would arise from it: there will be, for example, no blend of water and metal. In the case of the mixture of polity, we have seen that a good mixture is characterized by the fact that there is a mean between the extremes of the initial constitution. It seems to me that there is no reason this principle should not apply also on the metaphorical level. We can speak about polity as both oligarchy and democracy, but the constitutive features of the two must be present. The parts from which the mixture is composed are discernible, but the polity is not *just* an imperfect democracy, or *just* an imperfect oligarchy: it is a new constitution and, if mixed correctly, a stable one.

So, if Aristotle does not speak about mixtures of pleasure and pain, it may just be because they are not mixable; they are structurally so different that it is not possible to make a blend out of them. For Plato, it was possible to mix pleasure and pain because they were structurally similar: pain is a motion from the natural state, and pleasure is a movement to the natural state (*Phlb.* 32a8-4, *Ti.* 64c7-d3).²⁴ With the exception of the pure pleasures, there is a symmetry between pleasure and pain which enables them to make mixtures. For Aristotle, however, pleasure and pain are very different phenomena. In his longer accounts of pleasure, *Nicomachean Ethics* 7. 12-14, 10.1-5, he takes pains to show that the *kinetic* model does not correctly express the nature of pleasure and that a new model, one based on *energeia*, is needed.²⁵ In this model, pleasure is intimately connected to activities that are perfected by it (*Eth. Nic.* 10.4, 1174b31 – 33). In seeing a nice picture, spending good time with my friends or contemplating mathematical truths, I am active and the pleasure is intrinsically bound to the activity I am engaged in (*Eth. Nic.* 10.5, 1175a30 – 33). Pleasures that played such a great role in Plato's arguments, namely eating and drinking, are only secondary pleasures for Aristotle, who focuses on the pleasures that do not cease

²³ For the mixture of the human body, see *Gen. corr.* 2.7, 334b20 – 31.

²⁴ See also Linka (2023a).

²⁵ *Eth. Nic.* 7.12, 1153a7 – 15, 10. 3 1173a28 – 34, 1173b4 – 21, 10.4, 1174a12 – 19, *Gorg.* 496d – e. For secondary literature on Aristotle's theory of pleasure, see, e.g., Brodie (1991) 313 – 365, Frede (2016), Harte (2014), Taylor (2008), Owen (1977), Wolfsdorf (2005), Cheng (2015), Linka (2023a).

when we achieve the natural state; on the contrary, they continue in the natural state due to our engaging in the activities that are perfected by them. Aristotle's understanding of pleasure thus enables him to see it as something good and, even though he agrees that some pleasures are bad or lead to the depravity of our character, the connection between pleasure and activity integrates it very intimately into the good and virtuous life. Both Plato and Aristotle see the urgency of integrating pleasure into the good life; Aristotle, however, takes a step further in ascribing pleasure to the most valuable and noble activities a human being can achieve in this world, i.e., rational contemplation, and to the second most noble one, virtuous activity in accordance with reason (*Eth. Nic.* 1.7, 1098a12 – 18, 10.7 1177b19 – 25).

In his account of pain, however, Aristotle shares Plato's general insights. Even though he does not describe pain as motion and rather chooses notions such as the disintegration or destruction of nature, he too sees pain as an outcome of our natural state being dissolved (*Eth. Nic.* 3.12, 1119a21 – 25). While Aristotle disposes of the *kinetic* model of pleasure, he still uses it for pain. It is true that some pains can be explained with the help of the *energeia* model, namely that pain hinders an activity from its realization (*Eth. Nic.* 7.13, 1153b1 – 3).²⁶ For example, the emotional pain I feel when I am to carry out mathematical calculations causes me to abstain from this activity completely (*Eth. Nic.* 10.5, 1175b1 – 24). Pain cannot be seen, even in this *energeia* connected model, to be structurally similar to pleasure, which is something that perfects activity or, in one formulation, something so closely connected to activity that it is identified with it (*Eth. Nic.* 7.12, 1153a7 – 15).²⁷ Pleasure and pain, in Aristotle's view, are not mixable.

This can be corroborated by Aristotle's claim that we cannot feel pleasure and pain at the same time. When he discusses bad people who are unable to make friendships, he says about them:

People like that don't even sympathize with their own joys or their own pains (οὐδὲ δὴ συγγαίρουσιν οὐδὲ συναγοῦσιν). Their soul is in a state of civil war. Part of it, because of their wickedness, feels pained when they abstain (or refrain) from something. Part of it is pleased. One part pulls them in one direction, another in some other direction – tearing them apart, as it were. Even if it's not strictly possible to feel pain and pleasure at the very same instant, at any rate, right after enjoying something, they're upset that they enjoyed it. (εἰ δὲ μὴ οἷόν τε ἄμα λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἡδεσθαι, ἀλλὰ μετὰ μικρόν

²⁶ For an interpretation of pain as hindering an activity, see Linka (2023a). For the role of pain in Aristotle in general, see Cheng (2015), Linka (2023b).

²⁷ *Eth. Nic.* 7.12, 1153a7 – 15.

γε λυπεῖται ὅτι ἦσθη, καὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐβούλετο ἡδέα ταῦτα γενέσθαι αὐτῷ)
(*Eth. Nic.* 9.4, 1166b18 – 24).

From this passage, it seems clear that Aristotle knows about situations when we feel both pleasure and pain. He does not want to accept that we feel them at the same moment, or, as Plato said, that we feel them as a mixture of pleasure and pain. He must thus describe this phenomenon in another way: the imagery of civil war and the soul pulling us in different directions indicates that Aristotle wants to avoid describing these states as mixtures. He rather describes it in the way that pain follows pleasure. It is not strange that in some situations, these two phenomena are closely related and follow each other; Aristotle mentions, for example, the case of some emotions (*Rh.* 2.2, 1378b1 – 8). He was aware of the situations in which we feel both pleasure and pain. In contrast to Plato, however, he does not describe them as mixtures but prefers to refer to pain following pleasure or *vice versa*. I have tried to demonstrate that this is based on the fact that pleasure and pain are not mixable since they are ontologically different phenomena. If they happen to be felt at the same time, as for example in the case of bad people who are both pleased and pained by their wickedness, their “mixture” is so unstable that it cannot exist and has serious negative effects on the one experiencing it.

We have seen such a situation in the case of sharing misfortunes with our friends. Aristotle does not deny that it is pleasurable for us to share our pain, but he warns us that, actually, we are hurting our friend. As soon as we are aware of this, it must be clear to us that we should avoid doing this. Only if the virtue of friendship is not cultivated enough, as for example in Aristotle’s claim about women and effeminate men discussed above, are we unaware of the fact that we are hurting our friend, or we are neglecting this fact. However, as soon as we are aware of this mixed experience, we abstain from it. Feeling pleasure and pain is very problematic for Aristotle, and if such a phenomenon seems to take place, he sees it as a problem and a potential danger for the one who experiences it. In both the bad people mentioned above and the good ones sharing their misfortunes with their friends, the soul may fall apart due to the unnatural presence of both pleasure and pain at the same time.

III. Conclusion

In this paper, I have analyzed Aristotle’s notion of sharing pleasure and pain with our friends since it is the only instance in which he explicitly speaks about mixtures of pleasure and pain. I have shown that in sharing pain with our

friends, we are gaining both pleasure from our friend's presence and pain caused by our sharing. This fact led Aristotle to advocate restraint in sharing pain with our friends. I have shown that Aristotle is well aware of the notion of mixture and applies it in various areas of his philosophy. In the case of pleasure and pain, however, the notion of mixture is not applicable since the potential parts are not mixable. Thus, Aristotle prefers to describe the situations in which we feel pleasure and pain as one following the other and emphasizes possible negative outcomes for the souls of people experiencing both pleasure and pain simultaneously; it is possible to feel both pleasure and pain at the same time, but, for its destructive effects on the human soul, we avoid situations where this takes place. In the context of the relations between classical Greek philosophy and medicine, it is interesting to see that Plato is more indebted to the medical model of pleasure, while Aristotle interprets pleasure in an utterly new way, which also includes the fact that he does not use the imagery of mixture when discussing the relation between pleasure and pain.

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