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Erich Rothacker

Herausgegeben von
Christian Bermes, Hubertus Busche
und Michael Erler

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Friendship with oneself and the Virtues of Giving in Aristotle's Ethics*

Salvatore Giammusso

In Aristotle's ethics giving involves different virtues and the principal of these are liberality and magnificence, although magnanimity is also in some way implicated. In this paper, I will discuss how they are related. I shall try to argue that, for Aristotle, virtuous giving to others requires friendship with oneself. This kind of relationship with oneself may be understood as true generosity which integrates the forces available in the individual and opens up to the social world. It is the generous friend to himself who can truly give to others and practice liberality or, in some cases, even magnificence or magnanimity.

There can be no doubt about the relevance of liberality (ἐλευθεριότης) in Aristotle's practical philosophy. In the *Rhetoric* he mentions liberality alongside courage and justice, for example, as being among »the highest kind« of virtues which are »most useful to others« (Rhet. I, 9, 1366b 3). Furthermore, Aristotle thinks that citizens should learn to be liberal and not only to be just, that is they should give with liberality, not only to each his own.[1] This high regard for liberality depends on the way people who are liberal act, as if they have regulated the common aspiration for and the pleasure deriving from wealth. According to Aristotle, liberal people »spend freely and do not dispute the possession of wealth, which is the chief object of other men's desire« (εἶτα ἐλευθεριότης: προΐενται γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἀνταγωνίζονται περὶ τῶν χρημάτων, ὧν μάλιστα ἐφίενται ἄλλοι, Rhet. I, 9, 1366b 6). It is clear that Aristotle associates liberality and wealth, so it comes as no surprise when, in the Nicomachean Ethic, he defines liberality as »the mean with regard to wealth« (δοκεῖ δὴ εἶναι ἡ περὶ χρήματα μεσότης, Eth. Nic. IV, 1119b 22). By »wealth« Aristotle does not mean just money but also economic goods and properties that have a market value and which can be bought and sold and valued in terms of money.[2] As a result, liberality is the virtue of dealing

* The following text is a revised and extended version of the paper *Aristotle's Phenomenology of Virtuous Giving*, which I discussed at the World Congress of Philosophy *The Philosophy of Aristotle* (Athens, 10–15 July 2016).

1 Cf. Judith Swanson: Aristotle on Liberality: Its Relation to Justice and Its Public and Private Practice. In: Polity (1994). 3–23. 14.

2 Cf. Howard J. Curzer: Aristotle and the Virtues. Oxford 2012. 25.

with economic goods and wealth in the right way (Eth. Nic. 1119b 23; 1120a 8–23); while, on the contrary, illiberality (ἀνελευθεριότης) is the vice of people who accumulate wealth and do not spend money on others (Rhet. 1366b 16–17).

Aristotle's theory is deeply rooted in the ancient Greek tradition yet contains, at the same time, new elements. It is common knowledge that the aristocratic concept of liberty in the Homeric world – the exact opposite of slavery – is influenced by possession of lands and valuable assets; property and wealth are also believed to be the prerequisite for the development of moral qualities and virtues.[3] Aristotle refers positively to this aristocratic idea, but he transposes it in the context of the polis and civilizes it.[4] Property and wealth are required for liberal gifts, but there is no need to be rich. Aristotle's ideal citizen is liberal without great wealth and expensive gifts for friends; actually, »it is not easy for the liberal man to be rich, since he is not apt either at taking or at keeping, but rather at giving away, and does not value wealth for its own sake but as a means to giving« (πλουτεῖν δ' οὐ ῥᾴδιον τὸν ἐλευθέριον, μήτε ληπτικὸν ὄντα μήτε φυλακτικόν, προετικὸν δὲ καὶ μὴ τιμῶντα δι' αὐτὰ τὰ χρήματα ἀλλ' ἕνεκα τῆς δόσεως, Eth. Nic. 1120b 15). The desire to do good and use wealth for others is crucial. This is believed to be a more recent ethical achievement in ancient Greek history, so that the combination of old and new gives the sense of economic beneficence to Aristotelian liberality. ›Liberal‹ can be used, therefore, to describe the citizen who takes and gives wealth in the right way.

There are many implications to this argument. As we will see, it implies that the gift of non-economic goods is not a proper act of liberality, but rather a sign of goodwill and friendship. Also, the political aspect is relevant: liberality requires an institutional order in which individual property is allowed and promoted. In Plato's virtuous Republic, the State administers liberality, so goods are shared and there is no space for individual liberality. In defense of this individual right, Aristotle argues against Plato in his treatise on Politics (Pol. II, 5, 1263b 1–14).[5]

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3 Cf. Michael M. Austin and Pierre Vidal-Naquet: Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece: An Introduction. London1977. 16.

4 Cf. John Hare: Ἐλευθεριότης in Aristotle's Ethics. In: Ancient Philosophy 8 (1988) 1. 19–32 has argued that Aristotle puts together in his concept of liberality two different and unrelated things, possession of wealth and usage for other people. On the contrary, I refer to Curzer's interpretation of liberality as the whole of taking care of and giving wealth as it seems to me to be closer to Aristotle's interpretation of economical life (Curzer: Aristotle and the Virtues. 92).

5 According to Swanson: Aristotle on Liberality. 15, »Aristotle is the first philosopher not only to count liberality among the primary virtues, but to note that communism does not clearly or necessarily preempt the need for it, since communal ways of life tend to be Spartan, if not inhumane«. Indeed, Plato does not regard individual liberality as the main virtue needed for a virtuous life in public institutions, whereas Aristotle treats private ownership as a basis for the moral growth of the citizen, since one can take pleasure in giving to others

He entrusts individual liberality with a significant role as it has to move economic goods and let them circulate in the polis.[6] This is the reason why the liberal citizen is said to make the best use of wealth; he does not take wealth as an end per se, instead he cares for his property and uses it, with discretion and in the right way, as a means to benefit others. By doing so, he adjusts the flow of wealth in and out of the polis and contributes to social and political wealth.[7] Public happiness depends on liberality which, in order to grow, needs wealth just like the soul needs nourishment (De An. 421b 5–11). Wealth as such is not enough since virtue is a disposition that comes about as a result of work upon a part of the soul. In the case of liberality, it is training that transforms the natural attachment to goods into a rational pleasure in giving. This explains why Aristotle does not recognize non-economic beneficence as true liberality; if economic goods are not given, the soul does not regulate the attachment to property and no superior political good is achieved.

One might wonder what the right way of receiving and giving wealth is. Aristotle's answer to this question would be that no exact answer can be given. His ethical treatises claim that moral choices can only be intuitive and context-bound. There can be no universal rules for virtuous action because »virtue and the good man seem to be the measure of every class of things« (ἔοικε δέ, καθάπερ εἴρηται, μέτρον ἑκάστων ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ὁ σπουδαῖος εἶναι, Eth. Nic. 1166a 13–14). This is no pleading for relativism. Ethical inquiries can describe virtues and outline how a liberal citizen who has matured his attitude in practical situations would act. The moral significance of this research cannot be undervalued as it makes people aware of diverse styles of life and gives them models to bear in mind. Still, the moral choice is not a theoretical matter; it does not consist, as Aristotle says metaphorically, of theoretical abstractions about the properties of a circle, but in the act of indicating the center. Virtuous actions are similar to the concrete act of pointing at the center of the circle, and every discussion about them is, in some way, necessarily imprecise.

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only if he has something to give. Also, – as we shall see – he believes that private ownership indirectly represents a condition for a good public life.

6 »In Aristotelian language – so writes Nacy Sherman –, liberality requires that we act as a steward of our inflow and outflow – typically of wealth, but we might also add, of time« (Nancy Sherman: Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue. Cambridge 1997. 342).

7 Cf. Swanson: Aristotle on Liberality. 7 has found two motivations in Aristotle's liberal man. The first one is the need for bodily protection: according to this motivation, the liberal man gives away wealth for self-preservation and »his beneficence appears to be for the sake of civic peace or justice«; but Aristotle also stresses a second motivation: the desire of the rational part of the human soul to be active and to promote the development of social life. In this sense, liberal gifts »might help others not only to stop stealing and looting, but also to become self-sufficient and thus free to live reasonably or virtuously«.

Aristotle's aim in the Nicomachean Ethics is to outline the conditions for human excellence in the various spheres of life. We read that »virtuous actions are noble and done for the sake of the noble«. In the domain of economic life this has consequences. »The liberal man, like other virtuous men«, states Aristotle, »will give for the sake of the noble, and rightly; for he will give to the right people, the right amounts, and at the right time, with all the other qualifications that accompany right giving; and that too with pleasure or without pain; for that which is virtuous is pleasant or free from pain — least of all will it be painful« (αἱ δὲ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις καλαὶ καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα. καὶ ὁ ἐλευθέριος οὖν δώσει τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ ὀρθῶς· οἷς γὰρ δεῖ καὶ ὅσα καὶ ὅτε, καὶ τἆλλα ὅσα ἕπεται τῇ ὀρθῇ δόσει· καὶ ταῦτα ἡδέως ἢ ἀλύπως· τὸ γὰρ κατ' ἀρετὴν ἡδὺ ἢ ἄλυπον, ἥκιστα δὲ λυπηρόν, Eth. Nic. 1120a 22–27). The context is imprecise in the abovementioned sense, but it makes clear that the beautiful moral action is »convenient« in relation to a good public end and gives pleasure to the moral actor. In the case of liberal man, this means taking pleasure in giving economical help to others and leaving »little for himself«, »not to look at himself« (ἐλευθερίου δ' ἐστὶ σφόδρα καὶ τὸ ὑπερβάλλειν ἐν τῇ δόσει, ὥστε καταλείπειν ἑαυτῷ ἐλάττω· τὸ γὰρ μὴ βλέπειν ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν ἐλευθερίου, Eth. Nic. 1120b 5–7). His virtue has transformed the natural pleasure for goods into pleasure deriving from social bonds. This does not mean that he will dissipate his property for humanitarian purposes; rather, the liberal man acts politically, integrating dianoetic and ethical virtues. He »sees« in a given situation how he can benefit other citizens with money and economic goods, and does it with pleasure, but without putting at risk his own assets.

Also, the above-mentioned passage indicates that liberality is not universal, but particular. It is based on the selection of people, of forms, of circumstances and of quantities. Aristotle says that the liberal citizen »will not give to the wrong people nor at the wrong time, and so on« (οὐ μὴν δώσει γε οἷς οὐ δεῖ οὐδ' ὅτε μὴ δεῖ, οὐδ' ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, Eth. Nic. 1120b 20). Now, who are the right people? The beneficiaries of liberal gifts are mainly »the perfect friends«, that is the citizens that the virtuous man recognizes as »good, and alike in virtue« (τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίων, Eth. Nic. 1156b 7).[8] It takes

[8] Mario Vegetti: L'etica degli antichi. Roma-Bari 1990. 194 has extensively discussed Aristotle's concept of friendship; he has rigthly pointed out that Aristotelian friendship par excellence is among equals. It is founded on self-love and a desire for mirroring oneself in the virtue of the friend. »Il sentimento d'amicizia – so writes Vegetti – si esprime al suo meglio, secondo Aristotele, quando esso si scambia tra pari: la migliore amicizia è una forma di eguaglianza. E il suo fondamento non può essere — in questa morale tutta mondana — che una retta forma di egoismo. Si ha certo bisogno di amici per l'azione virtuosa cui essi collaborano; ma si ha soprattutto bisogno di riconoscere in loro, come in uno specchio, in un altro se stesso, la virtù che è in primo luogo nostra propria. Solo i buoni possono dunque propria-

time before one can feel »friendship and love« for another person in this specific sense and regard him as »another self« (ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός, Eth. Nic. 1166a 32). The first step towards friendship – with no significant difference between citizens and foreigners (Eth. Nic. 1166b 32, 1156a 32) – is the goodwill that arises suddenly in perceiving some excellent quality, »when one man seems to another beautiful or brave or something of the sort« (Eth. Nic. 1167a 20). Over time, the relationship can develop as familiarity grows, leading eventually to friendship. It is therefore concluded that liberality is not based on immediate empathy or spontaneous compassion; its condition is rather a long process of selection and identification. Only true friends mirror each other in virtue and take a pleasure in mutual recognition that has primacy over goods. This also clarifies why Aristotle emphasizes ἕξις, the right attitude with respect to one's wealth (οὐ γὰρ ἐν τῷ πλήθει τῶν διδομένων τὸ ἐλευθέριον, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ τοῦ διδόντος ἕξει, αὕτη δὲ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν δίδωσιν, Eth. Nic. 1120b 10), as the key to liberality. The liberal gives with pleasure because he gives to a friend with whom he self-identifies.

Pleasure in giving can be seen as a general condition for Aristotelian liberality, but it is not enough, as the case of prodigality shows. The prodigal man too seems to take pleasure in giving, but this is not true. As Aristotle demonstrates, the prodigal is unable to restrain himself and acts rather on an impulse, which reveals a sense of unease. The prodigal, he writes, »is neither pleased nor pained at the right things or in the right way« (ὁ δ' ἄσωτος καὶ ἐν τούτοις διαμαρτάνει· οὔτε γὰρ ἥδεται ἐφ' οἷς δεῖ οὐδὲ ὡς δεῖ οὔτε λυπεῖται, Eth. Nic. 1121a 8). Prodigality is based on a sort of emotional incompetence and dystonia, which is also accompanied by other vices such as intemperance.[9] The reason why the prodigal person does not feel real pleasure in giving depends on a deeper lack of pleasure in living. Compared with the liberal, the prodigal man is not fully responsible for his actions; he is, rather, a »fool« (ἠλίθιος, Eth. Nic. 1121a 27), who squanders his wealth by donating it more than he should.[10] Also, he remains bound to external things such as money and wealth and cannot see them as a means to superior moral ends.[11] Prodigality, though, is not generally as serious as illiberality; in fact,

mente dirsi amici perché il loro egoismo, fondamento di questo vincolo, è legittimato dalla virtù. Nel filosofo, l'egoismo è ulteriormente valorizzato dal fatto che egli ama in se stesso la parte più nobile dell'io, quella pensante, e questa amicizia con sé gli rende dolcissimo il tempo trascorso nella riflessione.«

9 Cf. Hare: Ἐλευθεριότης in Aristotle's Ethics. 20.

10 Peter Hadreas: Aristotle on the vices and virtue of wealth. In: Journal of Business Ethics 39 (2002) 4. 361–376. 363–364 offers an in-depth discussion of Aristotle's concept of prodigality and he concludes that »the resolute prodigal is trapped in a topsyturvy ordering of external goods«.

11 In regard to this Antony Kenny: Aristotle on the perfect life. Oxford 1992. 15 observes that »if in one person's system virtue is for the sake of wealth, virtue is only a useful good, not a noble one, because wealth is something merely useful. If, in another person's value-system,

the prodigal man can be »easily cured both by age and by poverty, and thus he may move towards the middle state« (εὐίατός τε γάρ ἐστι καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ἡλικίας καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ἀπορίας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέσον δύναται ἐλθεῖν, Eth. Nic. 1121a 20–21). This is the best scenario, but there are also other, more serious cases of prodigality. If a prodigal man runs out of resources and does not repent, he will possibly try to manipulate other people in order to find some. In this case, his behavior is similar to that of the illiberal man (Eth. Nic. 1121a 33) since both tend to take unjustly. Aristotle excludes these forms of conduct from the domain of liberality and states that prodigal giving »is not noble, nor does it aim at nobility, nor is it done in the right way« (οὐ γὰρ καλαί, οὐδὲ τούτου ἕνεκα, οὐδὲ ὡς δεῖ, Eth. Nic. 1121b 4–5).

Indeed, the case of the illiberal man is far worse since it is the opposite of liberality. The illiberal man is *philochrematos* (Eth. Nic. 1121b 15), attached to wealth (Eth. Nic. 1122a 2–3 and Eth. Eud. 1232a 11–12). These people accumulate wealth and do not spend money on others (Rhet. 1366b 16–17). Illiberality is a complex state and contains both »greed« (excessive desire and pleasure in taking) and »avarice« (inability to give and grief for the loss of property). Aristotle refers to the whole complex with the word »*aneleutheriotes*«, which suggests an attitude of moral slavery.[12] In fact, pleasure from possession but without use (Eth. Nic. 1121b 17, 1122a 13) or anxiety about giving money or valuables are not »civilized« passions and lead to antisocial and even self-destructive behavior. The illiberal – says Aristotle – »benefit no one, not even himself« (ὃ μὲν ὠφελεῖ πολλούς, ὃ δὲ οὐθένα, ἀλλ' οὐδ' αὑτόν, Eth. Nic. 1121a 30). Tyrants act in this way as do all those who despoil the polis of its wealth.[13] Like any other human being, they strive for happiness but fail in this end because of their injustice. It is interesting that Aristotle attributes this failure to a bad relationship with oneself. He says that the bad man »does not seem to be amicably disposed even to himself, because there

wealth is for the sake of virtue, then wealth too acquires the nobility which virtue has.« The prodigal represents the first case as he has not noble ends; rather, the liberal makes available his wealth to a noble end such as public happiness.

12 The term ἀνελευθεριότης is sometimes translated as greed in opposition to generosity (ἐλευθεριότης). Both translations are not satisfactory as »generosity« is not immediately connected with liberty like the original Greek term (ἐλευθερία); and »greed« is on the other hand only a part of ἀνελευθεριότης. »Illiberal«, »illiberality« are not usual concepts, but it is preferable to use them for two reasons: they immediately give the idea of the opposite of liberality and they preserve the link between moral sense (the individual character does not incline to liberality) and political sense (the form of government tends to tyranny). This is precisely what Aristotle means when he states that tyrants are illiberal as they take with no respect for individual property.

13 Cf. Richard H. Cox: Aristotle and Machiavelli on Liberality. In: K.L. Deutsch and W. Soffer (Ed.): The Crisis of Liberal Democracy: A Straussian Perspective. Albany / New York 1987. 125–147. 130.

is nothing in him to love« (οὐ δὴ φαίνεται ὁ φαῦλος οὐδὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν φιλικῶς διακεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἔχειν φιλητόν, Eth. Nic. 1166b 25–26).

Aristotle believes that all our feelings of friendship begin in the sphere of the individual (ἀπ' αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ φιλικὰ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους διήκει, Eth. Nic. 1168b 5). But what does this notion of friendship with oneself mean? We have to turn our attention to Aristotle's concept of magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία) as it gives us the opportunity to better understand friendship with oneself and how it is implicated in liberality. Aristotle offers an in-depth discussion of magnanimity in the Nicomachean Ethic, where he writes that magnanimity »seems even from its name to be concerned with great things« (ἡ δὲ μεγαλοψυχία περὶ μεγάλα μὲν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἔοικεν εἶναι, Eth. Nic. 1123a 34) and »greatness in every virtue« would seem to be its characteristic (δόξειεν ἂν εἶναι μεγαλοψύχου τὸ ἐν ἑκάστῃ ἀρετῇ μέγα, Eth. Nic. 1123b 30). Magnanimity deals with greatness and not with honours;[14] these are rather the domain of a first level virtue without name (or proper ambition). Compared with magnanimity, proper ambition lacks independence from external honours and greatness.[15] Magnanimity represents actually a peak of ethical virtues together with justice. Aristotle considers it a sort of »ornament of virtues« that, on the one hand, presupposes all the virtues and, on the other hand, amplifies them (ἔοικε μὲν οὖν ἡ μεγαλοψυχία οἷον κόσμος τις εἶναι τῶν ἀρετῶν: μείζους γὰρ αὐτὰς ποιεῖ, καὶ οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ ἐκείνων, Eth. Nic. 1124 a2). As a second-level virtue, magnanimity is involved in the way an already virtuous man strives for great things.

In a well-known passage in the Second Analytics, Aristotle quotes examples of magnanimity. He mentions two different groups of magnanimous people. In the first group we find Alcibiades, Achilles and Ajax, i. e. heroes who could not suffer the arrogance of others. Furthermore, Aristotle mentions Socrates and

14 I follow here scholars such as Ernst A. Schmidt: Ehre und Tugend. Zur Megalopsychia der aristotelischen Ethik. In: Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 49 (1967) 2. 149–168 and D. A. Rees: Magnanimity in the Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics. In: P. Moraux and D. Harlfinger (Hg.): Untersuchungen zur Eudemischen Ethik. Berlin 1971. 231–243, who have stressed the difference between Eudemian Ethics and Nicomachean Ethics in relation to the concept of *megalopsychia*. According to Schmidt, for example, the Eudemian Ethics conceives megalopsychia in terms of honour, which includes external goods and virtue. Therefore, honourable are the external goods and virtues which bring honour to those who possess them. »Die Ehre – so writes Schmidt – begründet den Wert der Tugend und der äußeren Güter« (Schmidt: Ehre und Tugend. 157). Here virtue depends on honours. On the other hand, the Nicomachean Ethics states that no honour is as worthy as virtue. Indeed, the magnanimous man of the Eudemian Ethics thinks it very important to be honoured by worthy people and to strive for generally recognized goods such as richness and high social position, whereas the magnanimous man of the Nicomachean Ethics does not desire honours in themselves, but virtue. In this sense, greatness of soul is independent from honours.

15 Cf. Aristide Tessitore: Reading Aristotle's Ethics: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy. Albany / New York 1996. 29.

Lysander as examples of a different type of magnanimity and states that they shared the characteristic of being indifferent to good or bad luck. The question as to whether both groups possess the same sort of magnanimity or whether there are two types of magnanimity remains unanswered (An. Post. 1397b 16–24). We can assume that Aristotle identified two different aspects of greatness that he did not see immediately as being related. The first, and the more heroic, concerns the active pursuit of glory; the second, and the more »contemplative«, deals with the attitude of the man who is not afraid of anything, not even death, since he has a more comprehensive notion of being and time. It is not difficult to realize that these two forms correspond to the Aristotelian ideals of ethic-political life and theoretical life. The second one is superior in its principle, but, as the exemplary case of Socrates shows, it needs, on the one hand, political institutions and, on the other hand, conflicts with them. This may be the reason why Aristotle seems uncertain about solving the dilemma of magnanimity.

Even though, Aristotle's discussion of magnanimity in the Nichomachean Ethic points out at least one feature common to both forms. Whether he does or contemplates something great, the magnanimous man is completely aware of his qualities and draws from this awareness the appropriate consequences. Aristotle stringently outlines this character trait as a correspondence between judgment and personal reality; we read that the magnanimous »thinks himself worthy of great things and is worthy of them« (δοκεῖ δὴ μεγαλόψυχος εἶναι ὁ μεγάλων αὑτὸν ἀξιῶν ἄξιος ὤν, Eth. Nic. 1123b 2). Two points have to be stressed here. Firstly, magnanimous people do have great qualities; they can endure »many great misfortunes« (Eth. Nic. 1100b 32) and have, besides, additional virtues such as courage, moderation and liberality. Just like liberal people, they benefit their friends, although, compared to them, they are uncomfortable when they receive. Secondly, they know that they have these qualities. They are self-conscious.

This precise judgement of their being is relevant and distinguishes them from vain and unduly humble men; both lack self-understanding. The vain (χαῦνος) »thinks himself worthy of more than he really is« (ὁ δὲ μεγάλων ἑαυτὸν ἀξιῶν ἀνάξιος ὢν χαῦνος, Eth. Nic. 1123 b 9); and pusillanimity represents, furthermore, a vice in contrast to this arrogant vanity. The unduly humble or pusillanimous man (μικρόψυχος) is one who actually does have qualities but »robs himself of what he deserves« (ὁ μὲν γὰρ μικρόψυχος ἄξιος ὢν ἀγαθῶν ἑαυτὸν ἀποστερεῖ ὧν ἄξιός ἐστι, 1125a 20). The verb ἀποστερέω denotes a deprivation as a result of robbery, but also a detachment and a withdrawal. In the original sentence it sounds as if the unduly humble man would separate himself from goods. However, cowardice is not principally at stake here, as this is the opposite of courage and, therefore, a first-level vice. Instead, the second level of virtue (or vice) relates to the aspirations of an already virtuous man who fails to achieve greatness. Aristotle's hypothesis in this regard is quite interesting. The unduly humble man,

he says, »seems to have something bad about him from the fact that he does not think himself worthy of good things, and seems also not to know himself; else he would have desired the things he was worthy of, since these were good« (καὶ ἔοικε κακὸν ἔχειν τι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ἀξιοῦν ἑαυτὸν τῶν ἀγαθῶν, καὶ ἀγνοεῖν δ' ἑαυτόν· ὠρέγετο γὰρ ἂν ὧν ἄξιος ἦν, ἀγαθῶν γε ὄντων, Eth. Nic. 1125a 22). This has to be remarked upon. Aristotle attributes the attitude of self-robbery to a cognitive factor,[16] as if the unduly humble man lacks that solid self-knowledge and judgment that the magnanimous actually has. Magnanimity is in fact not only a character virtue, the intellectual virtue also plays a role in it. Generally speaking, the Aristotelian distinction between moral virtues and intellectual virtues should not be taken too rigidly as the case of liberality exemplarily shows. Liberality is lead by discernment and prudent selection; if there were not also intellectual virtues at work in donations, there would be no moral virtue, but vice, or more precisely, prodigality. Now, the unduly humble man lacks this very intellectual virtue: he cannot judge adequately his personal qualities and feels maybe something wrong about himself; this compromises the desire for good things. As a consequence, he shows neither enough self-love nor desire for the right goods for him. The vainly ambitious and the unduly humble man are in some way connected because they do not have an accurate understanding of the their being. They differ in that one esteems himself too much and is deceived by goods which he believes he is worthy of, and the other is not self-conscious and confident enough. The man who aspires to little things being worthy of them seems more in harmony with himself, but it is this very congruency which is missing in the unduly humble man; he does not know his own merits. This is in many ways different from the illiberal man who is attached to goods, anxious over losses and who is a true enemy of himself. Nonetheless, the unduly humble does also fail in establishing a good relationship with himself. If not an enemy, he is not a friend to himself.

We can now reconsider the relation between liberality and magnanimity. Both the liberal and the magnanimous man have traits of generosity in the modern sense, but overall they are two dissimilar types. Aristotelian liberality is an economic virtue that takes care of wealth and property and makes it available to selected friends. On the other hand, magnanimity deals with greatness, both in the active and in the theoretical life. Aristotle distinguishes two domains, one of wealth and one of honors and greatness, and puts respectively liberality and right ambition (for small honors) at the first level and magnificence and magnanim-

16 Schmidt: Ehre und Tugend. 159 writes that the unduly humble man would be considered worthy only if he could consider himself worthy and concludes that »beim Fehlen subjektiver Würdigung, welches ein Fehler ist, Tugend nicht gegeben ist«. In the modern terms of cognitive sciences, we can say that self-assessment and self-appraisal are conditions for great virtue, and that the unduly humble man – without being a bad or vicious man – is actually incapable of them.

ity (for greatness) on the second level. Liberality is closely related to his corresponding second-level virtue since every magnificent man is also liberal and some liberal men are also magnificent. At first sight, this seems not to be the case as regards magnanimity and liberality. It is true that magnanimity is a second-level virtue and includes traits of liberality too, but they cover distinct areas of human experience and also seem to operate in different ways: liberality carefully selects the right conditions for social action (who to give to, when and how to give and so on), whereas magnanimity involves rather self-consciousness and desire for self-realization.

Despite all the dissimilarities, a more detailed analysis reveals that the two phenomena share a common structure. In fact, the liberal too can be said a friend to himself. Generally speaking, the virtuous man feels a pleasure for life and the parts of his soul are in harmony (Eth. Nic. 1166b 20). Also, his thoughts and actions correspond to this feeling so that he accomplishes his duties (Eth. Nic. 1169a 16) and has »nothing to regret« (Eth. Nic. 1166a 30). This applies to liberality: when it comes to helping friends with money and other valuable goods, the liberal man gives away wealth with no complaint and with the same pleasure for life that prevents him from being self-destructive. Certainly, the liberal man has transformed natural pleasure and attachment to goods into pleasure in giving wisely. He is not so ambitious and perhaps nor is he capable of the same equanimity as the magnanimous man, but he is aware of the social and political reality in which he lives and judges correctly who to give wealth to for a superior political end. His friendship with himself lies on the integration of φρόνησις and ethical impulse towards others. We can say, in other words, that liberality implies individual and social integration. The same also applies to magnanimity. The magnanimous acts in a temperate and brave way; he can give to others as the liberal does, furthermore, he contemplates or does great things that concern common good. His great quality lies in the inner coherence between self-knowledge and self-actualization which can be regarded as the perfect form of friendship with oneself.[17] In his case, there is no gap between theory and practice as the desire for goods derives directly from right judgment of himself.

Both the magnanimous and the liberal man can sustain others as they are integrated individualities. They know themselves and feel a pleasure for life which

[17] I fully agree with Schmidt: Ehre und Tugend. 166 when he places the honours in the background of the Aristotelian conception of magnanimity in the Nichomachean Ethics and defines virtue as a form of ethical self-awareness (»Die Großgesinntheit als die Tugend des sittlichen Selbstbewußtseins, des angemessenen Sich-selber-Ehrens, hat in der äußeren Ehre zwar nicht ihr Wesen, aber doch mehr als nur das wichtigste äußere Merkmal, an dem man sie erkennt. Zugleich sind die äußeren Ehren Abbilder der hohen Selbsteinschätzung des Großgesinnten«). I would just add that this form of self-appraisal rests upon integrity and friendship with oneself.

open them up to social life. Their form of virtuous giving to others is actually made possible by disciplined self-love and right judgment. Without them, even a man of great qualities will not develop his individual and social potentialities. This is precisely the point: Aristotle believes that only the friend to himself can truly benefit other people and be a supportive friend to them. In other words, altruism requires integrity and pleasure for life. This notion of friendship with oneself or, as I would be tempted to say, true generosity, refers then to an »ascetic« integration between passion and reason which comes out after training, social imitation and personal reflection. I would suggest that it should be considered as the core of every specific virtuous giving, if not of every virtue.

We can observe it also in the case of magnificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια). As already mentioned, this virtue is involved in giving as a second-level virtue corresponding to liberality as its first level. Scholars have been widely discussing the relation between the two, yet interpretations are controversial. They tend either to radically separate liberality from magnificence with the argument that the latter does not deal with the getting and giving of wealth, but rather with the suitable financing of public works;[18] or even to reject the distinction between the two of them, arguing that magnificence should be better interpreted as a form of »heroic« liberality, that is as an extraordinary virtuous action in ordinary conditions or as a virtuous action in extraordinary conditions in which a vice would be excusable.[19] From our point of view, we can clearly admit a relation of logical inclusion between the two. In fact, every magnificent man is liberal too and some liberal men are also magnificent. Though, if liberality covers the whole domain of economical life, it does not seem self-evident why Aristotle feels the need for another virtue.[20] The specific role of magnificence has then to be cleared up, particularly with regard to the notion of unity of virtues that Aristotle picks up from Socrates (Eth. Nic. 1144b 34–1145a 2).[21] As we said before, Aristotle states in book X of the Nicomachean Ethics that great wealth or great power and social influence are not necessary for a happy life (Eth. Nic. 1179a 1–6). Still, magnificence deals with greatness of expenditure, with reference to both quantity and quality. If we have to believe in the literal sense of the notion of unity of virtue, someone who possesses a virtue possesses them all; so the liberal citizen should also be magnificent and vice versa. This is not the case, since he may not have the considerable wealth which, evidently, a citizen must have if he is to act in a magnificent way. There are

18 Cf. Hadreas: Aristotle on the vices and virtue of wealth. 373.

19 Cf. Curzer: Aristotle and the Virtues. 6.

20 Cf. Michael Pakaluk: On the unity of the Nicomachean Ethics. In: J. Miller (Ed.): Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. A Critical Guide. Cambridge 2011. 23–44. 38.

21 Cf. Paula Gottlieb: Aristotle on Dividing the Soul and Uniting the Virtues. In: Phronesis 39 (1994) 3. 275–290. 275.

many interpretative questions involved here, and we begin the discussion of these points starting from the nature of magnificence as a virtue.

That magnificence is a virtue in its own right, and not simply a reflex of liberality, Aristotle also states in the Eudemian Ethics. Here, he treats magnanimity, magnificence and liberality together as »middle states« (ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ μεγαλοψυχία καὶ ἡ μεγαλοπρέπεια καὶ ἡ ἐλευθεριότης μεσότητες, Eth. Eud. 1231b 29). »Magnificence« suggests, apparently, a certain affinity with magnanimity as the word includes the idea of greatness (Eth. Eud. 1232a 30), but magnanimity concerns the greatness of soul that contemplates or does great things; it does not have primarily an economic aspect. On the contrary, magnificence is presented in the in-depth discussion in the Nichomachean Ethics as a virtue regarding wealth (δοκεῖ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὴ περὶ χρήματά τις ἀρετὴ εἶναι, Eth. Nic. 1122a 20). It is not by coincidence that Aristotle discusses magnificence after liberality as both pertain to the domain of economic life. For this reason, some scholars have been tempted to ascribe private small donations to liberality and great public expenses to magnificence.[22] Even if such distinctions make sense in some way, they should not be taken too rigidly. Aristotle's notion of liberality does not mean private charity, but it is rather a political concept that refers to a bond of friendship in the context of public relations, and magnificence too has its special quality. Even a relatively small expenditure, for a personal gift, for example, can be magnificent; neither the amount of money paid nor the public utility make it so, but the fact of being great depends on it being »convenient«, that is highly appropriate and fitting to the situation.

In his ethical treatises, Aristotle offers some indications about the difference between liberality and magnificence. The former applies to the taking and the giving of wealth, so that it covers the entire sphere of economic life, while magnificence only covers »greatness in expenditure« (ἐν μεγέθει πρέπουσα δαπάνη ἐστίν, Eth. Nic. 1122a 24), as Aristotle says, playing on the term μεγαλοπρέπεια, which includes precisely the two ideas of greatness and convenience. A liberal gift can be of different amounts according to the financial situation of the donor. As we know, the liberal citizen is hardly rich because he likes to give; but if he is rich, his donations will be eventually more conspicuous. Still, it is not the monetary value of the gifts that make him liberal, but rather the ability to manage the flow of wealth correctly. On the other hand, wealth in itself does not imply magnificence. If one spends inadequately on an important occasion, such as a wedding to the woman he loves, this is not magnificent but niggardly (Eth. Eud., 1233b 2), and if one spends more than necessary, it is vulgar (Eth. Nic., 1123b 20). The magnificent spends appropriately and in a splendid way, for magnificence is

22 Cf. Eugene Garver: Confronting Aristotle's Ethics: Ancient and Modern Morality. Chicago 2006. 251.

»splendour in adornment, and adornment does not come out of casual expenditure, but from expenditure that goes beyond what is strictly necessary« (τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρέπον ἐν κόσμῳ ἐστίν, ὁ δὲ κόσμος οὐκ ἐκ τῶν τυχόντων ἀναλωμάτων, ἀλλ ἐν ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐστίν, Eth. Eud., 1233a 34–35). It should be noticed that in defining the convenient Aristotle speaks of κόσμος, a concept that suggests an aesthetic order.[23] So the magnificent man appears great because his expenditure has aesthetic impact, i. e. it is splendid. We read, for example, that »the most beautiful ball or bottle is magnificent as a gift to a child, but the price of it is small and mean« (Eth. Nic. 1123a 15). In such cases, the gift may have a modest economic value, maybe less than that of a liberal gift given by the same person, but the magnificent expenditure is precisely that which is so perfectly fitting to a situation that it appears likely to be hard to beat.[24] Liberal gifts are motivated by benevolence and friendship and usually provoke gratitude. The magnificent man has other motivations. Whether in private or in public expenditures, his gifts are perfectly set up to arouse emotions such as surprise and admiration. These are two completely different situations. This is why the liberal, as Aristotle points out, »is not necessarily magnificent« (Eth. Nic. 1122a 29), while the contrary is always true – the magnificent man is also liberal, »for the liberal man also will spend what he ought and as he ought; and it is in these matters that the greatness implied in the name of the magnificent man — his bigness, as it were — is manifested, since liberality is concerned with these matters; and at an equal expense he will produce a more magnificent work of art« (καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἐλευθέριος δαπανήσει ἃ δεῖ καὶ ὡς δεῖ· ἐν τούτοις δὲ τὸ μέγα τοῦ μεγαλοπρεποῦς, οἷον μέγεθος, περὶ ταῦτα τῆς ἐλευθεριότητος οὔσης, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης δαπάνης τὸ ἔργον ποιήσει μεγαλοπρεπέστερον, Eth. Nic. 1122b 10–12). We see better now the affinity and the difference between the liberal and the magnificent man. Both of them spend in a right and proper way, but the liberal helps friends wisely, taking care that his estate is not compromised, whereas the magnificent does his best to make his expenditure great and splendid in every situation. We understand better now the sense of the relation of logical inclusion between magnificence and liberality. The class of magnificent men includes the class of liberal men because every magnificent man is not only liberal, but also his giving is distinguished by something specific. In short, magnificence is giving with greatness.

We can have a more precise notion of this greatness by analyzing the examples that Aristotle mentions. Expenditure for private situations includes weddings and

23 Cf. Hare: Ἐλευθεριότης in Aristotle's Ethics. 23.

24 The Jesuit Silvestro Mauro clarifies this aspect of magnificence: »omne opus magnifici tale est in suo genere, ut in eo difficile possit superavi«. Silvestro Mauro: Aristotelis Opera quae extant omnia brevi paraphrasi ac litterae perpetuo inhaerente explanatione illustrata a P. S. M., 6 voll. Roma 1668. Ed. by F. Ehrle, B. Felchlin and F. Beringer. Paris 1885–1887. 4 voll., vol. II. 94.

other events that occur only once, gifts for foreign guests, for the house as visible manifestation of magnificence, for long lasting assets. The magnificent spends greatly on business of public importance such as offerings to the gods and the construction of buildings for religious purposes, and, what is more remarkable, he sustains the liturgies. These are relevant community services such as arming a ship, setting up a choir, equipping a body of riders, organizing an embassy or even offering a public banquet. From these examples we understand that magnificence is mainly oriented towards the public. As is clearly stated in the text, the magnificent »spends not on himself but on public objects, and his gifts bear some resemblance to votive offerings« (οὐ γὰρ εἰς ἑαυτὸν δαπανηρὸς ὁ μεγαλοπρεπὴς ἀλλ' εἰς τὰ κοινά, τὰ δὲ δῶρα τοῖς ἀναθήμασιν ἔχει τι ὅμοιον, Eth. Nic., 1123a 5–7).

Considering these examples quoted by Aristotle, some scholars have interpreted magnificence as a sort of philanthropy,[25] but this not accurate. In the ordinary modern usage of the term »philanthropy« there is a suggestion that makes it more fitting to the universalistic ethics of Kant, not to that of Aristotle. In fact, Aristotle uses the concept of philanthropy rarely and in a rather bland way. In the Poetics this notion justifies why the public can feel the emotions represented in the scene (Poet. 1452b 38 and 1456a 21); human sympathy for those who suffer is the base of catharsis in the tragedy (Poet. 13, 1453a 3, 18; 1456a 23). Also, Aristotle speaks of philanthropy when he discusses the affinity between the members of humankind that we can be aware of by travelling (Eth. Nic. 1555a 20–23). However, the practice of giving is not founded on the unity of humankind, but rather on a psychological process of projection and identification which makes us feel benevolent towards people whose qualities we appreciate (Eth. Nic. 1167a 18–20). This very process creates the basis for friendship and political relations. Liberality is, consequently, not motivated by humanitarism, but by ethical-political bonds, and expenditures for liturgies are political phenomena. Scholars refer to the established practice among wealthy citizens of taking on of large expenses for public works in order to support the community as evergetism.[26] As already mentioned, this does not exclude that magnificent action may also have private purposes or take place in a special circumstance and cost relatively little. Aristotle does not stress the different situations, which are variable and relative, but the »fitting« that arouses admiration for its perfection.

In drawing an identikit of the magnificent citizen, sociological considerations can help. Aristotle states explicitly that magnificence does not suit poor people as they do not have the necessary means, but neither does it correspond as a whole

25 Cf. Gottlieb: Aristotle on Dividing the Soul and Uniting the Virtues. 82; cf. Pakaluk: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction. Cambridge 2005. 178.

26 Cf. Paul Veyne: Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique. Paris 1990; it. transl., Il pane e il circo. Bologna 1984. 21–24 and 154 ff.

to the profile of the liberal man. All citizens can learn to be liberal as abundant riches are not needed for liberality; on the other hand, magnificence requires plenty of financial resources and assets and strives systematically for elegance and style in every situation. It will be reasonable then to assume that it is the virtue of elites who can bear the costs of expenditure for public use.

Still, birth or wealth do not guarantee greatness. Magnificence is neither waste nor pomp, it is a second-level virtue, and, like the other virtues, it is a result of specific training. Sir David Ross wrote that magnificence is largely a matter of good taste,[27] but his view, while not false, can be misleading. The aesthetic dimension of magnificence should not be overstressed as the virtue is mainly the result of precise judgment and action that arouse admiration for their perfection.[28] In the text, we read that »the magnificent is then like an experienced man; for he can see what is fitting and spend large sums tastefully« (Ὁ δὲ μεγαλοπρεπὴς ἐπιστήμονι ἔοικεν: τὸ πρέπον γὰρ δύναται θεωρῆσαι καὶ δαπανῆσαι μεγάλα ἐμμελῶς, Eth. Nic. 1122a 35). It has to be noted that Aristotle uses here the term ἐπιστήμονι (from ἐπίσταμαι), which suggests the possession of a prudent wisdom and an almost scientific knowledge. The magnificent »sees« (θεωρῆσαι, just like Pericles was able to recognize in every situation what was the best for him and for the State) what is appropriate to a situation and knows how to act ἐμμελῶς, i. e. in a suitable and well-proportioned way. His good taste should be seen as the ability to perfectly judge a situation and to act in harmony with the circumstances. The vices related to magnificence concern this very lack of ability to »see« what is appropriate. According to this, vulgarity and niggardliness are a lack of intellectual virtue which causes one overspend when one should spend little (vanity and arrogance are also involved here) or spend a lot, but in a clumsy and improper way and without that splendour that is the true trait of magnificence. In fact, the niggardly man (μικροπρεπής) spends a lot for public purposes, but lingers on or regrets the money he has spent or even tries to save money, i. e. neither his actions nor attitude are suited to the situation and his social status. In short, even the niggardly man is not a friend to himself, although his behavior is not as socially harmful as that of the illiberal man.

If we compare liberality with magnificence from the point of view of their related vices, we eventually see that they are connected yet different. Vices of liberality are something serious; they can squander assets and ruin families or, far worse, lead to forms of antisocial behavior such as meanness. Every good citizen should guard against them. On the contrary, vulgar ostentation or niggardliness are minor vices in giving; »they do not bring disgrace« says Aristotle, »because

27 Cf. William David Ross: Aristotle. London / New York [6]1995. 212.

28 Cf. Rosalind Hursthouse: A False Doctrin of the Mean. In: J. Sherman (Ed.): Aristotle's Ethics: critical essays. Lanham 1999. 105–120. 105.

they are neither harmful to one's neighbor nor very unseemly« (Eth. Nic. 1123a 32). They reveal confusion and bad taste, but they do not damage the polis. The reason for this is that magnificence is a second-level virtue that does not apply to every citizen, but only to wealthy elites who can take responsibility for public expenditure on a great scale and in a manner that is commensurate with their social status. This interpretation is entirely consistent with Aristotle's situational approach to ethics. According to this approach, different social roles require specific virtues as we read in the *Politics*, where it is stated that »the goodness of all the citizens is not one and the same, just as among dancers the skill of a head dancer is not the same as that of a subordinate leader […] Now we say that a good ruler is virtuous and wise, and that a citizen taking part in politics must be wise« (Pol. III 1277a 13). Wealthy elites are not in the same situation as ordinary citizens who cannot practice evergetism. They have to be liberal and magnificent, not just liberal, i. e. great in expenditure.

It could be asked at this point if the Aristotelian concept of magnificence compromises the notion of unity of virtues. This notion is a truly Socratic theme in the aporetic dialogues of Plato, then revised and reinterpreted by Plato himself, Zeno and then Aristotle. In the Protagoras, Socrates defends the unity of virtue arguing that justice, mercy, wisdom and moderation are the same virtues. He opposes the objection of Protagoras that a man can act with courage even without possessing the other virtues with the argument that the courageous man acts so because he has knowledge about his ability (Protagoras, 350c). Actually, Socrates means here that virtue is a form of knowledge, and that it is impossible for one who possesses the knowledge to be influenced by non-cognitive factors. Plato transposed the arguments of Socrates arguing that in the knowledge of good (and not in the opinion of the good)[29] all the virtues are unified, and, therefore, one cannot possess a virtue without possessing them all. The question arises as to what the real meaning of Aristotelian notion of the unity of virtues is. Actually, Aristotle introduces a new point of view. »Socrates«, he says, »thought the virtues were instances of reason (for he thought all of them were forms of scientific knowledge), while we think they involve reason. It is clear, then, from what has been said, that it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, or practically wise without moral virtue« (Eth. Nic. 1144b 28–33). Aristotle shifts the emphasis towards the relation between dianoetic and ethical or character virtues. He cannot accept the platonic argument that the character virtues would be unified in

[29] I agree with Michael Cormack: Plato's Stepping Stones: Degrees of Moral Virtue. London 2006. 62, when he writes that Plato's *Protagoras* »implicitly distinguishes between knowledge and opinion by explicitly distinguishing between true virtue and popular virtue. Plato intends for the reader to recognize that the popular conception of virtue is associated exclusively with opinion, while the Platonic conception of true virtue is uniquely identified with knowledge.«

the knowledge of good since they are individual dispositions related to specific areas (for example, courage relates to the battlefield, liberality to the relationship with wealth, magnificence to greatness of expenditure). They may also refer indirectly to more general domains (for example, courage is important to face dangers even off the battlefield), but they are not all developed to the same degree in individuals and cannot even be completely listed. According to Aristotle, character virtues are, however, connected with rational principles; in the truly good citizen (not in the brave but intemperate one) all virtues are harmonized by *phronesis*. In this way, Aristotle can criticize Socrates and, at the same time, preserve something of his conception. If now we come back to the question of magnificence, we can see that it does not compromise Aristotle's own interpretation of the unity of virtues. Magnificence may well be a typical virtue of the social elite, as it is not enough to simply spend a lot, and, above all, wisdom is necessary. In the case of magnificence (as in that of magnanimity, the other second-level virtue), the union of ethical virtue with accurate judgment and *phronesis* is particularly visible. The magnificent, says Aristotle, is like a scientist; a strong intellectual knowledge guides him in his expenditure with no significant differences between public and private purposes. Accordingly, he can be said a friend to himself too since his actions reveal a perfect integration of ethical impulse towards the community and intellectual virtue.

The analysis of magnificence brings us back to the notion of friendship with oneself and I would like to summarize from this point of view my remarks on Aristotle's phenomenology of virtuous giving. In its more general form, the notion of friendship with oneself makes allusion to *phronesis* as the harmonizing factor of different dispositions, which integrates rationality and passion, knowledge and action, self-love and altruism. It is a dynamic process: virtuous individuality is the result of a long process of maturation, made possible by practice, imitation of good models, teachings and personal reflection. From an Aristotelian point of view, natural individuality, with its attachments and cravings, is hence only a starting point. Instead, friendship with oneself can be thought as the relative stability of the individual character which emerges when irrational attachment and cravings are overcome. We can think of it in modern terms as individual and socio-political integration. Individual integration means that passions become reasonable and conflicts are relatively resolved. Its expression is a nearly stable character that tends to be consistent in his relations and unable to repent because he acts according to the rational part of his soul. In the various circumstances of life, the friend to himself bases his choices on the intuition of the good, on observation of valid social models and on a sort of cognitive consonance. He is aware that his actions are tuned to a »rational tone« and feels pleasure in that. In a relative sense, he is self-sufficient, but, paradoxically, because of his integrity he does not see other people as a means to escape inner enmity and disharmony. For

this very reason he can truly make contact and community with others (Eth. Nic. 1166a 1–2). Friendship with oneself is also the gate to friendship and sociopolitical bonds. Actually, Aristotelian friendship, as pointed out by Gadamer,[30] adds a higher value to self-love. In fact, Aristotle says that »the friend is another self« (ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός, Eth. Nic. 1166a 30) and he means that friendship is a relation of reciprocal mirroring in the virtue that brings personal enrichment even to the self-sufficient man. In this sense, friendship is the basis of social and political life, but it is only accessible to those who have gone through an »ascetic« path of personal integration.

In my opinion, this is the key to Aristotle' theory of virtuous giving. In his treatises he discusses the right way to bestow benefits upon friends, to sustain liturgies and spend money with greatness in every situation, and finally to acknowledge oneself the right to aspire to the good one is worthy of. Their corresponding virtues deal with the right flow of money, with expenditure and, in a certain way, with self-realization. Each of these virtues refers to diverse domains, individual dispositions and particular situations (magnanimity and magnificence are not for every citizen), but all of them can be understood as specific manifestations of friendship with oneself. A citizen has first to become a friend to himself and generally take pleasure in life so that he can transform natural attachment to goods, anxious cravings and similar irrational emotions. Then he can truly practice liberality, and eventually, in some cases, also magnificence and magnanimity. That the liberal man is a friend to himself means that is able to use his wealth and goods wisely for the sake of a common good of a superior order. This implies right judgment, self-knowledge and ability to »see« and indicate, given some determinate conditions, the »center« of particular situations. His virtue has prevailed over a natural illiberality, so that he succeeds in meeting a double challenge: paying attention to his assets and giving away part of his wealth to selected friends (in whom he sees another self) for the sake of public happiness. The magnificent man acts similarly, albeit on a different scale. The responsibility for works and offices of public interest rests on his shoulders. Thanks to his abundant resources, he plays a relevant political role supporting expenditure of public relevance. His virtue too reveals a particular form of friendship with himself. In fact, the magnificent has wide experience of men and circumstances and can judge precisely, as if he were a scientist, what the most convenient and fitting expenditure for a given situation is. So, he spends not only with pleasure – as the liberal man does –, but also with style and greatness according to his high social status and political responsibilities. Both liberality and magnificence require *phronesis* and ethical impulse toward others; and public happiness depends on

30 Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer: Amicizia e conoscenza di sé. Il ruolo dell'amicizia nell'etica greca. In: Id.: L'anima alle soglie del pensiero nella filosofia greca. Napoli 1988. 93–110. 103.

them too. Still, this goal – which is the true end of ethical-political life – could not be achieved without the individual striving for unity and integrity.

On the contrary, vices of giving can be interpreted as demonstrating a lack of integrity and self-love. Indeed, characters such as the illiberal man do not do any good to themselves. The reason for this is clearly stated in the Nichomachean Ethics: the illiberal man is devoured by emotions such as an insatiable desire for wealth and the fear of letting it go. He is not only incapable of doing any good to anybody. Furthermore, he is a true enemy to himself because he sabotages – without knowing it – his own striving for happiness. Compared to this major antisocial type, the cases of the niggardly (μικροπρεπής) and of the unduly humble (μικρόψυχος) men are dissimilar. We can imagine the former as a sociable blunderer who gives money to others but not without resistance. In turn, the latter is a man who robs himself of the goods he would be truly worthy of. They are not friends to themselves in the sense that they cannot understand and judge precisely neither their own being nor the practical situations in which they are involved. In short, their moral knowledge is confused as a result of unresolved conflicts as is their action, although they are not a social danger.

I would like to conclude with a remark from a modern point of view. The most problematic aspect in Aristotle's theory of liberality and magnificence is that these virtues are strictly connected with wealth and expenditure, i. e. ultimately with money. Aristotle treats wealth as the matter that virtue needs in order for it to be activated. This is the reason why he does not regard non-economic beneficence as true liberality. Aristotle believes indeed that the soul has to learn how to regulate attachment to wealth for a superior political end; without economic goods the soul cannot be educated and, at the same time, no public happiness can be reached. Aristotle's approach implies that the gift of non-economic goods is not a proper act of liberality, but rather a sign of goodwill and friendship. This is, though, reductive; it was reductive even for other Greco-Roman traditions of philosophy. The Stoic school (particularly the middle Stoa), for instance, assumed that liberality is a main virtue that corresponds to the social nature of man. As such, it is best expressed not by money, but by personal help since this form of support creates and strengthens social bonds. As modern men, we too tend towards a more extensive concept of liberality; according to a general conception, we refer to a man who benefits others in various ways as »liberal«, regardless of his wealth; in other words, a man who lives and lets others live.

However, Aristotle also offers some insights into how to contribute to a more profound concept of virtuous giving. Virtues of giving are grounded on the notion of friendship with oneself; a notion which actually fits into a modern non-economical concept of generosity. Friendship with oneself suggests primarily the integration of wisdom and ethical impulse towards others and the good personal qualities that derive from this integration. These factors represent the core of true

generosity. It is very clear to see in magnanimity, a great virtue that is not about economic goods or wealth; it involves rather that proper self-knowledge which combines a desire for self-realization with the public good. In cases such as those of Socrates or Alkibiades, it represents indeed a peak of human experience. According to the Stoics – who liked paradoxa –, this peak was hard to reach even for Socrates. More significant, therefore, is that magnanimity refers to a friendship with oneself. This involves discipline and commitment, but it is more generally accessible in its elementary form. We can understand it as achieved individual integration which opens up to good social and political relations. This notion does not have to do immediately with money, rather it leaves open the various possibilities of supporting other people and the polis. To put it pointedly: virtuous giving to others requires integrity. Without integrity and cognitive consonance there can be no true good ethical and political life. In this sense, Aristotle's approach to a theory of virtuous giving has not exhausted its living potential.