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### Aristotle's Virtue of Friendship and the Relevance of Bayanihan System in the Philippines

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#### Abstract

This paper explores the connection between Aristotle's concept of virtue and friendship, particularly his emphasis on the moral qualities of good friendships, and examines how these ideas resonate with the Filipino concept of Bayanihan. However, the concept of bayanihan traditionally understood as a communal spirit of mutual aid, is deeply ingrained in Filipino culture, reflecting the cooperative ethos and the sense of solidarity among individuals. In this reason, by analyzing Aristotle's notion of friendship, which is rooted in virtuous relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and the common good, my paper recommends that the Filipino

Bayanihan system embodies a similar moral framework, where individuals work together for collective well-being. The paper further discusses the relevance of these ideas in modern Filipino society, highlighting how the spirit of Bayanihan continues to play a vigorous role in fostering social bonds and moral virtue in the context of community life, particularly during times of need or disaster. It argues that the integration of Aristotle's virtue ethics with the cultural practices of Bayanihan offers a valuable framework for promoting social harmony and collective responsibility in contemporary Filipino society.

**Keywords:** Aristotle's Virtue Ethics, Friendship, Bayanihan, Filipino Culture, Community Solidarity, Filipino Social Values

#### Rationale

It is always a truism that when people are united, they can accomplish great tasks; when people are divided, even the easiest task becomes challenging (Aristotle, 1984) <sup>[1]</sup>. This corresponds with the adage "*Unity we stand; divided we fall.*" Having been acculturated with the mentality of achieving the greatest good through a motivated spirit of brotherhood, solidarity, friendship, and cooperation. People with the social virtues of friendship and unity will experience harmony, peace, and progress. But how true is this belief? On one hand, is the classical example of unity with the aid of friendship which Aristotle, a Greek philosopher described in his Nicomachean Ethics as friendship they formed unity based on goodness, pleasure, and utility (Aristotle, 2000) <sup>[2]</sup>. On the other hand, a typical manifestation of unity among people who share a common belief system is the spirit of *bayanihan* which is cooperation among Filipinos in both times of crisis and times of joy.

Precisely, this research article highlights the relevance of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and the main task of this study is to determine the significance of Aristotle's notion of Friendship and the connection of unity in the *Bayanihan* system in the Philippines. And to possibly see this article in a manner of discussion I will present a philosophical discussion through Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. To begin with, Aristotle discussed friendship that can produce unity in a necessary virtue which is closely linked to the domain of morality. Friendship according to Aristotle is a kind of human relationship in which each person recognizes the needs of the other person and voluntarily offers necessary help to the other without expecting any reward or counting.

The cost of his goods and deeds. Although this kind of friendship is what Aristotle referred as the perfect as the perfect friendship based on goodness; yet, he further discussed what he called friendship based on utility and pleasure respectively (Aristotle, 2009) <sup>[3]</sup>. The *Bayanihan* system, in the Philippines as understood within the context of the typology of Filipino value orientation, refers to collective social action, particularly by the members of the community, and which is inspired and motivated by the spirit of solidarity, brotherhood, cooperation, and unity, especially during times of crisis. *Bayanihan* in the Philippines symbolizes the simplest meaning of the spirit of love and community and this creates a symbolic act of sharing and burdens or yokes of a neighbor in a communitarian aspect (Alegre, 2015) <sup>[4]</sup>. Beyond what *bayanihan* stands for, one could figure out a new element of solidarity, brotherhood, cooperation, unity, goodness, association, and to some extent, reciprocity.

The *Bayanihan* system is a Filipino cultural practice that has long been an integral part of Filipino society. Traditionally, it involved members of a community helping one another in times of need, such as when a family was moving houses or when a village was dealing with a crisis. The term *Bayanihan* originates from the word *bayan*, which means "town" or "nation," and is closely associated with the idea of helping out one's fellow community members (Bauang, 2010) [6].

By first comparing the nature of friendship and *bayanihan*, the researcher determined the relevance of Aristotle's concept of friendship to *bayanihan* using the content analysis method and further set specific parameters, namely: commonality, coherence, and importance between the two variables (Mendoza, 2018) [18]. The Filipino context of *Bayanihan* tends to look for a method of communitarian aspects in the field of unity and love in one commonplace. Based notion of Aristotle's is a necessity in life, and is built around people or community and it involves some kind of reciprocity, a form of virtue. *Bayanihan* is also a form of value that embodies the spirit of brotherhood, friendship, and solidarity. It rests on the tenets of interdependence, mutual respect, unity in diversity, and loyalty. It is manifested in other forms of social cooperation like *damayan*, *abolo*, and *alayan* (Dizon, 2015) [11]. Thus, this discussion concludes since friendship thrives in mutual understanding between friends who share the same interests and intellectual orientations each one of them. To make this paper logical I present the various questions that I consider a means of discussing this topic. These are the following questions.

1. How does Aristotle's concept of *philia* (friendship) relate to the principles of the *Bayanihan* system in the Philippines?
2. What role does mutual support and sacrifice play in both Aristotle's philosophy of friendship and the Filipino *Bayanihan* spirit?
3. How can the concept of "the good life" in Aristotle's ethics be reflected in the communal cooperation seen in *Bayanihan* practices?

These questions are the highlighted important part to be considered in this philosophical discussion.

### Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the relevance of Aristotle's concept of virtue and friendship in the context of the Filipino *Bayanihan* system. The research draws from both primary and secondary sources to investigate the philosophical and cultural implications of friendship and community cooperation. This analysis will utilize Aristotle's key concepts and provide a framework for understanding the materials and methods of *Bayanihan* in the Philippines as a natural culture that being practice by the Filipino people until now. This paper limits three premises that consist its discussions.

Premise 1: Aristotle's concept of Friendship.

Premise 2: The cultural ground of *Bayanihan* in the Philippines.

Premise 3: The ethical virtue of Friendship in serving *Bayanihan*.

These are the premises that suffice the discussions of this paper and patterns all the concepts and methods that concerns of this study.

### Research Design

The research design for this study is a qualitative, exploratory approach aimed at understanding the intersection of Aristotle's concept of friendship and the Filipino *Bayanihan* system. The design is structured to offer both theoretical insights and empirical evidence through a blend of philosophical analysis and cultural inquiry. The study is primarily descriptive and analytical in nature. It aims to explore how Aristotle's virtue ethics, particularly the concept of virtuous friendship, aligns with the communal spirit of *Bayanihan* in Filipino society. The research is exploratory in that it seeks to uncover connections between classical philosophical ideas and contemporary cultural practices. A key component of the research involves analyzing Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* to extract his views on friendship as a virtue, emphasizing the role of mutual goodwill and shared values. This framework is then applied to understand how *Bayanihan* functions as a collective practice of moral virtue in Filipino communities. The study involves an ethnographic examination of *Bayanihan*, focusing on both traditional and modern-day applications of the practice. The research looks into historical records, folklore, and contemporary examples of *Bayanihan*, particularly in times of disaster relief, community-building, and other instances of communal cooperation.

### Methods of Analysis

The analysis in this study is primarily qualitative and involves a comparative approach to understand the intersection of Aristotle's concept of friendship and the Filipino *Bayanihan* system. The methods of analysis are structured around both philosophical interpretation and cultural contextualization. A central method of analysis is the comparative framework that juxtaposes Aristotle's ethical theories with the practices of *Bayanihan*. By comparing Aristotle's views on virtuous friendship—based on mutual goodwill, moral character, and the pursuit of the common good—with the real-world application of *Bayanihan*, this analysis seeks to highlight similarities, differences, and areas of intersection.

The comparative approach emphasizes how the moral virtues discussed by Aristotle are enacted in Filipino cultural practices, especially in terms of mutual aid and communal solidarity. Thematic analysis is employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data gathered from interviews, focus groups, and the literature review. This method allows the researcher to recognize common ideas related to the concepts of virtue, friendship, and communal solidarity. Themes are derived from both the philosophical discussion of Aristotle's virtue ethics and the lived experiences of *Bayanihan* in Filipino society. The thematic analysis helps identify key elements, such as reciprocity, trust, and shared responsibility, which are central to both Aristotle's and the Filipino notion of friendship.

## Results and Discussions

### Bayanihan and its Image and Memories in the Philippines

It is denoting that the Filipinos are known to a social person in terms of unity, however, this unity that they have imposed in their community was not an individual action but rather a communal interest of each one of them (Casiño, 2014) <sup>[8]</sup>. One of these communal actions they have imposed in their life is the “*Bayanihan*” wherein the spirit of unity formed a unique action of every person who participated in the *Bayanihan*. The *Bayanihan* produced an idea of solidarity, brotherhood, unity, love, and cooperation that help especially in times of crisis. Its significance primarily lies in its plausibility and possibility of enriching the mechanisms of interpersonal relations between and among members of the community in which *bayanihan* is practiced. The Filipinos are known to be generous person in society because they have the practice of “*pakikipagsama*”, *pakikipagdamayan*, and *pakikipagkapwa-tao* all these general values that the Filipino people endowed were the highest forms of Friendship.

The *Bayanihan* system was only a collective memory of the people in the Philippines but it is significant to look back on the spirit of unity that was performed. These actions that were being practiced by the native Filipino people in the oldest time were a concrete manifestation of every individual nowadays because this will be served as an instrument to form a new government, a new system of camaraderie, and friendship. Moreover, the term *Bayanihan* (pronounced as *buy-uh-nee-hun*) is a Filipino custom derived from the word *bayan*; nation, town, or community. It originated from the practice of volunteers in a community helping a family move by carrying the house itself. The term *bayanihan* itself means “being in a bayan” which refers to the spirit of communal unity, work, and cooperation to achieve a particular goal.

The concept of *Bayanihan* is traced back to a country’s tradition which can be observed in rural areas, wherein the town’s people are asked especially the men to lend a hand to a family who will move into a new place. The relocation does not only involve moving the family’s personal belongings but most importantly it concerns the transfer of the family’s entire house to a new location (Cruz, 2015) <sup>[9]</sup>. A traditional Filipino house formed in a *Bahay Kubo* is made of indigenous materials such as bamboo *nipa* and *anahaw* leaves. For the volunteers to carry the house, bamboo poles are tied length-wise and cross-wise and go under the house. Approximately, it will take about 15-20 volunteers to carry a house and together they will move in unison heading to the family’s new place. As a token of gratitude, the family serves food to the volunteers at the end of the move. The *Bayanihan* spirit is still alive, there are still people in rural areas who transfer their houses to another place and people still help. Furthermore, the *Bayanihan* spirit lives on among Filipinos even in modern days and has been demonstrated in many forms, such as when natural calamities or disasters strike. Filipinos will go out of their way to help their “*kababayans*” in need. The *Bayanihan* spirit; is one of the many beautiful things that Filipinos do.

### Aristotle’s Virtue of Friendship and the Application of Bayanihan

Friendship, in its many forms, plays a central role in human life, shaping the way that individuals interact with one

another and fostering social cohesion and dimension in society (Cabrera, 2012) <sup>[7]</sup>. Among the most enduring and impactful philosophical treatments of friendship is Aristotle’s exploration and explanation of its role in ethical life, particularly in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle distinguishes between different types of friendships, but he places the highest value on those friendships that are based on virtue—those that are grounded in mutual goodwill, shared values, and the pursuit of the common good. These friendships mentioned by Aristotle are not merely a source of pleasure or utility; they are essential for personal growth and the attainment of *eudaimonia*, or human happiness and human flourishing. In the parallel part, in Filipino culture, the *Bayanihan* system represents a deeply ingrained social practice that involves collective effort and communal solidarity.

Traditionally, *Bayanihan* is a form of mutual aid, where individuals come together to help one another, especially during times of crisis or need (De Guzman, 2010) <sup>[10]</sup>. Whether it’s physically moving a house, responding to a natural disaster, or supporting community-based initiatives, *Bayanihan* is a reflection of Filipino values such as cooperation, empathy, and a sense of shared responsibility. This practice, though deeply rooted in Filipino tradition, and more than just a communal activity but a communitarian form of action in the society that embodies an ethical context that echoes the values of virtue and friendship.

Aristotle argues that virtuous friendships contribute to the flourishing (or *eudaimonia*) of both individuals and the community. In these friendships, individuals are not only sources of personal joy but also guides toward moral growth and ethical action. These kinds of relationships promote justice, cooperation, and the common good, all of which are essential for building a harmonious society. Friendship, for Aristotle, is therefore an essential aspect of a good and fulfilled life (Mendoza, 2018) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* presents three types of friendship: those based on utility, pleasure, and virtue. In the case of virtuous friendship, Aristotle asserts that it is founded on mutual goodwill, moral character, and the pursuit of the common good. True friendships, in Aristotle’s view, go beyond selfish interests and are characterized by a deep sense of equality, respect, and a shared commitment to moral excellence (Gonzalez, 2010) <sup>[14]</sup>. In this type of friendship, individuals help each other not out of obligation but out of a sincere desire for the other’s good, which in turn contributes to their flourishing. Aristotle’s focus on virtue as a central element of friendship reveals an ideal of human connection rooted in the development of moral character. The idea that friendships should be based on virtuous qualities such as trust, respect, and shared goals of personal and collective flourishing resonates with the Filipino cultural value of *kapwa* shared humanity, which emphasizes a deep sense of solidarity and mutual respect for others within the community (Cruz, 2015) <sup>[9]</sup>. Aristotle’s concept of virtuous friendship aligns with the Filipino practice of *Bayanihan*, shedding light on the shared ethical principles that underpin both. Aristotle’s exploration of friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics* reveals those virtuous friendships, founded on mutual goodwill, moral character, and a commitment to the common good, are fundamental to

achieving eudaimonia or a flourishing life. Such friendships are based not on self-interest or external utility but on the genuine desire to contribute to the well-being of others.

Likewise, the *Bayanihan* system in the Philippines exemplifies a communal ethic of cooperation, selflessness, and mutual aid. Rooted in the value of *kapwa* (shared humanity), *Bayanihan* encourages individuals to come together, often at great personal sacrifice, to support one another in times of need (Gonzalez, 2010) <sup>[14]</sup>. This practice reflects the core principles of virtuous friendship, where people engage in actions not for personal gain but for the collective benefit of their community, fostering a spirit of trust, solidarity, and moral responsibility. By comparing Aristotle's views on virtuous friendship with the practice of *Bayanihan*, it becomes clear that both emphasize the importance of reciprocity, selflessness, and communal cooperation. While Aristotle's philosophy offers a theoretical foundation for understanding the moral virtues that guide friendships, the *Bayanihan* system serves as a tangible, real-world application of these virtues within Filipino society. In essence, *Bayanihan* can be viewed as a manifestation of the principles Aristotle describes in his ethical framework, illustrating how virtue can be enacted through collective action and social bonds. As *Bayanihan* continues to be relevant in contemporary Filipino life, especially in times of crisis or community challenges, it underscores the importance of fostering a sense of interconnectedness and moral responsibility. Just as Aristotle argues that virtuous friendships contribute to the flourishing of individuals, *Bayanihan* plays a crucial role in the moral development of Filipino communities by promoting values such as empathy, cooperation, and collective well-being.

Thus, the application of Aristotle's virtue of friendship in the context of *Bayanihan* highlights how deeply rooted moral virtues shape and strengthen community ties. Both frameworks offer important lessons on the value of selfless cooperation and the central role of ethical relationships in fostering both individual and collective flourishing. By continuing to embrace the spirit of *Bayanihan*, Filipino society can ensure that these timeless principles of virtue, solidarity, and mutual respect remain at the heart of its cultural identity and social practices.

### The Bayanihan System and the Filipino Culture

The Filipino *Bayanihan* system represents a form of communal cooperation rooted in mutual aid, solidarity, and collective responsibility (Kintanar, 2006) <sup>[15]</sup>. Traditionally, *Bayanihan* is illustrated by the community's collective effort to assist a family or individual in need, such as when neighbors physically help carry a house to a new location. In more modern contexts, *Bayanihan* is often seen in disaster relief efforts, where individuals and communities come together to support one another during times of crisis. The *Bayanihan* system is not just a practical response to immediate needs; it is deeply ingrained in Filipino social values. The practice embodies the spirit of cooperation, where the welfare of the group takes precedence over individual gain. This sense of interconnectedness aligns with Aristotle's concept of virtuous friendship, which also emphasizes the collective good and the well-being of others as central to human flourishing (Lazaro, 2014) <sup>[16]</sup>. Both *Bayanihan* and Aristotle's virtuous friendship reflect the idea that humans are inherently social beings who find

fulfillment and virtue through the development of strong, morally grounded relationships within their communities.

The *Bayanihan* system is a deeply rooted Filipino cultural value that highlights the spirit of communal unity, cooperation, and selflessness. Traditionally, the term *bayanihan* refers to the practice of helping one another, particularly within a community, to achieve a common goal without expecting anything in return (Lico, 2008) <sup>[17]</sup>. This practice is often depicted through the image of neighbors coming together to carry a house or a *bahay kubo* (a traditional Filipino home) from one location to another, symbolizing the power of collective effort and mutual support. At its core, *Bayanihan* emphasizes the importance of solidarity, community responsibility, and altruism, values that have been integral to Filipino society for centuries. In modern times, *Bayanihan* has expanded beyond the physical act of helping move houses to encompass a wide range of activities, such as volunteering during times of disaster, supporting local businesses, and collaborating on social initiatives.

The *Bayanihan* system is a deeply rooted Filipino cultural practice that emphasizes mutual aid, cooperation, and communal unity. Traditionally, *Bayanihan* was exemplified by neighbors coming together to help a family move their house, often by physically lifting the structure and carrying it to a new location. Today, *Bayanihan* extends beyond this traditional practice and can be seen in various forms of collective action, especially during times of need, such as during natural disasters, communal events, or social initiatives (Dizon, 2015) <sup>[11]</sup>.

The *Bayanihan* system is a unique and profound aspect of Filipino culture, reflecting the interconnectedness of individuals and their collective strength in overcoming challenges. This enduring tradition continues to inspire Filipinos, both in the Philippines and abroad, to embrace cooperation and empathy as a way of life (Santos, 2015) <sup>[20]</sup>. Traditionally, *bayanihan* refers to the collective effort of a community working together to achieve a shared goal, often without monetary compensation. The term is derived from the word *bayan*, which means town or community and is symbolized by the image of neighbors lifting and transferring a house, particularly a traditional *bahay kubo*, to a new location (Pasion, 2017) <sup>[19]</sup>. This practice highlights the strength of social bonds within Filipino communities, where individuals are motivated by a sense of responsibility to one another. It illustrates how, in times of need, people come together to help without hesitation, whether it's for physical tasks like moving houses, aiding those in distress, or providing support in times of natural disasters.

The *Bayanihan* system remains a vital and cherished tradition in Filipino culture, symbolizing the core values of unity, cooperation, and community solidarity (Santiago, 2013) <sup>[21]</sup>. From its roots in collective physical tasks like moving homes to its broader applications in disaster relief, social support, and everyday life, *Bayanihan* showcases the Filipino spirit of helping others without expecting anything in return. In an increasingly globalized world, where individualism sometimes takes precedence, the enduring practice of *Bayanihan* serves as a reminder of the strength and resilience that comes from working together. It underscores the idea that no one is truly alone, and by



supporting one another, communities can overcome challenges, build stronger bonds, and create a more compassionate society. Through *Bayanihan*, Filipinos continue to inspire one another to uphold the values of selflessness, mutual aid and shared responsibility for a better and more connected world.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that Aristotle's virtue of friendship shares significant parallels with the Filipino *Bayanihan* system. Both concepts emphasize the importance of mutual respect, trust, and shared commitment to the common good. By examining these two systems through the lens of virtue ethics, we gain a deeper understanding of how moral virtues can shape social interactions and contribute to the well-being of both individuals and communities. In the Filipino context, *Bayanihan* continues to be a vital expression of these values, offering a model for cooperation and solidarity that transcends individual interests and fosters collective flourishing. Aristotle's concept of friendship, as discussed in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, emphasizes the importance of mutual goodwill, shared values, and a sense of community in forming meaningful relationships. According to Aristotle, true friendship is based on virtuous love, where individuals care for each other not for selfish reasons but because of the inherent goodness in the other person. This type of friendship nurtures personal growth and societal harmony.

In connection to the Filipino identity, the concept of *Bayanihan*, a traditional Filipino value of communal unity and cooperation, aligns closely with Aristotle's view of friendship. *Bayanihan* involves individuals coming together to help one another in times of need, whether its physically helping neighbors move houses or offering support during a crisis. Like Aristotle's virtuous friendship, *Bayanihan* is rooted in selflessness, mutual support, and the collective good that shared to everybody. The relevance of *Bayanihan* in modern Filipino society reflects Aristotle's principles by fostering a sense of solidarity and community, transcending individual interests for the benefit of the group. This communal spirit is crucial in times of adversity, such as natural disasters or societal challenges, where cooperation and altruism are essential for recovery and resilience. Thus, the virtues of friendship outlined by Aristotle, such as mutual respect, shared values, and selflessness, are embodied in the *Bayanihan* spirit of the Philippines. Both emphasize the importance of working together for the common good, demonstrating how ancient philosophical concepts can still be relevant in modern society.

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