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## Love, Friendship, and Disaffection in Plato and Aristotle: Toward a Pragmatist Analysis of Interpersonal Relationships

### **Abstract**

Although much overlooked by social scientists, a considerable amount of the classical Greek literature (circa 700-300 BCE) revolves around human relationships and, in particular, the matters of friendship, love and disaffection.

Providing some of the earliest sustained literature on people's relations with others, the poets Homer (circa 700 BCE) and Hesiod (circa 700 BCE) not only seem to have stimulated interest in these matters, but also have provided some more implicit, contextual reference points for people embarked on the comparative analysis of human relations. Still, some other Greek authors, most notably including Plato and Aristotle, addressed these topics in explicitly descriptive and pointedly analytical terms.

Plato and Aristotle clearly were not of one mind in the ways they approached, or attempted to explain, human relations. Nevertheless, contemporary social scientists may benefit considerably from closer examinations of these sources. Thus, while acknowledging some structuralist theories of attraction (e.g., that similars or opposites attract), the material considered here focus more directly on the problematic, deliberative, enacted, and uneven features of human association.

In these respects, Plato and Aristotle may be seen not only to lay the foundations for a pragmatist study of friendship, love, and disaffection, but also to provide some exceptionally valuable materials with which to examine affective relations in more generic, transhistorical terms.

### **Keywords**

Love, Friendship, Affection, Interpersonal Relations, Plato, Aristotle, Classical Greek, Pragmatism, Symbolic Interaction

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Working within the symbolic interactionist tradition (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Prus 1996, 1997; Prus and Grills 2003), this paper examines the works of two scholars of the classical Greek era (circa 700BCE-300BCE) who provide further insight into the study of friendship, love, and disaffection. Although there is a much broader Greek literature dating back to Homer (circa 700BCE) and Hesiod (circa 700BCE) that addresses a great many aspects of interpersonal relations, the present analysis focuses on the works of Plato (c420-348BCE) and Aristotle (c384-322 BCE). More specifically, we will be building on Plato's *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Lysis*, along with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Although writing over two thousand years ago, Plato and Aristotle provide a remarkable library of knowledge relevant to interpersonal relationships. Not only do these authors generate extremely astute considerations of friendship, love, and disaffection, but they also introduce countless other themes that cut across human relations more generally. While representing notably different styles of scholarship, both authors provide careful consideration of a variety of perspectives, deliberations, and actions pertaining to people's affective relationships with others.

Some social scientists may be inclined to dismiss classical Greek scholarship as "the relics of antiquity," but Plato and Aristotle present a great deal of material pertinent to contemporary analyses of people's relationships and a related set of opportunities for social scientists to engage these topics in transcontextual and transhistorical terms.

Following (1) an overview of the interactionist perspective, (2) a brief processual consideration of relationships, (3) a short discussion of classical Greek and related definitions of friendship, love and disaffection, we engage (4) Plato's *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Lysis*, and (5) Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The paper concludes with (6) a more contemporary pragmatist consideration of friendship, love, and disaffection using Chicago-style symbolic interactionism as our primary reference point.

## The Theoretical Framework

This project builds fundamentally on the symbolic interactionist tradition (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Strauss 1993 and Prus 1996, 1997, 1999). Accordingly, the eleven premises or assumptions outlined here not only reflect the interactionist paradigm more generally, but also establish the conceptual parameters for the present consideration of affective relationships:

1. *Human group life is intersubjective.* Human group life is accomplished (and made meaningful) through community-based linguistic interchange.
2. *Human group life is knowingly problematic.* Rather than positing an objective or inherently meaningful reality, it is through activity, interchange, and symbol-based references that people begin to distinguish (i.e., delineate, designate, and define) realms of "the known" and "the unknown."
3. *Human group life is object-oriented.* Denoting any phenomenon or thing that can be referenced (observed, referred to, indicated, acted toward, or otherwise knowingly experienced), [objects] constitute the contextual and operational essence of the humanly known environment.
4. *Human group life is (multi) perspectival.* As groups of people engage the world on an ongoing basis, they develop viewpoints, conceptual frameworks, or notions of reality that may differ from those of other groups.

5. *Human group life is reflective.* It is by taking the perspective of the other into account with respect to one's own being that people become "objects unto themselves" (and act accordingly).

6. *Human group life is sensory / embodied and (knowingly) materialized.* Among the realms of humanly knowing "what is" and "what is not," people develop an awareness of [the material or physical things] that others in the community recognize. This includes attending to some [sensory / body / physiological] essences of human beings (self and other), acknowledging human capacities for stimulation and activity, and recognizing some realms of practical (enacted, embodied) human limitations and fragilities. Still, neither phenomena, sensations, nor motions are meaningful in themselves.

7. *Human group life is activity-based.* Human behavior (action and interaction) is envisioned as a meaningful, deliberative, *formulative* (engaging) process; of doing things with respect to [objects].

8. *Human group life is Negotiable.* Because human activity frequently involves direct interactions with others, people may anticipate and strive to influence others as well as acknowledge and resist the influences of others.

9. *Human group life is relational.* People do things within group contexts; people act mindfully of, and in conjunction with, their definitions of self and other (i.e., self-other identities).

10. *Human group life is processual.* Human lived experiences (and activities) are viewed in emergent, ongoing, or temporally developed terms. The emphasis, accordingly, is on how people (as agents) make sense of and enter into the instances and flows of human group life in meaningful, purposive terms.

11. *Human group life takes place in instances.* Community life is best known through an attentiveness to the particular occasions in which people do things. Conceptions of human experience are to be developed mindfully of, and tested against, the particular occasions or instances in which people attend to and otherwise act toward self, other, and other objects of their awareness.

Although rudimentary in certain respects, these premises have profound *conceptual and methodological implications* for those studying the human condition. They alert students of the human condition to the importance of attending to (1) the ways in which people make sense of the world in the course of symbolic (linguistic) interchange, (2) the problematic or ambiguous nature of human knowing (and experience), (3) the object-oriented worlds in which humans operate, (4) people's capacities for developing and adopting multiple viewpoints on [objects], (5) people's abilities to take themselves and others into account in engaging [objects], (6) people's sensory-related capacities and [linguistically meaningful] experiences, (7) the meaningful, formulative, and enabling features of human activity, (8) people's capacities for influencing, acknowledging, cooperating with and resisting one another, (9) the ways that people take their associates into account in developing their lines of action, (10) the ways that people experience (and accomplish) all manners of community life in the ongoing or emergent instances of the "here and now" in which they find themselves, and (11) the "whatness" of human group life by examining the instances in which community life take place.

Still, much more is involved in the study of human group life and while premises of these sorts provide a conceptual home base, the interactionist emphasis is on "studying group life in the making." Focusing on human knowing and acting, the interactionists also have sought to develop concepts that enable them to comprehend the human condition in more direct and systematic terms. Examining instances of community life in process terms, through ethnographic inquiry, the

interactionists have attempted to specify, assess, articulate, and extend existing notions of human group life.

Given this quest for an analytic or conceptually articulated sociology (Blumer 1969; Lofland 1976, 1995 and Strauss 1993), the interactionists have made reference to generic social processes as elements addressing central aspects of human group life. Addressing the transcontextual and transhistorical features of human lived experience, generic social processes (GSPs) represent more pervasive and enduring qualities of ongoing community life.

As outlined by Prus (1996, 1997), the major generic social processes include: (1) acquiring perspectives, (2) achieving identity, (3) being involved [i.e., getting started, sustaining involvements, becoming disinvolved, becoming reinvolved], (4) doing activity, (5) developing relationships, (6) experiencing emotionality, (7) developing communicative fluency, and (8) forming and coordinating associations [establishing associations, objectifying associations, encountering outsiders].<sup>2</sup>

Providing researchers with a foundational set of the emergent features of human group life, GSPs allow for the comparison of concepts with specific instances of human interaction not only from their own research, but from any other works on the human condition that attend in more direct ways to humanly engaged activity.

Although those in the interactionist community have not yet studied friendship, love, and disaffection in particularly extensive terms, a variety of scholars working within the broader ethnographic tradition have contributed notably to an understanding of these matters in more generic terms. Working from an interactionist perspective and conceptually synthesizing the wide array of ethnographic literature that deals with interpersonal relationships, Prus (1996) provides the following list of the subprocesses involved in developing relations with others:<sup>3</sup>

- \* *Getting Prepared for Generalized Encounters*
- \* *Defining Self as Available for Association*
- \* *Defining (specific) Others as Desirable Associates*
- \* *Making Approaches / Receiving Openings from Others*
- \* *Encountering (and indicating) Rejection / Acceptance*
- \* *Assessing Self and Other for "goodness of fit"*
- \* *Developing Interactional Styles (in each relationship)*
- \* *Managing Openness and Secrecy*
- \* *Developing Understandings, Preferences, Loyalty*
- \* *Managing Distractions (and outside commitments)*
- \* *Juggling (multiple) Relationships*
- \* *Severing Relationships (disentanglement)*
- \* *Renewing Relationships (Prus 1996:159)*

We will not be examining these processes on a point by point basis within the present analysis. Nevertheless, these processes provide a consequential aspect of the conceptual frame with which this paper has been developed and we will return to a consideration of these matters in the conclusion.

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<sup>2</sup> For some other extensions of generic social processes as fundamental features of community life, readers are referred to considerations of deviance and regulation (Prus and Grills 2003), policy (Prus 2003b), terrorism (Prus 2005), public sociology (Prus 2007d), and technology (Prus and Mitchell 2009).

<sup>3</sup> For reviews of some of the ethnographic literature on relationships, see Prus (1996, 1997) and Prus and Grills (2003).

## The Classical Greek Literature

We did not engage the classical Greek literature specifically to learn about friendship, love and disaffection, but instead became more gradually aware of the relevance of these elements in the Greek classics amidst a more general consideration of human group life.<sup>4</sup> Still, it also became apparent that this literature cannot be adequately appreciated without attending to friendship, love, and disaffection.

A great many texts from the classical Greek era have been lost. Nevertheless, there still is an extensive literature available on themes pertaining to love, friendship and disaffection. While the Greek poets have given much attention to these topics, Plato and Aristotle provide a remarkably solid conceptual base and departure point for pragmatist considerations of people's affective relationships.

For readers less familiar with Plato and Aristotle, it should be observed that Plato and (his student) Aristotle are two of the most, if not the two most, conceptually enabling scholars of record. Nevertheless, the ideas and positions that they introduce are far from singular in emphasis. Still, both are highly articulate and insist on defining their terms of reference.

Whereas Plato is often depicted as "an idealist" and Aristotle as "an objectivist," these designations are only partially accurate at best. At times, Plato (representing Socrates) writes as a theologian and is highly skeptical of human (sensate-world) knowing.<sup>5</sup> Still, Plato also writes as a utopian political scientist (socialist), a moral entrepreneur and control agent, a philosophical dialectician,<sup>6</sup> and a pragmatist philosopher. Aristotle does not subscribe to a spiritual or "other world" theology. Instead, Aristotle is intensely concerned about examining the nature of human knowing and acting with respect to the sensate world. Aristotle emerges as a moralist at times, but in more consequential terms Aristotle is a biologist, physical scientist, a political scientist, a dialectician, a logician, and a pragmatist philosopher.

Whereas Plato provides a great many astute secular considerations of the human (sensate) condition, much of his work (reflecting the position of Socrates) is concerned with preparing people for another world (heavenly) existence. By contrast, Aristotle intends to enable people to better know and more effectively engage aspects of the humanly known (sensate) world.

Plato's works are presented in the form of dialogues and generally involve Socrates as the major and single most influential spokesman (regarding matters of theology, morality, dialectics, and wisdom). Whereas Plato's dialogues deal with a great many aspects of community life, many of which are pursued in considerable detail. In addition to other matters, Plato gives extended attention to affective relationships. Plato's materials sometimes reflect moral viewpoints but his texts

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<sup>4</sup> The primary contact route was a study of power as a humanly engaged process (Prus 1999), but this venture has since developed into a much more extended, pragmatist (interactionist-informed) analysis of human knowing and acting as this pertains to poetics, rhetoric, theology, history, education, politics, law, and philosophy. Some materials developed from this project that trace aspects of the study of human knowing and acting from the classical Greek era to the present time can be found in Prus (2003a, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007a,b,c, 2008a,b,c,d, 2009, 2010), Puddephatt and Prus (2007), and Prus and Mitchell (2009).

<sup>5</sup> Plato often invokes ideals as reference points and is concerned about promoting wordly virtue as a preparation for a divinely enabled after-life. His images of divinity and an after-life resonate extensively with those subsumed by Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theologians.

<sup>6</sup> As Plato uses the term (*Republic*), a dialectician is an analyst who pursues comparative analysis (similarities and differences) on a sustained, open (secular), conceptual basis. This is the way we will be using the term as well.

encompass a rich slate of substantive and analytical issues pertinent to love, friendship, and disaffection.

Aristotle's writings differ from Plato both in philosophical emphases and writing style. Rejecting Plato's divinely enabled mind-body dualism, Aristotle contends that people are to be understood first as animals, in biologically enabled terms. Like *all* other living creatures humans possess a life-energy (*psyche*; often translated as "soul"). Unlike Plato, who argues for a spiritual soul, Aristotle states that there is no separation between the physical body and the life energy and, in the case of humans, insists on the developmental unity of body, mind, and activity.

For Aristotle, human knowing is a process. It reflects people's capacities for sensory experiences, but is contingent on activity, group life, and (more uniquely) language. In ways that resonate extensively with American pragmatist and symbolic interactionist thought, Aristotle views humans as biologically-enabled *actively-engaged, community-based and linguistic-informed* (Prus 2003, 2004, 2007a, 2008a, 2009).

Whereas Plato deliberates openly and extensively about the nature of affective relationships in certain of his dialogues, Aristotle's considerations of love and friendship are much more explicit and direct. As with so much of his other works, Aristotle approaches human relationships as knowingly enacted and developmental endeavors. Still, Aristotle's writings are not void of moral overtones. Aristotle's material on friendship and love are laced with notions that people should try to act in good (i.e., noble) manners and avoid involvements in, and associations with, less desirable activities and associates.<sup>7</sup>

## Defining Friendship, Love, and Disaffection

In developing this statement, we have attempted to remain as close as possible to the authors' use of the terms "friendship, love, and disaffection." Still, since the authors use words of these sorts in somewhat different ways in presenting their materials, the definitions proposed for the use of this paper cannot precisely replicate those of the authors.

In more ideal senses, *friendships* denote relationships between two people that involve reciprocated positive affections and caring for the other and self. However, as the material following demonstrates, this often does not capture the actualities of

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<sup>7</sup> The texts from Plato and Aristotle used in this statement have been translated from Greek writings by other scholars. These translations have been developed by people who not only would have had no knowledge of our interactionist applications but also have no particular affinities with the approach developed within. It also might be recognized that these published translations are apt to be considerably superior to even more careful readings of the sort that might be produced by reasonably competent individuals who have studied Greek for some years.

At the same time, there will be variations among translators and these differences will be most significant with respect to particular details. Fortunately, we not only have access to multiple translations of many classical Greek texts, but also have been concentrating on more substantial portions of text. Thus, in dealing with materials for this project, we have endeavored to locate text that is both extensive and explicit in its development with respect to the topics of *friendship, love, and disaffection*.

Like us, many readers may be surprised to see just how extensively many, seemingly contemporary, notions about friendship have been articulated in classical Greek scholarship. Still, contemporary researchers have to be prepared to overcome some differences in writing styles in texts that were written centuries ago. This, however, should be recognized as a limitation of the reader rather than the authors.

friendship. Not only may people develop a variety of affective stances towards others and pursue these in different degrees of intensity, but people's interests also need not be reciprocated "by their friends." In addition, while still being referred to as friendships, some relationships may notably lack the positive affection of ideal friendships and may be based solely on the utility of the association to one or both parties.

Compared to friendship, *love* implies a more intense, affectionate concern for the other. Still, two separate emphases of love may be delineated. These acknowledge people's capacities for sensate experience and affection concerns. One variant of love may be described as an attraction or affection of a romantic, sexual, erotic, passionate, or sensate nature. It may include but does not presume a deep caring for the other. The other notion of love denotes a deep caring and affection for the other but does not, in itself, imply a romantic, sexual, erotic or passionate element.

Again, ideal notions versus actual instances of these concepts must be considered. It also should not be assumed that these emphases are mutually exclusive. As well, neither of these notions of love need be reciprocated. Likewise, while genuine affection appears to represent the primary basis for the second variant of love, caring relationships also may be closely connected with the practical utility of the other. Because the term love is often used in reference to more sensate or more caring orientations in the statements following, we will endeavor to contextualize the discussion appropriately.

Whereas friendship and love generally imply positive affections toward the other, *disaffection* denotes expressions, affections, and involvements that generally oppose these notions; including animosity, ill will, enmity, unfriendliness, and dislike. Disaffection, too, may be experienced in a variety of ways, with varying degrees of intensity, and need not be reciprocated.

Disaffection is given considerably less attention than love and friendship in the works considered here, but it should not be supposed that disaffection precludes friendship and love, or vice-versa. Indeed, some disenchantment or displeasure with the other may be evident both within relationships of distinctively friendly and loving natures as well as represent the pointedly central emphasis of some relationships.

## Attending to Plato and Aristotle

In what follows, Plato's considerations of affective relationships will be discussed at some length prior to Aristotle's analysis of relationships. As in so many other areas of his scholarship, Aristotle builds on insights that Plato introduced.<sup>8</sup> Thus, an appreciation of Plato's work facilitates understanding of the more pointedly analytic materials that Aristotle develops. At the same time, however, an examination of Aristotle's work on friendship is instrumental for better comprehending Plato's insights. Still, both authors benefited immensely from the more general intellectual community in which they were embedded.

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<sup>8</sup> Whereas Aristotle builds on Plato's work in various ways, those who suggest (sometimes smugly) that Aristotle was not very original are poorly informed individuals and simply have not examined Aristotle's texts with much care. Thus, although Plato is the more entertaining author and is much easier to read, Aristotle's works are filled with conceptual insights and developments the likes of which have never been matched for their comprehensive, enabling, and innovative contributions to sustained scholarship.

Although we had earlier considered the matter of organizing the texts of Plato and Aristotle around the set of subprocesses pertaining to relationships as generic social processes (Prus 1996), we realized that Plato's and Aristotle's materials have a particular classical quality of their own. Since these accounts of affective relationships are analyses unto themselves and thereby differ from the mass of material that one normally accumulates in extended ethnographies, we were concerned that we maintain the integrity of these texts for readers.

Thus, while attentive to much of the contemporary ethnographic literature pertaining to relationships as GSPs we will review, analyze, and present materials on friendship, love, and disaffection in the orders in which they appear in the original text. This may result in some repetition, and appear a bit fragmented at times, but it will provide readers with a much better sense of the particular texts being considered and is necessary if the analytical authenticity of these authors is to be maintained.

While the works considered here also deal with many other relevant issues to the social sciences, only the themes regarding friendship, love and disaffection are examined in more detail. In line with the interactionist emphasis on the *what* and the *how* of everyday life, aspects of these texts that deal more directly with human knowing and acting are highlighted.

## Plato's Portrayals of Affective Relationships

Although these dialogues likely were not developed in this particular order, we have organized the analysis around Plato's *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Lysis*, respectively. This enables us to move from some more general to somewhat more focused aspects of affective relationships. Still, readers are cautioned that we can convey only partial images of the rich detail that Plato develops in each of these statements.

### ***Symposium***<sup>9</sup>

Developed within the context of a *symposium* or formal drinking party, Plato's *Symposium* is made up of seven speeches made in honour of Eros, the God of Love.<sup>10</sup> Although Plato often discusses these themes in the context of mythological heroes or celebrities, this work holds relevant insight regarding social interchange for the contemporary reader. As a means of maintaining organizational flow, the speeches in *Symposium* are discussed in the order in which they are delivered.

Within this text Plato generally uses the term love to refer to sexual, romantic, erotic or passionate attractions and expressions, but he also locates this emphasis with somewhat broader conceptions of love. While friendship is not explicitly considered in this work, some notions of disaffection are discussed in relation to romantic involvements.

In particular, *Symposium* addresses (1) *the importance of studying love*, (2) *the relevance of love as an element in human behavior*, (3) *various forms of romantic love*, (4) *the relative nature of love*, (5) *multiple views and customs regarding*

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<sup>9</sup> Although we benefitted from the translation of *Symposium* provided by Benjamin Jowett, we have relied primarily on the excellent translation of *Symposium* developed by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (1989).

<sup>10</sup> *Eros* is the Greek term for *love* or *desire*; often used in reference to the Greek Goddess of Love, *Aphrodite*. Also consider *eros* as in *hero* or *heroine*.

passionate love, (6) parallels between erotic love and other realms of human involvement, (7) a theological explanation concerning the origin of passionate love and desire, (8) praises and promotions directed towards romantic love (specifically the god of love), (9) objects of love and desire, (10) ultimate goals of love (as happiness and immortality), (11) definitions and implications of “true love,” and (12) instances of people’s passionate fascinations and obsessions with others, and the reactions of third party others.

Prior to the presentation of the speeches, Plato draws attention to the great significance and vital importance of romantic love, and asks why this topic is not more frequently directly addressed.

Within the first speech of *Symposium* (178b-180e; with Phaedrus speaking), the *God of Love* is described as powerful and compelling, as well as a prominent motivating force of human behavior. Instances are provided in support of this claim including: experiencing the desire to hide one’s involvements in wrongdoing from loved ones, performing extraordinary acts for a loved other, and making more extensive sacrifices for the benefit of loved ones than for anyone else. Love is also viewed as an inspiration for doing good. Encouraging desirable behavior and deterring less admirable deeds, love thereby *aids in the maintenance of virtue and order*.

In the second speech (180d-185c; from Pausanias), the speaker discusses various forms of love. He makes the case that there are actually two gods of love. One represents *common* or *vile* love, entailing short-lived physical lust and desires. The second signifies *proper* love, which is described as having lasting, more intelligent, and virtuous qualities. Instances of each form are provided.

Pausanias then addresses the *relative nature of love*, claiming that love does not possess inherent values of good or bad, but rather people attach evaluations to the resulting thoughts and behaviors:

This applies in the same way to every type of action: considered in itself, no action is either good or bad, honorable or shameful...how it comes out depends entirely on how it is performed. If it is done honorably and properly, it turns out to be honorable: if it is done improperly, it is disgraceful...Love is not in himself noble or worth of praise; that depends on whether the sentiments he produces in us are themselves noble. (Plato, *Symposium*, 181a, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

In turn, Pausanias recognizes the various perspectives and practices that may be taken on love. These notions vary from region to region and person to person. He speaks directly of how different regions maintain different views and customs regarding love:

...Although the customs regarding love in most cities are simple and easy to understand, here in Athens (and in Sparta as well) they are remarkably complex. In places where the people are inarticulate, like Elis or Boetia, tradition straightforwardly approves taking a lover in every case. No one, the young or old, would ever consider it shameful. ...By contrast, places like Iona and almost every other part of the Persian Empire, taking a lover is always considered disgraceful. (Plato, *Symposium*, 182b-c, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

Pausanias then goes on to provide instances of the perspectives and customs that his own group holds. These include a positive evaluation of those expressing one’s love for a partner (especially if the loved one is of honorable background and

accomplishment); performing extraordinary acts for one's lover (while these same extraordinary acts performed for a nonlover would be regarded in a negative manner); the lover is given special treatment and much of the lover's behavior is overlooked; success in acquiring a lover is deemed noble and failure to do so is regarded as shameful; and loving on the basis of physical appearances for short periods of time rather than engaging in more lasting and involved relationships is described as a vulgar and vile practice. Pausanias continues with further descriptions of the proper methods for obtaining a lover.

The existence of customs are said to be a means of promoting acts of proper love (as discussed above) and deterring those of vile and vulgar forms. His speech ends with a consideration of acts of deception and how these practices may be employed within relationships of love.

The third speaker (186-188d; Eryximachus speaking here) also discusses love in the context of the two forms proposed above (proper vs. vile). However, Eryximachus claims that love occurs in all realms and is not limited to the human soul. *Parallels* are drawn between qualities attached to the love experienced between humans and those fascinations people develop in areas such as medicine, music, seasonal change, astronomy, and theology. Eryximachus draws out instances of struggle between the proper (good, just, honorable, healthy, harmonious and heavenly) and the vile (common, vulgar, harmful, crude, impulsive, and destructive).

The fourth speech (189d-194e; delivered by Aristophanes) presents a *creation story of love* intended to account for human experiences of love and romantic desires. These are said to result from an instance of punishment, bestowed by the gods, which consisted of the splitting of all humans -- male, female and androgynous -- in two separate bodies (the present human form). In turn, the experience of love is simply the natural longing to be whole or pursuit of unity with the original other half. This account is offered to explain romantic desires of both a homosexual and heterosexual nature and the intense longing for one another that is often felt by lovers.

The fifth presentation (195a-198a; by Agathon) takes the form of an epideictic or evaluative speech;<sup>11</sup> it is offered *in praise of the God of Love* and the gifts this god brings. In doing so, Agathon first describes Love's physical character including youth, delicate nature, fluid supple shape (allowing for the convenient passage in and out of the soul), and attractive appearance.<sup>12</sup> This is followed by a description of Love's moral character as virtuous and just, moderate, brave, wise, and creative. Agathon also praises the God of Love for the gifts she bears:

Love fills us togetherness and drains all of our divisiveness away. Love calls gatherings like these together, in feasts, in dances, and in ceremonies. Love moves us to mildness, removes us from wildness...love cares well for good men, cares not for bad ones. In pain in fear, in desire, or speech love is our best guide and guard. (Plato, *Symposium*, 197e, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

This speech outlines love's abilities (variously) to unite individuals; generate calming effects; promote acts of kindness; foster grace; and encourage yearning and desire. As well, love offers guidance, protection, and friendship to those of good nature.

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<sup>11</sup> Epideictic (evaluative or demonstrative) rhetoric deals in the art of praise or blame for specific individuals as well as commemorations or condemnations of particular groups or events.

<sup>12</sup> In *Symposium* (195a-198a), Love (as one of the gods) is sometimes discussed as a "god" but at other times is presumed to be a "goddess."

Before the next speech officially begins (198b-201e), Socrates, a featured member of the party briefly addresses the *objects of love and desire*. His claim is that desire is always directed towards a thing. In particular, the quest is for needed things. This includes those things that one does not possess but desires to possess, as well as those things that one already possesses but desires to continue to possess in the future. He also posits that the object of desire or love is only directed towards things that are beautiful and good, never towards the ugly.

In the sixth speech, Socrates (201-212b) recounts a conversation he alleges to have had on love with a woman called Diotima. In the process (through Diotima), Socrates takes issue with some of the things suggested in earlier speeches. Providing an account of the upbringing of the god of love, the popular beliefs and praises of the god are refuted. In its place, she claims love actually consists of a balance between beautiful and ugly, mortal and immortal, wise and ignorant, rich and poor. Within this discussion, notions of happiness are examined. It is suggested that happiness entails the possession of that which is good and beautiful.

When addressing the *goal or ultimate aim of love*, Diotima claims that the answer is *happiness*. This occurs when one possesses the beautiful things once desired (thus, there is no need or desire for anything further). Questions are then raised concerning whether this love and desire for happiness is experienced by all.

This discussion leads to *a clarification of the definition of love*. Here, conveying her viewpoint, Socrates suggests the concept of love actually covers several different forms of emotion and experience:

...We divide out a special kind of love, and we refer to it by the word that means the whole—'love'; and for the other kinds of love we use other words... Every desire for good things or for happiness is the 'supreme and treacherous love' in everyone. But those who pursue this along any of its many other ways—through making money, or through the love of sports, or through philosophy—we don't say that these people are in love, and we don't call them lovers. It's only when people are devoted exclusively to one special kind of love that we use these words that really belong to the whole of it 'love' and 'in love' and 'lovers.' (Plato, Symposium, 205b-d, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

While people's actions (and fascinations) with respect to other matters may parallel those experienced in the pursuit of love (ultimately happiness), they are not labeled in "love" terms. Rather "love" is used to represent a particular form or *a special kind* of affection or intrigue. Also of sociological interest in this discussion is the author's recognition of the ambiguities of language and its implications for analysis of particular subject matters.

In light of this, Diotima again affirms that the objective or goal of love involves the desire *to possess the good forever*, and further asks the following questions:

How do people pursue it if they are truly in love? What do they do with the eagerness and zeal we call love? What is the real purpose of love? (Plato, Symposium, 206b, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

In addressing these concerns, Socrates says that Diotima's viewpoint is that the love relationship is a means of sustaining *immortality* (in a biological sense), via the reproductive practices that take place within love's context. In addition, love enables the lover to experience true beauty in its pure, divine and virtuous form. This notion of true beauty as the aim of love parallels the proper love discussed by previous speakers.

The final speech (212c-222b) is made by a boisterous uninvited guest, Alcibiades and reveals an instance of a *fascination with another*. While praising the object of his affection (Socrates in this case), Alcibiades reveals how his involvement has left him with many experiences and emotional episodes, including physical and emotional attraction, seduction, rejection, jealousy, and attempts to restrain from sexual temptation.

In developing *Symposium*, Plato draws our attention to a number of themes highly pertinent to affective relationships. Thus, he indicates (a) how romantic love may be viewed in differing ways, (b) how these understandings develop and are pursued, (c) the various customs and practices engaged by both those within groups (insiders) and outsiders, (d) how particular customs may be sustained or adjusted in the midst of community life, (e) how linguistic interchange is recognized and dealt with, (f) how people pursue and sustain these involvements, and (g) how those perspectives and actions entailed in involvements of love parallel people's intrigues in other realms of group life.

### ***Phaedrus***<sup>13</sup>

While Plato's *Phaedrus* also deals with other noteworthy themes, particularly those of rhetoric and theology, this text addresses notions of love, disaffection and friendship at some length.

Written in Plato's usual script-like manner, *Phaedrus* unfolds as a conversation between two companions. Although focusing primarily on romantic love, *Phaedrus* also periodically compares these involvements with friendships. In contrast to *Symposium*, which emphasizes praises, gifts, and benefits of romantic relationships, *Phaedrus* gives more attention to the animosity and disaffections that arise within romantic involvements.

In particular, Plato addresses (1) *the challenges of maintaining romantic relationships*, (2) *the disadvantages of viewpoints adopted by the romantically involved*, (3) *the responses of others to people's romantic involvements*, (4) *the practices and difficulties of terminating relationships*, (5) *the continuities of relationships based on physical attractions*, (6) *the general ingratiating tendencies of lovers when dealing with other people*, (7) *the selfless generosity implied by friendships*, (8) *reciprocity within friendships and romantic involvements*, (9) *the questionable behaviors of those in love*, (10) *themes of insecurity and jealousy in romantic love*, (11) *the relative nature of attraction and beauty*, (12) *flattery*, (13) *the relevance of similarities for romantic relationships*, (14) *the viewpoints of those involved with jealous and insecure lovers*, (15) *the advantages of people adopting "in love" perspectives*, and (16) *the theological perspectives of love*.

Plato (231-232a) first addresses some of the *problematic* features of passionate relationships. Notably, when people's commitments to loved ones are intensified, there is often an associated neglect of others. As well, extensive investments made to the loved one are generally viewed as wasted once desires diminish and relationships dissipate.

Plato then considers the *perspectives maintained by lovers*, positing that those who are in love reduce all other involvements as secondary to the lover. This is

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<sup>13</sup> We have relied primarily on the translation of *Phaedrus* developed by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (1995), but also appreciated the translation of Benjamin Jowett (1937).

framed in negative terms, and is seen as detrimental to those involved as lovers. Those thusly involved are frequently referenced as *blinded by love* or being *lovesick*.

Plato (232b) next addresses the *stigma* or disrepute attached to the more overt, often physical expressions of erotic love and the practice of people spending too much time with their lovers:

The result is that whenever people see you talking with him they'll think you are spending time together just before or just after giving way to desire. But they won't even begin to find fault with people for spending time together if they are not lovers; they know one has to talk to someone, either out of friendship or to obtain some pleasure. (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 232b, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

By contrast, there is no stigma applied to those who spend extended periods of time together within friendship contexts, since people are social beings and are thought to require the company of others.

The speaker (232b-232e) then addresses difficulties of *ending romantic involvements*, pointing to the emotional suffering and effects on people's future perspectives, especially when relationships are highly valued by one or both parties. These situations also may be difficult for both parties involved. Often the experience or threat of the termination of a relationship leads to the development of insecurities and jealousy (as was discussed in *Symposium*, 213d). Attempts may be made by the insecure or jealous lover to isolate the loved from others and therefore limiting potential alternatives and threats. In addition, the question is raised if jealousy is an indication of being in love.

*Phaedrus* (233) subsequently turns to matters concerning *the continuity of involvements*. Since physical attractions often result in emotional desires for another, this often leads to the development of romantic relationships on a superficial basis. Thus, there is a greater potential for these relationships to falter, once desires have passed. This is contrasted with the development of friendships, which purportedly do not lend themselves to this situation as easily.

Ingratiation and the loss of sensibility or perspective also receive attention in *Phaedrus* (233b). It is observed that those in love are often highly complementary to people more generally. This tendency is seen to reflect people's absorption in the love perspective, which encourages lovers to see things through "rose-colored glasses":

A lover will praise what you say and what you do far beyond what is best, partly because he is afraid of being disliked, and partly because desire has impaired his judgment. Here is how love draws conclusions: when a lover suffers a reverse that would cause no pain to anyone else, love makes him think he's accursed! And when he has a stroke of luck that's not worth a moment's pleasure, love compels him to sing praises. The result is you should feel sorry for lovers, not admire them. (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 233b, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

This expressed disenchantment with those in love is in stark contrast to the materials in *Symposium*, wherein the lover is viewed as noble and honorable.

The speaker (233c) subsequently focuses more directly on friendships. In particular he discusses the *actions of a good friend*. These include (a) giving without thought of immediate returns or pleasures, (b) refraining from emotional overreactions when encountering conflict, and (c) providing guidance and forgiveness for unintentional errors. These actions are said to assist in the

maintenance of lasting and enduring friendships. This is followed by the observation that erotic love is not a necessarily component for strong and secure relationships, as indicated in relationships between a parent and child.

The matter of *reciprocity* in both romantic relationships and friendships is then briefly examined (234b, 236-238c). It is suggested that favors or aid should be provided to those who are best able to return these, not those who are in the greatest of need.

Plato reminds readers that romantic love is often viewed as a justification for error, a strategy unavailable to those who are not in love:

(F)riends often criticize a lover for bad behavior; but no one close to a non-lover ever thinks that desire has led him to bad judgment about his interests. (Plato, Phaedrus, 234b, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

While the lover is viewed as adopting a perspective that entails his loss of wits and being blind to reason, the same actions performed by a nonlover are not defined or justified in this irrational *lovesick* manner. Plato then discusses the capacity of love (and objects of desire) to encourage one to yearn for and accommodate temptations of lustful and sexual sorts.

Plato (239-240) then re-engages the theme of *jealousy* and *insecurity* and the resulting actions that may take place. This involves the practice of people becoming involved with those who are thought weaker and inferior, as a means of maintaining control and boosting self-esteem. As well, insecure and jealous lovers may attempt to prevent their loved ones from interacting with those who may appear superior to themselves, as well as with those (such as family and close friends) who may have the ability to block their relationships.

The danger, however, is that these exclusionary tactics eventually may lead to dislike or resentment of the jealous lover by the loved one. Throughout this discussion, as well, Plato makes mention of the *relative nature* and *utility of appearance in attraction*, pointing out that some forms and appearances are viewed as more desirable over others.

Plato (240c) then goes on to attend to the dangers of those who engage in *flattery*. The threat of this role comes in its charm and associated vulnerability many experience as a result. In a similar manner, he discusses someone assuming the role of "a younger kept person" — whose pleasures he describes as short lived and whose costs for enduring the relationship can be great.

The notion of *similarity as a basis of romantic involvements* (240e) is then briefly touched on. This takes place in the context of age, with those of similar age being drawn together. A further observation is that those who are in relationships with others of dissimilar ages, often experience difficulty since the elder's desire for the younger will not fade as quickly as the younger person's interests; resulting in continued attraction on the part of the elder individual that is not experienced and reciprocated by the younger person. This may lead to accounts of jealousy and insecurity, as discussed above, on the part of the older person, directed toward the younger individual.

Plato (240e-241c) examines this scenario through the perspective of the younger person or other *victims of jealous lovers*. Here, the author describes instances from this perspective and the difficulties involved therein:

To be watched and guarded suspiciously all the time with everyone! To hear praise of yourself that is out of place and excessive! And then to be falsely accused—which is unbearable when the man is sober and not only

unbearable but positively shameful when he is drunk and lays into you with a pack of wild barefaced insults! (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 240e, Nehamas and Woodruff trans.)

Plato (244b-245c) then shifts emphasis somewhat and describes the *advantages of the love perspective* (earlier described as entailing infatuation as well as a loss of reason and self-control). He first explains that the original meaning of the term madness (*mania*) once had positive connotations. In addition, he posits that madness has brought many people relief in troubling times, as it provides a kind of mental escape for those involved. As well, it has inspired the poets and muses. Finally, he suggests that one should not accept the claim that a friend in control (someone who is not influenced by sexual desires) is better than one who is infatuated (madly in love), as love is understood to be sent by the *gods to ensure our greatest good fortune*.

Plato (250d-256e) subsequently attempts to explain the experience of love, in particular sexual attraction and temptation directed towards physical beauty through his *theological* perspectives on the soul (*psyche*). Accordingly, true beauty is so valued because it resembles that which the (reincarnated) soul earlier experienced within the heavenly realm. For those souls that (once reborn in a new physiological body) remember more extensively, one's response is of admiration of ideals and longing for the divinely experienced past. However, those souls whose memories are feebler or who have not become close to the divine in earlier lives will respond in more animalistic, sensate-driven manners—giving into sexual desire without shame or remorse. This explanation is continued as Plato theologically accounts for various other instances of love and friendship, claiming that these relationships are inspired by the divine.

Within this context, Plato briefly makes reference to the notion of "similar" and "opposites" constituting a basis for a relationship. Here, he posits that those who are similar in character will form bonds, while those who are different from one another will not. *Phaedrus* concludes with an extended consideration of rhetoric.

Like *Symposium*, Plato's *Phaedrus* provides readers an extended, dialectic examination of friendship, disaffection and, in particular, romantic love. Drawing attention to some more problematic features of romantic relations, this text instructively addresses matters such as influence and negotiation in the development of relationships, intersubjective evaluations of objects/targets, tactics for developing, maintaining and terminating relationships, and the differing viewpoints that people may adopt with respect to love and other affective relationships.

## Lysis<sup>14</sup>

Plato's third text, *Lysis*, is a running dialogue about friends and potential romantic lovers. While the focus is on friendship, themes of passionate love and disaffection receive considerable attention.

Within *Lysis*, Plato examines the matters of (1) *people's differing experiences and expressions of infatuation or sexual attraction*, (2) *the reactions of others to infatuated individuals*, (3) *people pursuing and/or attracting potential romantic partners*, (4) *the relevance of similarities for attractions*, (5) *concepts of happiness in romantic relationships*, (6) *utility of relationships*, (7) *mutuality in friendships and*

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<sup>14</sup> While mindful of Benjamin Jowett's translation of *Lysis*, we worked more closely with Stanley Lombardo's translation.

*romantic involvements, (8) sharing common qualities as a basis for friendship (continued), (9) whether those who are already happy require friendship, (10) some limitations of similarities, (11) relationships pursued for the sake of another friend, (12) friendship as knowable only relative to one's reference points, and (13) whether one can love another without also being a friend.*

*Lysis* begins (204a-205d) with a discussion of *romantic infatuation or intense sexual attraction* for another. Acknowledging the relative nature of beauty, Plato observes that people may hold differing definitions of physical attractiveness. The author also considers the different ways people may express their desires, including praising the object or person of affection (directly to these individuals and/or others), offering gifts to the object of desire and becoming preoccupied or fixated with contemplation of the loved other.

Plato also observes that people's expressions of infatuation may range from instances of concealment and highly discreet revelations to open and uninhibited actions. These practices also are seen as contingent on the response and reactions of third parties to the infatuated individuals. Providing some instances of negative reactions, Plato suggests that reactions from others may involve viewing the infatuated individual as mad, raving, ridiculous or annoying, as suggested in the following account of an individual responding to the infatuation of another:

[I]f he spends any time with you at all you'll be driven to distraction hearing you say it so often. We're all just about deaf from all the 'Lysis' [name of the admired] he's poured into our ears. And if he's been drinking, odds are we'll wake up in the middle of the night thinking we hear Lysis' name. As bad as all this is in normal conversation, it's nothing compared to when he drowns us with his poems and prose pieces. And worst of all he actually sings odes to his beloved in a weird voice, which we have to put up with listening to. (Plato, *Lysis*, 204c-d, Lombardo)

Plato (205e-206e) then considers the *matter of people (as agents) pursuing or attracting prospective lovers*. Here, he discusses some strategies and related cautions. Thus, lovers sometimes endeavor to overwhelm loved individuals with praise and gifts, this method engenders the risk of ridicule (from others) of the efforts made and losses of investments consumed by the gifts. This risk increases as the effort invested in the loved object increases.

As well, the praise, gifts, and other acknowledgements directed toward the targets of affection may serve to increase these people's confidence in their abilities to attract and successfully pursue relationships with other people -- thereby making the lover's task even more challenging. Thus, rather than overwhelming targets with praise, gifts, and the like, the speaker suggests the most promising method of pursuit is to *soothe* and *charm* the target by engaging in intellectual conversation.

Next, Plato (207) addresses the idea is that common qualities and similar desires provide a basis for friendship. The commonalities discussed include things such as age, class backgrounds, and physical attractiveness.

Plato (207d-210c) subsequently posits that relationships of romantic love and friendship reflect the desire for the loved one to be happy. Defining *happiness* as the freedom to do whatever one pleases without restraint. Plato examines the matters of trust, freedom and guidance in relationships of love and friendship. He posits that these bonds may entail the desire for those who are loved to be free to do what makes them happy, but freedom as employed here is limited to those things that the loved individual fully understands. Until then, loved ones are to be guided by their

more knowledgeable associates, as in the instance of the parent and child or city officials and citizens.

From there, Plato (210d) briefly discusses the *utility of relationships*, suggesting that bonds of romantic love and friendship may be developed on the basis of one's usefulness to the other.<sup>15</sup> Thus, useful qualities are said to increase closeness. Within this context, the speaker revisits the topic of pursuit of passionate relationships. Here he (210e) posits that a successful strategy for dealing with love objects is to "cut them down to size" and "put them in their place," rather than "puffing them up and spoiling them." The implication is that target confidence in self hinders the probability of agents achieving reciprocity of affection on the part of the loved one. This subdiscussion is concluded with the thought that desired relationships seldom are easily acquired.

Plato (212b-213d) next addresses *mutuality* within relationships, particularly those of friendships. Here, he questions the commonly invoked criterion of reciprocity, asking if people have to exchange somewhat comparable feelings of love or affection to be considered friends; if it is possible to have only one friend in a friendship; and, if so, who the friend actually would be in nonreciprocated relationships:

Then which is the friend of the other? Is the lover the friend of the loved, whether he is loved in return or not, or even hated? Or is the loved the friend of the lover?... [O]ne is frequently a friend of a nonfriend, and even of an enemy. This is the case when you love someone who does not love you back, or even hates you. And frequently one is the enemy to a nonenemy, or even to a friend, as happens when you hate someone who does not hate you, or even loves you. (Plato, *Lysis*, 212c, 213c, Lombardo)

As in much of Plato's work, no definite conclusions are made; rather he poses questions and proposes issues for the reader to consider.

Plato (214a-219) subsequently returns to the issue of sharing common qualities as a basis for friendship. While acknowledging the plausibility of people developing affinities on the basis of similarities, Plato points out a major exception to this notion. Thus, he posits that those who share negative qualities (the bad) cannot actually maintain true loving or liking friendships, especially with another who is also bad.

Pursuing this theme further, Plato then asks whether *those who are already happy and good* (and therefore seem not to require anything or anyone) *have any requirement for friendship*. He further questions whether a good person can enter into a lasting relationship with another that is also good. Still, Plato is not finished with the matter of similarities.

He introduces another oppositionary point, suggesting that relationships among similars also foster competition. Rather than strengthen bonds, similarities provide comparison points and may lead to envy, contempt, and jealousy. In addition, those who do not share common qualities are said to maintain better, more lasting relationships as they require or complement each other's shortcomings or needs. Plato then goes on to suggest that examining relationships in these terms may not be wise since there are many instances where neither those who share and do not share common qualities with another are able to enter into and sustain lasting relationships.

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<sup>15</sup> Plato also discusses the utility-based friendship in several of his other works, especially in regards to political associations (*Alcibiades*: 126b; *Republic* I: 351c-e, V: 462-464; *Laws* III: 694a-b, V: 738d-e, 743d).

Plato (219-221) again addresses the matter of utility in friendship, through the example of those *bonds that people pursue for the sake of another friend*. Here, he asks about the genuine nature of these relationships and the terms used to describe them:

When we talk about all the things that are our friends for the sake of another friend, it is clear that we are merely using the word 'friend.' The real friend, is surely that in which all these so-called friendships terminate. (Plato, *Lysis*, 220b, Lombardo)

Should these relationships exist only for their utility in maintaining relationships with other friends, the termination of relationships with the initial (third party) friends may lead to the ending of these other relationships. Likewise, if the initial incentives or basis of relationships are removed or somehow changed, these relationships also will undergo transformations, possibly resulting in their extinction.

Within this context, Plato (220d) draws attention to the point that *all things are considered in relation to something else*; a reference point is always required for the consideration (and knowing) of things. This is illustrated by reference to the preceding instance, as Plato questions the use of the term friend:

Then that friend of ours, the one which was the terminal point for all the other things that we called 'friends for the sake of another friend,' does not resemble them at all. For they are called friends for the sake of friend, but the real friend appears to have a nature completely opposite of this. It has become clear to us that it was the friend for the sake of an enemy. Take away the enemy and it seems it is no longer a friend. (Plato, *Lysis*, 220d, Lombardo)

It is only when compared to other relationships that the employment of the term friend seems less genuine. When considered in isolation, without a context or reference point, evaluations cannot be made.

Plato (221b) then briefly deals with the notion of romantic love in friendship. He questions the separation of love from friendship asking, *if it is possible to desire and love something passionately without feeling friendly toward it*. Without providing any definite answers, Plato then addresses the notion of desire in relationships with respect to complementary requirements and resources. As already discussed, the speaker posits that the desire experienced in these contexts entails the wanting of that in which one is deficient; thus, another who possesses that which one is lacking is therefore desirable.

Examining aspects of friendship, romantic love and disaffection in Plato's usual dialectic manner, *Lysis* provides readers with much instructive insight (perspectives and practices) into affective relationships. In particular, he addresses (a) the strategies employed in the pursuit of both romantic and friendly involvements (influence and persuasive communications), (b) the practical limitations people may encounter in dealing with targets and third parties, (c) the humanly enabling features of relationships, (d) some different bases of attraction and the contingencies affecting each of these, and (e) the ambiguities that scholars encounter in the analysis of friendship.

Given the compelling qualities of Plato's analysis of friendship, love, and disaffection, there is much more to learn from Plato's works. Interestingly, an examination of Aristotle's writings on friendship are instructive not only in their own right, but also as a means of shedding further light on Plato's works.

In contrast to Plato, who openly questions the viability of friendship as a humanly experienced phenomenon, Aristotle acknowledges friendship as a fundamental feature of human group life. Aristotle's emphasis, thus, is not whether friendship can exist in the human realm, but rather what human friendship entails, the forms that friendships assume, and how these relationships are developed, sustained, and terminated by people in the humanly known and enacted spheres of community life.

### **Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics***<sup>16</sup>

While many of Aristotle's works are relevant to the study of human group life,<sup>17</sup> the present statement focuses on only a portion of these materials, more specifically Books VIII-IX of *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>18</sup>

Like Plato, Aristotle exhibits some moral judgments in his consideration of affective relationships (as seen in his discussions of good and bad friends and proper methods and practices maintaining successful and virtuous life-styles). Aristotle also introduces some structuralist variables (as with age, class, and attitudes) into his analysis of friendship. Still, because Aristotle engages the concepts of friendship, love, and disaffection in exceptionally direct, detailed, and processional terms, his materials are of great value to those in the social sciences more generally and to those working in the interactionist tradition more specifically.

Whereas Plato's *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Lysis* focus on passionate love, Aristotle engages friendship more generically. Still, Aristotle also deals with romantic love along with many other matters discussed by Plato. However, these are framed in different ways, typically in more explicit and analytically direct manners.

Notably, too, while Plato's concepts are developed within conversational flows, Aristotle's texts are turgid, densely compacted analyses packed with insights on people's relationships. To make the material more manageable for readers, the two books (sections) from *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) will be considered separately, mindful of the developmental flow that each assumes.

Book VIII of *NE* explores the following aspects of friendship: (1) *the necessity of friendship*, (2) *various instances of friendship*, (3) *common qualities (and desires) and complementary needs as two distinct bases for friendship*, (4) *definitions and objectives of friendship*, (5) *kinds of friendship and behaviors involved in maintaining these relationships*, (6) *the suitability of particular people for friendship*, (7) *the nature of friendships between those of differing status positions*, (8) *the differing roles of "lover" and "loved,"* (9) *the parallels of friendships with people's other relationships (civic and government associations)*, (10) *friendship amongst blood relatives*, and (11) *some problematic aspects of friendship*.

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<sup>16</sup> In developing this statement on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* we built on the translations of Terence Irwin, Harris Rackham, and W. D. Ross. However, we also benefited from the remarkable commentary of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* developed by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). It also might be observed that Aquinas provides exceptionally competent commentaries on several of Aristotle's texts.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle's *Poetics*, *Politics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Rhetoric to Alexander* also address people's relationships and interchanges with others. Other works of pragmatist relevance include Aristotle's *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *On the Soul*, *Sense and Sensibilia*, and *On Memory*.

<sup>18</sup> For related, more sustained pragmatist considerations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics* (see Prus 2007a, 2008a, 2009), respectively.

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: i) begins his analysis looking at the *necessity of friendship*. Like Plato (*Phaedrus*: 232b, *Symposium*: 178), Aristotle also makes the claim that people are social beings and, as such, require the company of others.

Aristotle then addresses some variants of friendship, including those who are members of the same groupings (family, sex, ethnic backgrounds) and makes special reference to friendships that arise in political associations. Aristotle also discusses the virtuous and honorable values attached to friendship. Those who were genuine “friends” or are able to maintain multiple friends are more esteemed.

Aristotle also draws attention to the notions of *common qualities and desires, as well as complementary requirements and resources as a basis for friendship*. He briefly discusses the matters of complimentary needs as a means of attraction versus common qualities and desires. Here, Aristotle develops arguments similar to those found in Plato’s works.<sup>19</sup>

The *objectives and definitions of friendship* are then addressed (VIII: ii). The objective or goal of friendly relationships is to “love that which is good.” Good is said to be that which is honorable, pleasurable, and useful (if used to attain that which is honorable and pleasurable). However, Aristotle further notes that these notions are relative to the perspective of the actor. Thus, *each man loves not what is good for him, but what seems good* (*NE*, VIII, ii: 1155a).

Aristotle next considers *definitions of friendship* suggesting that these relationships must be reciprocated, further observing that this is why one cannot maintain a friendship with inanimate objects. Stating that there must be mutual awareness of one another and reciprocation within friendship, those relationships with humans where the friendship is unreciprocated are better be described as (unilateral) instances of goodwill. Accordingly, Aristotle proposes the following definition:

To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other... (Aristotle, *NE*, VIII, ii: 1156a, Ross trans.)

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: iii) then goes on to further describe three different foundations or *kinds of friendship*. Accordingly, friendship may be based on (1) utility,<sup>20</sup> (2) pleasure, and (3) virtue and honor. Relationships based on *utility* reflect concerns for the other based on the potential use or advantages these people represent. Friendship founded on instrumentalist motives does not reflect a genuine concern for the well being of the other. Aristotle observes that these types of relationships are especially common among the old, the very young, and travelers, as these people often are in positions of dependence.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> While Plato supports the claim that common qualities foster friendships, he also posits that commonalties may encourage competition within these relationships. Although Aristotle does not address this later notion in *NE*, Aristotle makes a parallel claim (*Rhetoric* II: 1381b1) where he suggests those who are similar may in some cases pose threats to one another with respect to competition for resources, thereby deterring the development of friendships.

<sup>20</sup> Plato (*Lysis* 210d) also addresses instrumentalist friendships that are developed on the basis of evaluations of the other’s usefulness.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle also considers the utility of friendship within *Rhetoric* and *Rhetoric to Alexander*. In both texts, Aristotle discusses the practices of speakers creating friendly feelings between themselves (as well as any person or group on whose behalf they may speak) and the audience from whom speakers seek desired decisions and activities. Likewise, speakers may attempt to generate considerable disaffection between audiences and the opposing speakers (and the positions they represent).

As Aristotle also observes in *Rhetoric to Alexander*, having friends increases one’s overall reputation for credibility since maintaining friendship involves keeping promises as well as being good, honest, and just. In addition, Aristotle speaks of the advantages of people developing friendships with

*Pleasure* is the second potential basis of friendships. These relationships are similar to friendships of utility in that there is not a genuine concern for the other, but rather are engaged for the pleasure or enjoyment the other may bring. Young men are said to hold many friendships of this type, as their priorities often are situated concerns with immediate pleasure. Given their broader, instrumental base, these first two types of friendship (utility and pleasure) are not envisioned as lasting. They are thought to be maintained only as long as the other is deemed useful or pleasurable.

The third kind of friendship is based on *virtue and honor*. Representing a balanced reciprocation of genuine concern for the well being of the other, Aristotle defines this type of relationship as the ideal form of friendship. He describes this relationship as both useful and pleasurable. In addition, it is the most intense, enduring and rare of the three types of friendship relationships. Its rarity reflects the comparative lack of virtuous people available to become involved in these relationships, as well as the time and effort needed to both become familiar with one another and sustain these involvements.

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: iv) further considers the various types of friendship, observing some similarities between virtuous friendships and those of utility and pleasure in that the virtuous friend is also both useful and enjoyable to the other. Relationships centrally founded on utility and pleasure, are not as lasting as those of virtuous forms, but they may still endure if mutual benefits are being received. However, should these benefits not be reciprocated, the friendship is likely to dissipate:

(F)riendships are most permanent when friends get the same thing from each other (e.g. pleasure), and not only that but also from the same source, as happens between ready-witted people, not as happens between lover and beloved. For these do not take pleasure in the same things, but the one in seeing the beloved and the other in receiving attention from his lover; and when the bloom of youth is passing the friendship sometimes passes too (for the one finds no pleasure in the sight of the other, the other gets no attention from the first)... (Aristotle, *NE*, VIII, iv: 1157a, Ross trans.)

In addition, Aristotle points out that while any person may take part in friendships of pleasure and utility, only those possessing virtuous, good, and honorable qualities can maintain friendships of virtue, as they hold a genuine and unselfish concern for the others' well-being. Acknowledging the enduring qualities of virtuous relationships, Aristotle notes that those based on pleasure and utility are much more susceptible to sabotage than are those of a more virtuous (trusting, caring) nature.

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: v) continues his discussion in the context of these three forms of friendships, exploring the importance of spending time with friends in order to maintain those relationships. Aristotle says that physical distance does not necessarily prevent friendships; but rather hinders the activities involved in maintaining these relationships. In addition, he suggests that spending time with friends is characteristic of friendships, whereas people who simply assist one another are better deemed "well-wishers." Aristotle then reiterates the notion of reciprocity, claiming that friendship is a kind of equality, especially among those of virtuous nature.

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those who are righteous, are more influential, live in closer proximity, and have similar interests, as well as those with whom one is obliged to work or co-operate with in some way.

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: vi) subsequently addresses the matter of people's *suitability for friendship*. Here, he posits that people who possess more virtuous qualities make better friends; while those who are less patient with others, become easily annoyed, or are weak conversationalists are poor candidates for genuine friendship relations. Aristotle also observes that the virtuous or ideal relationships are difficult to maintain since it is challenging to sustain a tolerant and friendly persona at all times. Still, an overall pleasant demeanor is important if one is to be considered a successful or desired friend.

Next, Aristotle considers friendships between people *of differing statuses or positions* (*NE*, VIII: vii). Within these relationships, as in the instances of parent and child or ruler and subject, participants do not exchange the same benefits. Still, these friendships are maintained as reciprocations are balanced when recipients of goods and services provide proportionately more love (affection) to donors in order to restore equality of benefits.

However, since proportionate amounts of affection and other benefits are difficult to gauge, this balance is not always easy to maintain. As well, Aristotle notes the difficulty in determining exactly at what (calculus) point people can be friends; for even when many aspects of reciprocation are absent, people may still retain friendships. Recognizing that *friendship* is complex and subject to various exceptions, Aristotle stands by his original emphasis on the importance of reciprocity (*NE*, VIII: ii).

Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: viii) then compares the *friendship roles* of the lover (loving) and the loved (being loved). Here, he posits that people generally prefer the role of being loved in much the same way they enjoy being honored:

Most people seem, owing to ambition, to wish to be loved rather than to love; which is why most men love flattery; for the flatterer is a friend in an inferior position, or pretends to be such and to love more than he is loved; and being loved seems to be akin to being honoured, and this is what most people aim at... Now since friendship depends more on loving and it is those who love their friends that are praised, loving seems to be the characteristic virtue of friends. (Aristotle, *NE*, VIII, viii: 1159a, Ross trans.)

Preferences aside, Aristotle observes that friendship often appears to revolve more fully around loving than being loved, as is the case with the mother and her infant. Within this context, Aristotle reviews earlier notions of equality, and similarities and complimentary positions within friendships.

Subsequently, Aristotle (*NE*, VIII: ix) considers the *parallels* between friendships and other relationships, particularly those of a civic nature. Here, he addresses the ties and bonds that develop between those who are affiliated by virtue of common circumstances, such as fellow soldiers and travelers in particular locales. These relationships are based on situated mutualities and are not expected to endure beyond these contexts. In contrast to friendships, civic associations are always directed towards particular interest or goals:

But all associations are parts as they were of the association of the state. Travelers for instance associate together for some advantage, namely to procure some of their necessary supplies.... Thus the other associations aim at some particular advantage; for example sailors combine to seek the profits of seafaring in the way of trade and the like... similarly members of a tribe or parish... religious guilds and dining-clubs, which are unions of sacrifice and social intercourse. But all these associations seem to be subordinate to the association of the state, which aims not at a temporary

advantage but one covering the whole of life. (NE, VIII, ix: 1160a, Rackham trans.)

While friendships also are goal directed, these other relationships seem to be based more on achieving particular advantages for a their mutual benefit. Thus, friendships tend to outlast the accomplishment of specific goals.

Further extending notions of friendships to other contexts, Aristotle (NE, VIII: x-xi) next compares friendship with types of states or governments. Extending the friendship analogy to the relationship between these various forms of government and the people they govern, Aristotle compares friendships with monarchies or kingdoms, aristocracies or elite governments, and timocracies or constitutional governments.

Aristotle (NE, VIII: xii) then explores *friendships among blood relatives*. Comparing family relations to his earlier discussions of friendship and civic associations, Aristotle posits that the relations between blood relatives differ from instances of civic friendship. Hence, fellow citizens, fellow tribesmen, and fellow travelers share particular sets of common circumstance, whereas family roles are more diverse. Aristotle then discusses the differing qualities and nature of friendships between parent and child, siblings, extended family members, and husband and wife.

Aristotle observes that the parent's affection for a child is greater than the child's affection for the parent. This results from (a) the parent being more familiar with the identity of the child than vice versa, (b) the parent viewing the child as belonging to them, as they physiologically pass on life-qualities to the child, and (c) the parent being able to love the child for longer than the child can knowingly love the parent.

Siblings, cousins, and extended family members are said to resemble comrades and other civic associations as discussed earlier, in that these people generally are less dependent on one another, but still share some common circumstances. Aristotle also explicitly addresses the husband-wife relationship, suggesting that friendship exists more naturally within this context. This involvement entails both utility and pleasure, and may include virtuous qualities.

Aristotle (NE, VIII: xiii) then focuses on *the problematics of friendship*. He suggests that friendships of utility are most prone to difficulty since they are based solely on self-interested exchanges of goods and services. Whenever there are problems in exchange, this is directly reflected in the friendship. Aristotle briefly addresses potential problems such as the measurement and agreement of balanced exchanges as well as instances in which repayment is not made or is made in ways that displease recipients. He then suggests solutions to such difficulties, including people more cautiously choosing associates for friendships of utility. These difficulties are not as likely in virtuous friendships because of the genuine, unselfish concern that the parties involved have for one another.

Friendships of pleasure also depend on more direct notions of things obtained from the other. Once these enjoyments cease, so too does the friendship. Plato (*Phaedrus* 240e-241c) also considers matters of reciprocity within the context of romantic involvements, pointing out difficulties in sustaining mutual benefits.

Aristotle further considers matters of continuity with respect to friendships involving people of different or unequal situations. He suggests that disagreements over balances of exchange are likely to occur in these relationships, as each member of these relationships commonly view themselves as more deserving of benefits. Both also have different justifications for the basis of exchange:

Differences also arise in friendships when there is a disparity between the parties...For men think it ought to be in a friendship as it is in a business partnership, where those who contribute more capital take more of the profits. On the other hand the needy or inferior person takes the opposite: he maintains that it is the part of a good friend to assist those in need; what is the use (he argues) of being friends with the good and great if one is to get nothing out of it (Aristotle, NE, VIII, xiv: 1163a, Rackham trans.)

Consistent with his earlier observations, Aristotle suggests that this difficulty may be avoided if those in lesser positions give more affection to those who provide more material goods, while those better able to offer the other material goods and services do so. He then notes that friendships, unlike business associations, are based more on what is possible for each to give, rather than what is equal in some more calculating manner.

While addressing several themes that Plato introduces in *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Lysis*, Aristotle in Book VIII of *Nicomachean Ethics* more explicitly deals with (a) the importance of friendship relationships, (b) the ways friendships may be viewed and defined, and (c) the manners in which these relationships are developed and sustained. Aristotle also considers the differing positions and perspectives that people may assume within these involvements, the various contexts and instances in which friendships take place, and some of the difficulties that people encounter within friendships.

Book IX of *Nicomachean Ethics* continues in the same manner as Book VIII. Here, however, Aristotle more specifically considers: (1) *the difficulties of achieving reciprocity within friendship*, (2) *loyalty and obligations in friendship*, (3) *terminations of friendships*, (4) *notions of self and friendship*, (5) *goodwill in friendship*, (6) *concord in friendship*, (7) *benefactors and beneficiaries*, (8) *love of self and the virtuous self*, (9) *the necessity of friendship*, (10) *happiness and friendship*, (11) *maintaining multiple friendships*, (12) *friendship during misfortune and prosperity*, (13) *seeking, giving and receiving aid*, and (14) *shared activity amongst friends*.

In Book IX, Aristotle (NE, IX: i) continues to address the *problematics of reciprocity* within the various forms of friendship. More specifically, though, he attends to the difficulties that arise when the benefits received fall below recipients' expectations, resulting in the appearance that nothing was actually gained or received from the other. In providing a possible solution to this problem, Aristotle suggests that repayment should be determined by those who initially received a benefit.

Turning to notions of *loyalties and obligations* in friendship, Aristotle (NE, IX: ii) discusses various customs and expectations that people attach to particular friendship contexts:

Clearly, then, we should not give the same thing to everyone... And, since different things could be given to parents, brothers, companions and benefactors, we should accord to each what is proper and suitable. This is what actually appears to be done. (Aristotle, NE, IX, ii: 1165a, Irwin, trans.)

Aristotle also notes that obligations are not always clear, especially when friendship involves people in different statuses or positions. Still, he suggests that people as individuals, should make efforts to act mindfully of the customs and/or obligations that are typically appropriate for people in their situations.

The discussion (NE, IX: iii) then centers on the *termination of friendships*. Aristotle examines circumstances that may lead to a dissolution of the relationship.

Some of these changes may result from gains (in status, virtue and other manners) that one friend attains relative to the other, leaving an imbalance in their relative circumstances. Still, Aristotle suggests that these friendships may be sustained with effort. Some other difficulties may arise when people encounter deception or other misrepresentations from the other parties and subsequently expect more rather than less from the other.

Next, Aristotle (*NE*, IX: iv) considers how people's *senses of self* may come into play in friendships. After stating that how one treats a friend often reflects one's own attitude towards the self, Aristotle then questions whether it is possible for one to be friends with one's self. He suggests this is possible, as the person has the same desires and qualities as himself, and he is concerned for his own well being, just as a virtuous friend might act towards another. However, Aristotle contends that those who are not of a virtuous or good character cannot maintain friendships either with others or themselves. Since they do not view themselves as worth loving, they are unable to have virtuous friendly feelings (genuine concern for the well being of the other) even towards themselves (as objects of affection).

Subsequently, Aristotle (*NE*, IX: v) examines the notion of goodwill. While envisioning goodwill as a quality of friendship, Aristotle says that goodwill should not be mistaken for friendship because one can invoke goodwill without mutuality of awareness or reciprocation on the part of the other. These latter aspects are necessary for friendship to exist. Aristotle further distinguishes goodwill from romantic love, which includes *intensity and desire*. As a generalized caring for the other, goodwill may be said to be a quality within friendship as well as represent the beginning of a friendship. However, goodwill need not apply to those friendships based on utility or pleasure.

In a parallel manner, Aristotle (*NE*, IX: vi) then considers the quality of *concord* (i.e., harmony or agreement) in friendship. Aristotle uses the term in reference to *people's agreements on affairs that advance their interests and concern their lives* as opposed to agreement on other, more particular matters. Again Aristotle invokes the notions of good versus bad, claiming that concord of this sort is only present in virtuous people and, in turn, virtuous friendships.

Next, Aristotle (*NE*, IX: vii) focuses on the bond between *benefactors* and *beneficiaries*. He contends that benefactors generally have more love for beneficiaries than vice versa. He identifies a number of bases for this claim. Among these is the suggestion that giving is nobler than receiving:

The benefactor's plan is fine for him, so that he finds enjoyment in the person he acts on; but the person acted on finds nothing fine in the agent, but only, at most, some advantage, which is less pleasant and lovable.

What is pleasant is actualization in the present, expectation for the future, and memory of the past; but what is pleasantest is the [action we do] insofar as we are actualized, and this also is most lovable. (Aristotle, *NE*, IX,vii: 1168a, Irwin, trans.)

Aristotle also suggests that benefactors have more love for those who benefit from their generosity because the giving role involves more activity, and people seem to have more appreciation and enjoyment for that which they have worked. He also posits that the love returned to a benefactor from the beneficiary is often done so out of debt and obligation. This is not the case in the love directed towards the beneficiary.

From here, Aristotle (*NE*, IX: viii) resumes his discussion of *the self in friendship*, asking whether one may love the self more than others. Commonly,

Aristotle observes, those seen to love themselves more than others often are viewed as selfish or bad (the evil person does everything for selfish gain). Conversely, Aristotle contends that people who have genuine concern for the well being of the other and who love the other the most make the best kind of friends. If the self fits these criteria, there should be no shame in being one's own best friend. In providing a singular approach to these two sides, Aristotle suggests that only those who are selfish, in that they take more than their share, are justly condemned with this negative view of self-love. However, if one treats the self, as one would treat another, in a virtuous manner, this negative label is unwarranted.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: ix) continues his discussion of the virtuous love of self. He claims that if everyone loved themselves best in this way, it would result in successful community -- as the good done for one's self would benefit others as a result of its virtuous nature. However, those who love the self in evil ways would only hinder and hurt those around them. Aristotle illustrates this notion of the *virtuous self-loving* person through the following examples:

It is true of the good man too that he does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies for them; he will throw away both wealth and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility... In all actions, therefore, that men are praised for, the good man is seen to assign himself the greater share in what is noble. In this sense, then, as has been said, a man should be a lover of self; but in the sense in which most men are so, he ought not. (Aristotle, *NE*, IX, ix: 1169a–1169b, Ross trans.)

Stressing the love of the virtuous (other directed) self, Aristotle concludes that it is beneficial for community settings for virtuous people to be self-lovers.

While Aristotle briefly addresses the *necessity of friendship* in Book VIII, he discusses this notion in greater depth in Book IX. Recognizing that people require friends in time of need, as well as to offer aid to others, he asks if a happy person actually needs friends. It may *appear* that they do not need friendships, in that they do not need friendships of utility, for they require not goods or services; nor do they require friendships of pleasure, as their lives are already enjoyable. Plato (*Lysis* 214a-219) also raises this question, of whether the happy require friends, but Plato does not leave readers with any definite answer.

In an instructive variant from Plato, Aristotle contends that since happiness is an *emergent activity*, it does not revolve around the possession of objects of desire. Relatedly, Aristotle observes that the company of others provides a means of learning about and sustaining happiness as an activity. As well, this activity is difficult to maintain on a solitary basis:

For as we have said at the beginning... happiness is a form of activity, and an activity clearly is something that comes into being, not a thing we possess all the time, like a piece of property... it therefore follows that this supremely happy man will require good friends, insofar as he desires to contemplate actions that are good and that are his own, and the actions of a good man that is his friend are such.... A solitary man has a hard life, for it is not easy to keep up continuous activity by oneself; it is easier to do so with the aid of and in relation to other people. The good man's activity therefore, which is pleasant in itself, will be more continuous if practiced with friends... Moreover the society of the good may supply a sort of training in goodness. (Aristotle, *NE*, IX, ix: 1169b-1170a, Rackham, trans.)

Aristotle recognizes the human capacity for an array of viewpoints and thoughts on these matters. When people identify their own thoughts and actions as virtuous and good, life is improved. However, happiness is most fully realized when people of virtuous thoughts and actions share these with others of the same nature.

Next, Aristotle (*NE*, IX: x) draws attention to the notion that while one should not be without friendship, there are some practical limitations to the *number of friends* one might reasonably have. First, since friendships of utility require some giving of goods and services, it simply is not feasible to maintain a large number of relationships of this form. Pleasure in excess also seems to spoil the effect and so multiple forms of this friendship cannot be successfully maintained either. As well, one cannot maintain very many virtuous friendships, since these relationships require considerable time and effort to develop and sustain. Those who try to maintain many friendships simultaneously, sacrifice quality for quantity, and do not appear to be *real friends* to any.

Aristotle (*NE*, IX: xi) next considers the notion that *friends are sought out during times of advantage and need*. When fortune is bad, people require the assistance of friends. Yet when fortune is good, people turn to friends to offer them aid and to have them as company (as mentioned earlier, friendship is necessary even to the happy). Aristotle further posits that while friendship may be more of a necessity during troubled times, it is considered more honorable to engage friendships throughout favorable periods.

Aristotle then discusses *how friends may aid* each other during difficult times. He posits that friends not only may assist others through material aid, but also may offer emotional support. Friends may assist others during harsh periods by providing words of support and sympathetic understanding. Still, Aristotle warns that those in need should be sensitive to the emotions of the other; that their friends not be unduly upset or burdened by the difficulties they have encountered. Hence, the honorable view, as suggested by Aristotle, advises that friends should be wary when turning to others for support, doing so only in times of great need and then only in ways that would be of minimal inconvenience to their benefactors.

In addition to the above caution, Aristotle further suggests it is best to promptly volunteer aid to a friend in need. However, those who are disadvantaged should not presume or volunteer to share in the prosperity of a friend. Still, when offers of generosity are made, friends in need should modestly accept (and fully acknowledge) the generosity of the other, as friendship is ultimately necessary in both times of bad fortune and good.

In the final chapter of Book IX, Aristotle (*NE*, IX: xii) continues with the matter of spending time with friends. He posits that friends benefit simply from seeing the other happy. In addition, Aristotle suggests that it is within *meaningful shared activity* that friendship is expressed and life is enhanced:

For friendship is a partnership, and as a man is to himself, so is he to his friend; now in his own case the consciousness of his being is desirable, and so therefore is the consciousness of his friend's being, and the activity of this consciousness is produced when they live together, so that it is natural that they aim at this. And whatever existence means for each class of men, whatever it is for those whose sake they value life, in that they wish to occupy themselves with their friends; and so some drink together, others dice together, others join in athletic exercises and hunting, or in the study of philosophy, each class spending their days together in whatever they love most in life; for since they wish to live with their friends, they do and share

in those things which give them the sense of living together. (Aristotle, NE, IX, xii: 1171b-1172a, Ross trans.)

Still, Aristotle points out that shared activity amongst the bad and evil only spoils this behavior, while shared activity amongst honorable people leads to more virtuous actions.

Despite some more distinctive moral guidelines, Book IX of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* provides readers with great insight into the strategies and practices of sustaining relationships, various difficulties encountered and remedial adjustments, instances and tactics for terminating relationships, how the self may be involved in friendly involvements, the differing viewpoints that people may adopt within friendships, and the value that friendships hold for survival, community relations, and happiness.

While Aristotle repeatedly emphasizes the importance of virtuous (honorable), reciprocated friendships, he also clearly defines friendships in meaningful, deliberative, enacted, and negotiated terms. Although Aristotle's works complement Plato's analysis in many respects, Aristotle is more pointedly analytic in his consideration of friendship particularly with respect to people's activities and their capacities for self-reflectivity.

## In Perspective

Although neither Plato nor Aristotle can be expected to maintain a consistent symbolic interactionist approach to the study of friendship, love, and disaffection, their works have a compelling relevance to contemporary scholars interested in the study of interpersonal relations.

Not only will academics in social psychology (psychology and sociology) who have worked in the areas of friendship and attraction recognize the roots of a great many themes in their fields of study in Plato's and Aristotle's works,<sup>22</sup> but a closer examination of these materials also reveals just how limited many developments in contemporary social science, particularly those of a more positivist nature (as in variables predicting attraction, friendship, and romantic relations), are when compared to the more processually engaged analyses of affective relationships that Plato and Aristotle developed over two millennia past.

Thus, while Plato and Aristotle introduce some structuralist notions of attraction (as in the notions that similars attract on the basis of shared circumstances and viewpoints or that opposites attract through complementary needs), they clearly and explicitly acknowledge limitations of these notions for interpersonal relations that many in the social sciences have yet to recognize. Consequently, not only do Plato and Aristotle draw attention to the multifaceted nature of affective relationships, but they also envision these in problematic, emergent, minded, actively, and interactionally constituted manners.

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<sup>22</sup> For some reviews of the broader literature on the social psychology of interpersonal attraction and interpersonal relationships, see Secord and Backman (1964), Erber and Erber (2000), and Hendrick and Hendrick (2000). For some materials on sexual and/or related intimate relationships that have a more distinctive interactionist and/or ethnographic emphasis, see Waller (1930), Reiss (1961), Bartell (1971), Warren (1974), Ponse (1978), Prus and Irini (1980), Vaughan (1986), Rosenblatt et al. (1995), Ekins (1997), Prus (1997), Rosenblatt and Stewart (2004), Rosenblatt (2006), and Holmes (2010).

In addition to delineating a number of conceptual dimensions that seem to have eluded many structuralist social scientists, Plato and Aristotle provide a great many focused departure points for the subsequent study of affective relationships. Indeed, they may be seen to provide an extended set of research agendas that are as relevant today as they were 2000 years ago.

Still, Plato and Aristotle have more to offer. In more substantive terms, both authors provide contemporary scholars with materials that have noteworthy ethnographic qualities. Because Plato's materials were developed within dialogues, wherein speakers present and engage in some detail a number of themes of relevance to affective relationships within the broader communities in which they are situated, the ethnographic essence is perhaps more readily evident in *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Lysis*.

Plato's dialogues are not developed in ways that typify current ethnographic styles, but seasoned ethnographers are apt to appreciate the care with which Plato (as an ethnographic insider) articulates a variety of positions that could be held by people of the sort depicted in the dialogues. As well, and in contrast to most "native" produced texts of record, Plato's speakers address specific topics in highly focused, articulate, and analytic ways.

Plato's analytic emphases contrasts notably with the works of the classical Greek poets (Homer, c700BCE; Aeschylus, 525-456BCE; Euripides, 480-406BCE; Sophocles, 495-405BCE; and Aristophanes, 450-385BCE), who also are exceptionally sophisticated authors. This is not to deny the ethnographic insights into the human condition that one may encounter in these poetic renditions. However, Plato's works have a much more sustained analytic descriptive quality to them than do the texts of these otherwise eloquent, highly accomplished poets.

In addition to providing descriptions of people's experiences with romantic, friendly, and ill-willed involvements, Plato often reveals the perspectives and actions of the participants as their relationships unfold. Plato also is attentive to the point that love, friendship, and disaffection are activities that have no inherent meaning or value, but rather take on meanings and values according to the perspectives and definitions that the people involved place on their associations with others.

Relatedly, Plato (in fundamental but often ignored terms) explicitly draws attention to the point that things are knowable only relative to other things. Meanings and evaluations of friendship and love, thus, only can be appreciated on the basis of the comparisons that one might develop with respect to other things (and other actions).

Without these reference points, as in comparisons with instances of negativity or animosity, notions of love and friendship are left meaningless. Plato also acknowledges the problematic use of language, recognizing that ideal definitions of love and friendship often differ from the ways that people's involvements develop in practice.

While focusing primarily on relationships of a romantic nature, Plato illustrates the multiple viewpoints that people may assume with respect to affective relationships and the meanings (and purposes) that these experiences hold for the people involved as well as their implications for community life more generally.

Plato also acknowledges the problematic features of these relationships and the ways in which people attempt to deal with these uncertainties and related difficulties. Likewise, Plato attends to the ways in which relationships are developed and pursued as well as things that may lead to their demise. He also considers the responses and reactions of outsiders to romantic involvements and how these other persons may engage those who are more centrally involved in the situations.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is more overtly analytical in its formulation than are Plato's dialogues. Still, because Aristotle's analysis focuses on human knowing and acting in such detail, he also offers much rich ethnographic insight into friendship relations of the classical Greek era.<sup>23</sup> Like Plato, Aristotle introduces some structuralist and moralist themes at times. As well, like Plato, Aristotle is careful to separate ideals from actualities.

Whereas Plato focuses primarily on romantic love, Aristotle examines friendship relationships on a more generic plane. Consistent with Plato's approach to sensate relationships, Aristotle envisions friendship as an emergent activity that is problematic in all stages of its development. Like Plato, Aristotle views relationships as matters that are knowingly shaped by the actors involved, through their capacities for reflectivity, activity, and meaningful interchange.

Aristotle also makes it clear that friendships may develop in varying ways with people approaching relationships with notably different objectives. While defining reciprocity as an essential element of genuine friendship, Aristotle also recognizes the problematic nature of friendship and considers the diverse manners that people may define, contribute to, and assess relationships with regards to their objectives, related notions of reciprocity, and their senses of self.

Like Plato, Aristotle is acutely aware of the interconnectedness of the people involved in particular instances of friendship with other aspects of community life. Both authors appreciate, in more ethnographic terms, the importance of examining affective relationships as community-based products and processes.

Further, in addition to materials that reflect notions of friendship among those in the philosophic and aristocratic sectors of the Greek community at the time, both Plato and Aristotle develop analytic positions that are distinctively generic in emphasis. These matters become more apparent when we return to the earlier discussion of generic social processes and, in particular, the subprocesses pertaining to people developing relationships with others.

Thus, while neither Plato nor Aristotle deal with the matters of people getting prepared for generalized encounters, defining self as available for association, or renewing relationships in any direct sense, their texts (consistent with Prus 1996) shed considerable light on the ways that people go about (a) defining (specific) others as desirable associates; (b) making approaches / receiving openings from others; (c) encountering (and indicating) rejection / acceptance; (d) assessing self and other for "goodness of fit;" (e) developing interactional styles (in each relationship); (f) managing openness and secrecy; (g) developing understandings, preferences, loyalty; (h) managing distractions (and outside commitments); (i) juggling multiple relationships; and (j) severing relationships.

To be sure, the two Greek scholars do not give all of these matters equal attention and they do not pursue each of these topics as fully as one might hope. Still, whereas Plato discusses matters of these sorts more pointedly in reference to romantic relationships and Aristotle primarily deals with friendship relationships, they provide a great deal of insight into the ways in which people relate to one another in more affective terms and offer an extended array of material that other scholars might use to develop comparative analyses of the processes by which people engage affective relationships. In this respect, their work both parallels and contributes to the scholarly

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<sup>23</sup> Because Aristotle presents his material in such densely compacted forms, it is extremely difficult to summarize his work and yet maintain an adequate representation of its conceptual and substantive richness. Quite directly, there is so much more to his analysis of friendship than we are able to convey here.

objectives associated with contemporary analytic ethnography (see Blumer 1969; Lofland 1976, 1995; Strauss 1993; Prus 1996; 1997; 1999; Prus and Grills 2003).

While it would be absurd to expect any author, no matter how competent, to “do everything for us,” it should be recognized that Plato and Aristotle have so much to offer to students of the human condition. Not only do their works serve as intellectual springboards from which to pursue the study of affective relationships in a number of comparatively neglected but highly productive ways, but their texts also serve as valuable transcontextual and transhistorical resources with to which assess (via comparative analysis) existing conceptualizations of the relationship process and further our understandings of human group life.

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