

ALISTAIR MACRAE - Two Accounts of Friendship: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Plato's *Lysis*.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes a distinction between genuine friendships (i.e., character friendships) and friendships that are friendships in name only (i.e., pleasure friendships and utility friendships). Drawing on some of the relationships in *Downton Abbey* and Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*, this workshop will demonstrate that Aristotle's account of friendship compares unfavorably with that of Plato.

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Resources About Friendship in Plato's *Lysis* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

Prepared by Alistair Macrae, July 2018.

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Banjo: "Toyota envisions its new artificially intelligent cars will know you so well that you'll love them, and they'll love you back...[I suspect that it will be difficult] for auto makers to achieve the kind of love connection with their customers that Toyota is promising."

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Bever: "...[Twenty-five-year-old Erika Hurt] was captured in a photograph by police, passed out in the driver's seat of her car outside a Dollar General store in Hope, Indiana – an empty syringe still resting between [her] fingers...[and] her ten-month-old son buckled into his seat behind her. When Hurt first saw the photo, she was humiliated... But the photo, she [later] said, eventually had a sobering effect. 'I'm thankful now that a police officer took that picture...[I use that photo] to show others that addicts can recover.'"

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Brooks: "...[T]oday's radicalism assumes that war is the inherent state of things. The key influence here is Saul Alinsky. [In] his 1971 book, *Rules for Radicals*, ...[Alinsky asserts that life] is inevitably a battle between the people and the elites, the haves and the have-nots... Today's radicals conduct themselves on the presumption that since life is a battle...[from which it follows that] moral decency is mostly a hypocritical fraud. [Today's radicals believe that in order to] get anything done, the radical has to commit evil for good cause. Unlike today's radicals, I believe – among other things – that] love is a genuine force in human affairs and that you can be effective by appealing to the better angels of human nature... [I also believe that] the radicals are looking for meaning and purpose in the wrong way and in the wrong place, and they're destroying our political world in the process..."

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Caryl: "David Cornwall's father, Ronald, was a professional con artist, a serial bank rupt, and a charming huckster who spent several stints in jail. His mother Olive, who couldn't deal with her husband's philandering and physical abuse, abandoned the family when David was five years old. [Ronald] beguiled his sons for years with fake stories about [Olive's] absence until they finally found out the truth. As he grew up, David quite naturally sought out a surrogate father figure, and found one in a teacher at his boarding school named Vivian Green, an erudite historian who would become one of the primary models for the future George Smiley...I don't think it's stretching things to say that the Smiley novels can be viewed as a roman-fleuve built on a family romance: the complex intimacies of the secret world are the prerequisites of grand and echoing betrayals. It was Magnus Pym, the protagonist of le Carre's autobiographical novel *The Perfect Spy*, who stated what might count as the governing conundrum of le Carre's haunted world: 'Love is whatever you can still betray...Betrayal can only happen if you love.'"

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Gonzalez: "The *Lysis* has not ... often been interpreted in the light of [Plato's] *Phaedrus*. Yet the description in the latter dialogue of the soul as 'fallen' and as seeking a return to its home among the Forms is clearly related to the idea in the *Lysis* that what we love is a good that belongs to us." (p. 89, f.n. # 42)

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Jencks: "It seems to me that several scholars who find fault with Plato's account of [*philia*/friendship] in the *Lysis* really prefer what they take to be Aristotle's account. They take Aristotle to be saying in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155b15-20 that real friendship is reciprocal, and that relationships of utility are in some way only ersatz friendships. They overlook *Nicomachean Ethics* Book viii 7, where Aristotle includes as examples of genuine [*philia*/friendship] relationships of domination – specifically, relationships between fathers and sons, rulers and subjects and husbands and wives. Because these scholars themselves

believe that real friendship cannot be asymmetrical, ...[they]... all represent Plato as holding this too. For example, Gregory Vlastos (1981, 7-8) roundly condemns Plato for overlooking unselfish relationships..." (f.n. # 35, p. 78)

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McCarthy: "Ever needed a best friend but didn't have one handy? Ever thought of hiring one? You probably have already, says Rebecca Perlman Coniglio, a licensed clinical social worker in the New York City area. Consider your hairdresser, the bartender or your house cleaner. The concept of hiring someone for a task but interacting with him or her as a friend has been going on for decades... There's nothing wrong with getting a friend via hiring, Coniglio says. "But it's better to strive toward the confidence where you can make a true friend and realize someone would be happy to be your friend for free."

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For more resources about Plato's *Lysis*, see the following website:

https://philpapers.org/browse/plato-lysis?onlineOnly=&proOnly=on&sqc=&showCategories=on&hideAbstracts=&start=50&publishedOnly=&filterByAreas=&cn=plato-lysis&categorizerOn=&newWindow=on&freeOnly=&sort=firstAuthor&new=1&langFilter=&limit=50&cId=74912&format=html&jlist=&ap_c1=&ap_c2=