

Sarah Gandam

“I Wanna Ruin Our Friendship, We Should Be Lovers Instead”:

The Argumentation of Inevitability of Eros within Friendship

## I. Introduction

The foundation of a true friendship is composed of love and care. Therefore, when a pair of true friends express and possess love and care for each other, genuinely wanting what is good for each other, the rise of romantic or erotic love is inevitable. Aristotle, C.S. Lewis, and Plato each discuss friendship in their philosophical works, yet one theme they share is the possibility for erotic or romantic love within friendship. In using the works of Aristotle, C.S. Lewis, and Plato I will argue that within a complete friendship between two people who are attracted to each other's gender, it is inevitable for the development of one-sided or mutual feelings of sexual or romantic love.

## II. Aristotle

To prove the inevitability of sexual or romantic love arising within friendships, it is vital to define what elements create a complete friendship. According to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* “Book 8: Friendship,” a complete friendship involves enduring virtue and long-lastingness. Because the rarity of these friendships and the time they take to form, one cannot have a multitude of complete friendships. He states that “loving and friendship are found most of all and at their best” within this complete friendship (Aristotle 123). To have a complete friendship with someone, both parties must embrace all features of the other, having admiration for the other rather than the benefits or pleasure they may receive from them. Aristotle also mentions how some friends find enjoyment “together in shared activities” (Kraut, Sect. 9). This relates to

Aristotle's idea of "eudaimonia," which can be translated into "living well" or "flourishing" (Kraut, Sect. 2). To achieve eudaimonia, Aristotle stresses the idea of doing worthwhile activities often and well, yet also the idea of maintaining a close friendship and "living together" with that friend. Contrary to what one would assume, living together is not *only* the two sharing a residential space. Rather, it is also the pair doing worthwhile activities, or shared activities, together, which should be done often and well (Kraut, Sect.9). This is easier to do when sharing a residential space, but in modern context, even when residing in separate places, it is still possible to achieve the idea of living together with that individual.

According to Aristotle, it is evident that the friends will spend an abundant amount of time together. The pair begins loving the good within each other, which is almost effortless in any given relationship. Yet over time, they begin embracing each other's faults, an arduous feat within other relationships. With these elements and the two already having an attraction to each other's genders, this creates what one could call 'a perfect storm' for sexual or romantic feelings to develop in either one or both friends. Yet, it is important to note that these are purely feelings, which could fade over time, especially if not reciprocated.

### III. C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis supports Aristotle's idea of friends living together within *The Four Loves*. According to C.S. Lewis, friendship must be about something. Whatever this pair of friends do, it is done together. In doing this shared activity of a common interest, the friends participate in a more inward and less widely shared activity (Lewis 66). C.S. Lewis compares this friendship and their common interest to "fellow travelers . . . on the same secret road" (Lewis 67). Yet, Eros is natural compared to friendship, which is the least natural love. Therefore, because eros is natural, it is inevitable that eros arises in friendship. C.S. Lewis proposes that if those two people are of

different sexes, the arising friendship between them will certainly swiftly progress into erotic love.

However, just because the two are of different sexes, does not mean they are automatically attracted to each other's gender. This remark is due to antiquated ideals of the age this book was written in. Therefore, it should be put into a contemporary context in that this development could not happen if the two friends are not attracted to each other's gender, or as C.S. Lewis later states, "are physically repulsive to each other" (Lewis 67). C.S. Lewis also states that this development could be stalled, temporary or permanently, if one or both friends have found love elsewhere. He notes that the progression of erotic love could happen at any given point in their friendship, not just at the beginning (Lewis 67).

#### IV. Plato

The *Symposium* gives an excellent example of unrequited romantic and sexual love within friendship, full of passion, longing, hurt, and hope. *The Fragility of Goodness*, by Martha Nussbaum, discusses this example: Alcibiades' love for Socrates. From context, Socrates and Alcibiades would have what Aristotle would characterize a 'complete friendship' (Bartlett). They were living together, spending time with one another, and embracing each other's admirable traits and faults. In light of the works of Aristotle and C.S. Lewis, it is no surprise that Alcibiades developed these sexual and romantic feelings for Socrates. The tone of Alcibiades is an all-consuming sexual and romantic desire. He feels like a slave to Socrates and love itself, making him descend to madness, especially since he used to be in control (Nussbaum 197).

#### V. Conclusion

A complete friendship between a pair who are attracted to each other's genders will inevitably produce romantic or sexual feelings for one or both friends. Defining what a complete friendship is through Aristotle showed important elements, like living together, that helps develop these romantic or sexual feelings. C.S. Lewis also confirms this through *The Four Loves*, reasoning that eros is a more natural feeling than friendship, therefore it is certain that these feelings will arise at some point within pair's relationship. Plato gives an example of unrequited romantic and sexual feelings Alcibiades had for Socrates in the *Symposium*, showing the range of the sexual and romantic feelings one may have for their friend. It is difficult to determine the tone of these sexual and romantic feelings, whether sorrowful or hopeful, and how long they may last, whether it be weeks to years. Yet, it is clear that these feelings will most certainly arise at one point or another. In conclusion, those in complete friendships are utterly susceptible to falling in love with the other, vulnerable to unrequited love and heartbreak, or like Alcibiades, descent into madness.

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