

The relationship between Dido and Aeneas is comparable in passion to the poetic verses of what Shakespeare wrote about Romeo and Juliet. However, while we might perceive this to be a romantic love, in many senses it proved to be very unhealthy for both sides of the relationship. Nevertheless, Plato might have condoned the love of the pair based upon their status as lovers brought together by the gods, whereas Aristotle would most likely have condemned the choices which they made as a result of their mad desire.

As a pair, Plato might have found their love to be of interest, if only because it was a true gift of the gods. The fact that Juno connived in order to bring Cupid's arrow to the pair would have caused him to praise it, despite its lack of rational structure. On the other hand, Aristotle notated in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that, even though the gods had intervened in this sense, the two were still capable of making the choice to neglect those around them for the selfish desire that Dido and Aeneas felt, and that in fact they had lost all of their goodness on the grounds that they had quit doing their function as leaders and rulers. True love, in the words of Aristotle, and friendship are not the pursuit of sexual desires or to embrace a person based upon their personality or their charms, but rather would be to embrace another person based upon their goodness.

The fact that they also set aside the moral virtues they had matured with would have also caused Aristotle to condemn the two of them. As a Greek woman, Dido shamed herself by allowing Aeneas's advances. While they had felt desire for one another, it was still a choice for them to sleep together in the cave, when they could have just as easily practiced self control of

their sexual desire. In Nicomachaen Ethics, Aristotle notates how an extreme of pleasure can impeded rationality, in the same sense that the extreme delight that the two lovers find in one another tumbles the walls of their rational thought into a night of lust and lasciviousness. Plato, on the other hand, even points out in the Symposium how love creates this madness, and may have been much lighter on Dido and Aeneas on the grounds that they were driven to madness and that they had very little choice in the matter because of Venus and Juno. Plato even states in Phaedrus how not all madness is bad, stating how the madness of love can be very beneficial to the soul.

The side of the relationship experienced by Dido would be nothing but condemned for the simple act of her decision to build her own funeral pyre and for her neglect of her own kingdom in the wake of her husband's death by Aristotle, but Plato might have seen that otherwise, she would have been left to mourn for her lost husband for the rest of her years. According to Aristotle, people are valued for what they do, especially in the case of rulers. Nicomachaen Ethics even goes as far as to define a ruler as tyrant if they were to pursue their desires above themselves, and in fact, the people she is supposed to rule complain that the queen has neglected them for her own human desires. Dido had neglected her entire kingdom out of her obsession with Aeneas, thus making her into a tyrant, as she made no further improvements throughout the course of their relationship. Her suicide compacted this further, because, as Aristotle also stated, the state is the one which loses in the case of suicide, and in this case the state lost their figurehead.

The largest loss in the case of Dido would be her rationality in the madness of her soul's desire. Whereas Aeneas saw what he needed to do and was willing to set himself aside for the greater good of Italy, Dido's mind had been shot with the bullet of her desire for him. Their friendship had lost its healthiness on her end as a result of this. Whereas a healthy friendship should have involved the pursuit of both lovers enduring what was required for the greater good, in this case it prevented Dido from creating improvements in her kingdom. Plato states in the Symposium that this kind of neglect is a retardant in a relationship. In fact, this is the greatest agreement between Aristotle and Plato. That is, that a truly healthy relationship would involve the improvement of the goodness of both souls. However, Dido suffocates her own goodness in Aeneas, which, in the end, could have been a contributing factor in his decision to cast her aside. Dido's actions, after all, were based upon choice. She chose to try to hold Aeneas back from his own fate in the way that she was suppressing the things she was required to do, and in this same way she chose to drive herself through her sword. Aristotle would have most certainly frowned upon this, and would not have seen it as a righteous thing to do. Her good sense should have told her to wait until Aeneas had accomplished what needed to be done in Italy, but instead her choice was to take herself from the state. Plato might have still condoned her love for Aeneas despite these choices, for as stated in Phaedrus, Aeneas's beauty had completely captivated her, and that her soul and even his would not feel whole without the other person. As this dialog explains, their souls had been driven toward one another by not only the gods, but also their need of companionship, and that together they were much more whole than they would have been if they

were apart. That is, Dido's choices were driven by the needs of her soul, and the madness wrought from this.

However, Aeneas is different from Dido in several fashions. Whereas he still allowed himself to be completely taken by her for a time, he learned to set himself aside for the greater good of the people. In this sense, Aristotle would have definitely commended the relationship, because it did not override Aeneas's fate or his duties. In other ways, however, Aeneas could have also been condemned in the sense that he did not treat Dido fairly.

Aristotle still felt that true friends and lovers should still pursue the goodness of one another, and that the relationship has soured if one feels that they are not treated fairly. Writing her off and stating that they were nowhere near the sanction of marriage drove her the rest of the way to insanity over him, though in reality it cannot be conceived that he perceived she would act so desperately over him when she had already lost her original husband.

Aeneas's choice to return to Italy showed that he was not allowing Dido to come between him and his own destiny. According to Aristotle, an appropriate attitude would have been much like a Catholic setting aside red meat for the celebration of Lent. This practice, for most, is embraced as a cleansing fast. However, in the case of a less appropriate attitude, it is instead seen as a torture. Love is much the same; Aeneas may have loved Dido, however, he did see his time away as torture but rather as a necessity. This showed that he was in a very healthy state of mind and that his rationality was completely intact.

On the other hand, one might also conclude that even in the case of Aeneas, the

relationship was unhealthy at best. While he might have felt relieved to be going to Italy in order to achieve what Fate had set out for him, at the same time he had still been completely swept away in his love for Dido and the only way he could pull himself to do what he needed to do would be to part with her. In the Symposium, Plato states that a healthy love would allow for one person to mentor the other and for both to grow off of each other, just the same as Aristotle states that both must feel fairly treated. Aeneas did not counsel Dido to take care of her kingdom or to wait on him in his absence; instead, he rips her heart to shreds by telling her that he did not love her when his actions spoke differently. Aristotle would definitely not have smiled upon this, simply because this was completely unfair to Dido. In this case, one might even consider that, had Aeneas truly fallen out of love with her, it might have been better for him to at least give her some hope that he would return for her.

This lack of attentiveness to their respective goals during the height of their passion definitely made Dido and Aeneas's relationship one which lacked rationality and turned both into unwitting tyrants in a selfish fit of passion. Plato might have seen this love as beautiful, but Aristotle would have written it off in the light of Dido's resulting actions.