

ACADEMIA LUNARE

Friendship in
The Lord of the Rings

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Foreword - Fantasy Friend

Ronald Kyrmse¹

J.R.R. Tolkien has been called “the author of the 20th century”. Indeed, in English-speaking countries, the sales of *The Lord of the Rings* are surpassed only by those of the Bible. The extreme popularity of this imaginary-world creator — who influenced almost all authors of fantastic fiction since the 1950s — comes in great measure from the verisimilitude of his universe, so different from our own that we can, as it were, go there on vacation as we read. At the same time, it is so similar to our own that we can apply its message and lessons to our own lives. Thus, the Secondary World, product of subcreation — in Tolkien’s terminology, the invention of a world by an author, who is, in turn, also created — is at once a reflection and a guide to the primary world we live in.

Tolkien’s epic work shows us much about human relations: persistence, humility, nobility. Among them, friendship is certainly one of the most sought for and satisfying. Indeed, the very outcome of *The Lord of the Rings*, with fundamental consequences for Men’s history (as narrated by Tolkien), depends to a great extent on the practice of friendship. This book shows not only how, but also why it was this way.

The appreciation of Tolkien’s works started long before the highly popular films by Peter Jackson, which brought crowds of people to the movie theatres and generated legions of fans in the beginning of this century. However, it is important to note that, long before, groups could be found that aimed

1. Ronald Kyrmse has translated the majority of Tolkien’s works in Brazil, including *The Lord of the Rings* (HaperCollins Brasil, 2019), and, in 2003, published his own book of essays, *Explicando Tolkien* [Explaining Tolkien] (Martins Fontes, 2003).

at studying seriously the subcreated world, deepening the knowledge about Tolkien's geography, his languages, his societies, and psychology, exploring them with the rigour of the so-called "serious" disciplines and with the academic prestige that fantasy cannot normally boast of, not even in Literary studies. In Brazil, such groups date back at least to the 1980s, being initially quite informal, and becoming gradually more organised, partly because of the positive potentialities of the internet.

Cristina Casagrande has the advantage of belonging simultaneously in the academic environment, bringing along the rigour of research, and the enthusiast field — the "Tolkienists" — employing to the study of the author, whom they call "the Professor", such energy that occasionally consumes time that "should" be employed to more serious tasks. But this amount of time is justifiably spent, for Tolkien himself often worked long into the night to elaborate his world when he could be delving deeper into the study of Anglo-Saxon language and literature instead.

Thus, while studying hundreds of pages and hours of movies — the same story told by two different bards — Cristina is able to show us the huge importance of friendship, a feeling that motivates us, conducts us, and, often, leads us to success. And which sees far, because it stands (as Newton's quote goes) on the shoulders of giants. Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Tolkien saw human beings and their emotions clearly. Cristina Casagrande, in this work, evidences their view for our own understanding.

Chapter Two

Ethics and aesthetics in Tolkien's imagination

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien led an ordinary life according to the standards of his time: he held a permanent job position as a professor at Oxford University, he was married to the same woman for more than fifty years and was the devoted father of four children. When one gets to know his biography, one sees that, apart from being a family-oriented man, the Professor was someone of extraordinary inventiveness, intelligence, and acuity; a thinker who knew how to connect the ideas of his time to the wisdom of tradition.

Therefore, analysing friendship in *The Lord of the Rings*, his greatest fictional work, implies knowing a little of his own life and getting closer to his way of thinking, especially to the way he conceived his imagined world — important traits that reverberate in his literary work. Thus, it is essential to study authors who helped build Tolkien's worldview, his relationship with religion, and his ideas about the ethics and aesthetics surrounding literature, mythology, and fairy-stories.

The Professor

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1892. From 1916 to 1917 he served in the British Army, during World War I, in the Battle of the Somme. However, due to a fever caused by lice (known as “trench fever”), he returned home earlier than planned. In this battle, he lost two friends who, with him, were part of the TCBS¹: Robert Quilter Gilson and Geoffrey Bache Smith.

1. *Tea Club Barrovian Society*, a school group at King Edward's School, Birmingham, formed in 1910 by Tolkien and three other friends who discussed various matters, including literature.

say about my taste is that it is old-fashioned; yours will soon be the same".¹¹

Tolkien's (and Lewis's) philosophical basis was grounded, thus, on the medieval and classical thought, and not on the rationalist one; nor did they anchor their criticism about modernity on romanticism. Such medieval and classical lines were in harmony with Tolkien's personal taste, and were the source of his research and work, as evidenced by the medieval epic poem *Beowulf* (copied in the 11th century), which he translated from Old to Modern English in 1926, without ever finishing editing it.¹² Another work of reference translated by Tolkien was *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a romance from the 14th century based on the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Subcreative fantasy

The Silmarillion contains five stories, among which the *Quenta Silmarillion* is the main one. It starts with the *Ainulindalë*, which means "The Music of the Ainur" in Quenya, the elvish language invented by Tolkien. In this account, Eru Ilúvatar, the Creator of everything that exists in Tolkien's fictional world, introduces a theme to the Ainur,¹³ and they develop this theme in musical form, struggling, each group in their own fashion, to comprehend part of Ilúvatar's thought, seeking harmony in their composition. By listening to the others, they managed to shape a single composition, beautiful and harmonic.

Melkor, the most powerful among the Ainur, decided to put into the Music parts that he invented himself, which were not originally present in Eru's mind, thus generating disarrangement and disharmony. At first Eru, with a smile, raises his left hand, proposing a new theme. Once again Melkor starts a dissonance, to which Eru, now stern, raises his

11. Lewis quoted in Duriez, *Tolkien and C.S. Lewis*. Op. cit., pp. 26-27.

12. In 2014, Tolkien's translation of *Beowulf* was launched by HarperCollins.

13. Immortal spirits similar to the angels in the Christian doctrine.

Hence if our masters [...] ever succeed in producing a world where all are Companions and none are Friends, they will have removed certain dangers, and will also have taken from us what is almost our strongest safeguard against complete servitude.⁶⁰

Friendship in charity

As a theologian, Lewis uses Christianity as a complement to his study about friendship. He devises a beautiful image in which God is responsible for true Friendship, which would, in turn, awaken the Beauty (whose source is the very divine being) of others before us. The Creator chose our friends before we did, and He chose to be everyone's Friend.

In Tolkien's mythology, as previously seen, there is Eru Ilúvatar, a fictional character that plays the role of the Jewish Christian God, the creator of that fantastic world, even though He is not explicitly mentioned in *The Lord of the Rings*.⁶¹ Tolkien, although he rejected allegorical interpretations, did not accept the claim that religion was not present in his works. He wrote about it in one of his letters: "It is a monotheistic world of 'natural theology'. The odd fact that there are no churches, temples, or religious rites and ceremonies, is simply part of the historical climate depicted".⁶² Tolkien's works are pervaded by Christian thought, even though set in a pre-Christian world.⁶³

The greatest Catholic Church theologian, Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century), in his *Summa Theologiae*, tackles the

60. Lewis, C.S. *The Four Loves*. Op. cit., p. 115.

61. Except as a brief mention to "The One" in the appendices, in the context of the Fall of Númenor.

62. Tolkien, J.R.R., Carpenter, H. (Org.), Tolkien, C. (Assist.). *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Op. cit., Letter 165, p. 220.

63. In *The Silmarillion* the chronology of Middle-earth is explained, which is divided in Ages: first, second and third. *The Lord of the Rings* is set in the Third Age, which then proceeds to the Fourth, Men's Age. Our present History is a continuation of that world Tolkien invented.

Friendship in Justice

In friendship according to charity one finds its most complete definition, since, for Aristotle, the knowledge of friendship happens through the object of love. According to Lewis, friendship is one of the four loves, and charity is nothing less than the virtue of Christian love. Thus, friendship and charity are the two loves least connected to senses, that is, the least “necessary” for our survival. They are not necessary for the body, being unable to generate or maintain life, but they are both particularly interconnected, and essential for the health of the soul.

On the other hand, we cannot talk about friendship without also talking about justice. According to Aristotle, this would be a complete virtue because not only does it benefit those who exercise it, but also the ones who receive it. Friendship, which always requires more than one person to exist, favours the occurrence of justice. By looking at things that way, one describes friendship in its public, political sphere.

Resuming our first hypothesis about *The Lord of the Rings*, that the final objective of the central plot is peace in Middle-earth brought about by the destruction of the Ring, and that this could not happen with a single individual but only with a group of people sharing one objective, we can conclude that friendship favours justice not only from an individual, but mainly from a collective point of view.

In the *Summa Theologiae* one also finds this direct relationship between the part and the whole, both equally necessary:

Justice, as stated above [...] directs man in his relations with other men. Now this may happen in two ways: first as regards his relation with individuals, secondly as regards his relations with others in general, in so far as a man who serves a community, serves all those who are included in that community. [...] so that all acts of virtue can pertain to justice, in so far as it directs man to the common good.⁷⁴

74. Aquinas, T. *The Summa Theologica*. Op. cit. SS, Q58, A5.

because of that, he considers friendship equivalent to justice, even though, in this sense, it “yet it falls short of the notion of justice, because it lacks the full aspect of debt, whereby one man is bound to another”.⁷⁷ However, the kind of friendship dealt with in this work is that associated to charity, more than simply affability. The latter, removed from the benevolent representation of charity, is linked to accidental friendship, based on pleasure, and not to the honest or perfect one, which occurs with reciprocal benevolence.

Therefore, a virtuous man’s friendship is, for us, strictly connected to the love that generates justice, aiming at the common good. The choice for *The Nicomachean Ethics* leads us to a study about the ends of Man (and, by extension, the ends of the characters to be studied), having as the ultimate end the *eudaimonia*, that is, happiness (or bliss, according to the Christian view). Friendship is virtue or implies virtue, the necessary condition for the good that seeks no other end.

Within Tolkien’s work, friendship is a tool that enables one to reach the ultimate end of the saga: destroying the One Ring and, consequently, conquering one’s weaknesses which are potentialised by the magical object, achieving peace for himself and the free peoples of Middle-earth.

Magic: on, through and beyond the screen

Tolkien’s *legendarium* is multiple in landscapes, fauna, flora, languages, architecture, and other natural and cultural variations. One of the places that catches our attention the most in Middle-earth is Lothlórien, an elvish kingdom resembling the gardens of Lórien in the Undying Lands, where Irmo, the Vala known as master of visions and dreams, dwells. Lothlórien stands as a timeless space in Middle-earth, and a place of resistance against Sauron’s wicked deeds. Legolas, the elf in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, describes the place as such:

77. Aquinas, T. *The Summa Theologica*. Op. cit., SS, Q114, A2.

the original lies".⁸⁶

For the author, the synopsis did not show respect to the dialogue, to the characterization, to the passage of time and to other issues. It is Kyrmse's — and my own — opinion that Jackson did not sin against the issues Tolkien raised, insofar as *The Lord of the Rings* is concerned.⁸⁷ "He might not have reproduced the letter of the book, but undoubtedly captured its spirit".⁸⁸

That, it must be said, is not an opinion shared by Christopher Tolkien, J.R.R. Tolkien's third son and his literary executor. In a 2012 interview to *Le Monde*, Christopher shows his disapproval for the movies directed by Peter Jackson: "they have eviscerated the book, making it an action movie for 15- to 25-year-old young people", and "it seems that *The Hobbit* will be the same kind of movie".⁸⁹ According to Christopher, his father had been devoured by his own popularity and absorbed by the absurdities of the time we live in. He goes on to say that the "commercialization has reduced to nothing the aesthetic and philosophical impact of this creation. There is only one solution left for me: turning my head away".

Identification and Projection

As for the representations of friendship in *The Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy, we must first establish the basic concepts of *identification* and *projection* in the theory of the cinema according to the philosopher Edgar Morin. In his essay *The Cinema, or The Imaginary Man*, Morin talks about the soul of the cinema, and the processes that constitute its magic: *anthropomorphism*, which projects humanity in the exterior world; and *cosmomorphism*, which enables man to identify

86. Tolkien, J.R.R., Carpenter, H. (Org.), Tolkien, C. (Assist.). *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Op. cit., Letter 210, p. 270.

87. *The Hobbit* trilogy, again, is the subject of other discussions.

88. Kyrmse, R. *Explicando Tolkien*. Op. cit., p. 144.

89. *The Hobbit* trilogy had not yet been released back in 2012.

Chapter Three

Corruption and division: the self, the double and the other

We will now focus on the thought-provoking and probably most complex character Tolkien created: Gollum. To do that, we will turn to the representation of the *self* as the subject, who engages with themselves, and will see how this is reflected in their relationship with the other.

What immediately catches our attention in Gollum is, undoubtedly, his conflicted, unstable, dichotomic personality: two persons existing in a single being, in perpetual discord. But it has not been always like that. It is known that Gollum is a creature closely related to a Hobbit and that, originally, he was known as Sméagol.¹ In the first book of the saga, Gandalf tells how that came to happen when he explains to Frodo how the Ring ended up in Sméagol's hand:

[Sméagol] was interested in roots and beginnings; he dived into deep pools; he burrowed under trees and growing plants; he tunnelled into green mounds; and he ceased to look up at the hill-tops, or the leaves on trees, or the flowers opening in the air: his head and his eyes were downward.²

The way the character is presented, showing his interest in subterranean matters, is a metaphor of his own personality: Sméagol was a self-absorbed creature, with a gloomy, curious mind, searching for his origins (roots) and progressively more

1. Sméagol is a translation of the name Trahald, in Westron, the common language of Men. The etymological root of Sméagol is the Old English *smeagan*, meaning 'to investigate'.

2. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. London: HarperCollins, 2008, p. 69.

and Abel, sons of Adam and Eve. Cain killed his brother out of envy. Just like him who wanted Abel's favour before God, Sméagol wanted what his friend held in his hands: the Ring of Power; and, just like Cain killed Abel to assuage his greed, Sméagol kills Déagol. After the fratricide, Cain was banned from the community, and the effect of the Ring also made Sméagol very unpopular among his peers, so that he became more and more isolated.

The Precious

Before proceeding in the Sméagol-Gollum analysis, it is important to know more about the meaning of the One Ring: after all, both the magical object and Gollum appeared almost simultaneously in Tolkien's mind. The writer made them public in *The Hobbit* (1937), his first published book, initially told to amuse his children.

At first, the Ring was a simple magical object in a fantastic story, with the power of making invisible anyone who used it — as well as the user's clothes and everything he or she was holding. Bilbo Baggins, a Hobbit, found the Ring in a very dark cave, when he got lost from his Dwarf friends, as told in the chapter "Riddles in the Dark": "It was a turning point in his career, but he did not know it. He put the ring in his pocket almost without thinking..."⁶

However, the author's creative process regarding the mythical value of the Ring took many years to become complete. When Tolkien wrote about the Ring for the first time in *The Hobbit*, he did not know yet about its history and its value that we now understand through *The Lord of the Rings*.

Even though the Ring was said to be a "turning point in his career", everything it does for Bilbo in *The Hobbit* is to help him overcome problems by making him invisible. By then, the author had no idea of the Ring's origins nor of what it would

6. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. London: HarperCollins, 2006, p. 81.

Gollum was not able to discover what Bilbo had in his pocket because he would frequently keep his precious in a rock in his island, and so he lost the game. Even then, because of his evil nature, he did not show Bilbo the way out (differently from what happens in the first edition), but he started to worry about the whereabouts of the Ring, since he could not find it in its hiding-place. Still by luck — or, rather, Providence — the Ring slipped into Bilbo's finger who, without realising it, became invisible and finally — though not without further difficulties — managed to escape from there.

The origins of the Ring

Before the foreword to *The Lord of the Rings* we find the famous poem about the Rings of Power. The lines “One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, / One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them” are engraved in the magical object devised by Sauron, written in the Black Speech of Mordor. When he forged the Ring, the Enemy became dependent on it, because he transferred to it part of his vital power. The Dark Lord's objective was to create a domination weapon but, paradoxically, it also dominated him, because the destruction of the Ring would also entail the definitive loss of his physical form. The Ring acted in a similar way with everyone, in a higher or lesser degree according to the person's strength and wisdom, and the amount of time the person spent with the object.

The origin of the Ring dates to c.1600 of the Second Age of Tolkien's universe, while its destruction happened in 3019 of the Third Age, so it existed for about 4860 years.

The First Age comprises 450 years of the Trees (which are equivalent to 4312 solar years) — in a time when the sun and the moon did not exist, and the land of the Valar was illuminated by the Two Trees —, plus 590 solar years, after the creation of the sun and the moon.

See the following table for the exact dates:

Two names, no identity

The relationship between Sméagol and himself is crucial for us to understand his relationship with his double (Gollum) and the others — and, therefore, to understand how friendship manifested (or not) in him. We know that, in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle highlights that the “Friendly relations to others, and all the characteristics by which friendship is defined, seem to be derived from our relations towards ourselves.”²⁹

Gollum’s relation to himself, as we could notice, is wholly unstable. In fact, this comes from the fact that he lacks unity and, therefore, a single self cannot be identified in him. According to an article by Leif Jacobsen,³⁰ Sméagol/Gollum is both good and evil, or even neutral. It is an *a priori* truth, because in the outcome of the saga the character decides to keep the Ring — that is, he chooses Evil.

Gollum’s character is not very clear in the narrative, and this can be exemplified through several moments of the book. We could highlight the moment when Frodo Baggins, following his path to Mordor to destroy the Ring, asks his friend Sam Gamgee: “It’s my doom, I think, to go to that Shadow yonder, so that a way will be found. But will good or evil show it to me?”³¹ We know that it is precisely Gollum who guided *The Hobbit* friends to their destination. Such ambiguity is seen also when Sam and Frodo, in a metalinguistic dialogue, reflect upon the kind of characters they could be — as though they were already part of a great story told to their descendants — and Sam says about Gollum: “I wonder if he thinks he’s the hero or the villain?”³²

29. Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by F. H. Peters, 10 edn. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1906, p. 294.

30. Jacobsen, L. “The Undefinable Shadowland: A Study of the Complex Question of Dualism in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*”. Lund University, Sweden, 1997. <<http://tolkiensarda.se/new/alster/shadowland.pdf>> [Accessed 24 March, 2020].

31. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. Op. cit., p. 788.

32. Id., p. 933.

quote that cinema provides us with “intimacy because the image (again through the foreground) makes us literally penetrate the beings (by means of their faces, open books to the souls) and the things”.⁶⁵ Corroborating our analysis, Otto Rank claims, concerning the “essential problem of the ego”, that “the modern interpreter, who is supported or compelled by the new technique of representation, [prominently highlights] by using such a vivid language of imagery”.⁶⁶

The Double Characterization

It is impossible not to mention the physical description of the character. The movie evidently based its own description on Tolkien's, as shown in this passage:

Down the face of a precipice, [...] a small black shape was moving with its thin limbs splayed out. Maybe its soft clinging hands and toes were finding crevices and holds that no hobbit could ever have seen or used, but it looked as if it was just creeping down on sticky pads, like some large prowling thing of insect-kind. And it was coming down head first, as if it was smelling its way. Now and again it lifted its head slowly, turning it right back on its long skinny neck, and *The Hobbits* caught a glimpse of two small pale gleaming lights, its eyes that blinked at the moon for a moment and then were quickly lidded again.⁶⁷

Based on this description, the art direction of the movie studied how it could be imprinted upon the character. The behind-the-scenes footage made by the team shows that Gollum's representation underwent several steps from the screenplay to the screen itself: drawings, sculptures, mock-ups, storyboards, animatics etc.

The artists who provided the basis for the whole art direction were the English Alan Lee and the Canadian John Howe, famous for their Tolkien-inspired illustrations. Both were the

65. Id., p. 25.

66. Rank, O. *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Op. cit., p. 7.

67. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. Op. cit., p. 800.

Chapter Four

United by the same ideal

When Gandalf told Frodo about the origins and the power of the Ring, *The Hobbit* soon volunteered to leave the Shire,¹ to Gandalf's surprise:

‘My dear Frodo!’ exclaimed Gandalf. ‘Hobbits really are amazing creatures, as I have said before. You can learn all that there is to know about their ways in a month, and yet after a hundred years they can still surprise you at a pinch.’²

Gandalf's statement shows how interesting *The Hobbits* are, even though they are unknown or despised by the majority of the peoples in Middle-earth. Moreover, by saying “not even from you”, Gandalf shows that, among *The Hobbits*, who already are special creatures, Frodo Baggins, Bilbo's heir, stands out for his personal values.

The Hobbit would have left the Shire alone were it not for the fact that his gardener, Samwise Gamgee, had overheard great part of the conversation. As a consequence of his curiosity, Gamgee was invited to depart with his master, which was a great joy to him, after all the stories of the world beyond the Shire fascinated him and, besides, Sam did not want to leave Mr. Frodo.

Baggins tried to leave the Shire discreetly, pretending to be moving to another dwelling. Following Gandalf's advice,

1. In the movie, one has the impression that Frodo left as soon as Gandalf explained everything to him. But the book makes it clear that five months elapsed after Frodo's decision. Besides, the conversation they have about the Ring happened almost ten years after Bilbo's party. The literary text is also clear in showing that Frodo's decision, however prompt, was also a difficult one.

2. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. London: HarperCollins, 2008, p. 82.

more about what should be done with the Ring, not without going through a number of adventures and misfortunes. The truth is that, without his three companions, and other friends he found along the way, Frodo would not have gotten there, and this was only the beginning.

One threat, multiple heroes

At the end of the first volume of the saga, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the reader witnesses the breaking of the fellowship — constituted of two Men, Aragorn and Boromir; four Hobbits, Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin; the Wizard Gandalf; the Dwarf Gimli; and the Elf Legolas. From that moment on, Frodo and Sam follow on their own to Mordor, where the Ring must be destroyed, and the other members of the fellowship take distinct paths.

According to Maria Nikolajeva, an expert in comparative literature, *The Lord of the Rings* would be considered an adult novel, not a children's book, unlike *The Hobbit*, because it displays parallel plots as from the breaking of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. She argues:

Auxiliary and parallel plots allow the reader to follow several characters one at a time. It may be necessary and desirable for the actions involved; however, it limits the scope of characterization. While an adult novel of 800 pages can have a number of parallel plots and yet leave ample room for the portrayal of several characters, a children's novel of 120 pages does not have the same prerequisites.⁴

This may be the main reason why *The Lord of the Rings* has over a thousand pages, not counting appendices and maps. Space was needed to develop the actions of the plot and the characterization and development of characters. Tolkien talks about that, displaying his peculiar humour:

4. Nikolajeva, M. *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2003, p. 162.

Her claim corroborates the purpose of this study, because friendship has a function to the end of the story, but it also plays an important role in its development. We can say that friendship contributes for the eucatastrophic outcome and that it brings happiness itself, being both a condition for the chief good and a symptom of it.¹⁷

Nine against nine

According to C.S. Lewis, friendship happens when two or more people see the same truth, but friendship lies especially in the question rather than in the answer to a question. That is, for people to become friends, it is necessary that they perceive the importance of a given subject, not that they agree with the answer: “In this kind of love, [... the question] ‘Do you love me?’ means *Do you see the same truth?* Or at least, ‘Do you *care about* the same truth?’”.¹⁸

Let us go back to the Council of Elron, in Rivendell, where some representatives of the free peoples of Middle-earth, apart from Gandalf, had a long discussion, chaired by the Elf Elrond, about the story of the Ring, Gollum’s whereabouts, and Sauron’s plans to hold dominion over Middle-earth and enslave its inhabitants. It was known, then, that they were at war and that the Enemy had to be challenged.

Members of distinct peoples were present: Bilbo and Frodo; Gandalf; the Dwarves Glóin and his son, Gimli; several Elves of Rivendell and Legolas, an Elf from Mirkwood; the Men Boromir and Aragorn, and Sam, who participated secretly, without being invited, because he could not stay away from his Master. They had a common objective: to fight Sauron and his evil plan. They all brought with them the same truth about the war of the Ring. At that moment, their different races,

17. There is a correspondence in the biblical aphorism: “A faithful friend is a strong defense: and he that hath found such an one hath found a treasure” (Ecclesiasticus 6:14).

18. Lewis, C.S. *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960, p. 97.

friendship. After the destruction of the Ring, the narrator shows a sequence of events, even adventures, in each one's journey back home, keeping their bonds of friendship. According to Aristotle, we need friends in good and bad fortune, because "in misfortune we need help, in prosperity we need people to live with and to do good to; for we wish to do good".²⁷

Over the next few pages, we will find out more about the peoples represented in *The Fellowship of the Ring* and their importance for the story.

Elves and Dwarves

The least probable friendship of *The Fellowship of the Ring* is that between the Elf Legolas and the Dwarf Gimli. Both peoples had estrangements that dated back to the First Age of Middle-earth's history and which ensued mortal battles between them.

But the origins of that disagreement can be traced back to a time even before the First Age, when Elves and Men had not yet awakened in the world. It is told in the mythology that the Elves are called Eru Ilúvatar's Firstborn, and the Men are the Followers. The Dwarves, in turn, were originally created by the Vala Aulë, who could not await the coming of the Children of Ilúvatar and created his own offspring. So *The Silmarillion* says:

And the voice of Ilúvatar said to Aulë: 'Thy offer I accepted even as it was made. Dost thou not see that these things have now a life of their own, and speak with their own voices? [...] Even as I gave being to the thoughts of the Ainur at the beginning of the World, so now I have taken up thy desire and given to it a place therein [...]. They shall sleep now in the darkness under stone, and shall not come forth until the Firstborn have awakened upon Earth [...]. But when the time comes I will awaken them, and they shall be to thee as children; and often strife shall arise between thine and mine, the children of my adoption and the children of my choice.'²⁸

27. Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Op. cit., p. 314.

28. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Silmarillion*. London: HarperCollins, 1999, pp. 37-38. Emphasis added.

so, because it could not be worked into the main narrative without destroying its structure: which is planned to be ‘hobbitic-centric’, that is, primarily a study of the ennoblement (or sanctification) of the humble.³⁶

Such a concept is complemented in another letter by the Professor:

[...] this last great Tale [...] is seen mainly through the eyes of Hobbits: [...] because the last Tale is to exemplify most clearly a recurrent theme: the place in ‘world politics’ of the unforeseen and unforeseeable acts of will, and deeds of virtue of the apparently small, ungreat, forgotten in the places of the Wise and Great (good as well as evil).³⁷

A Hobbitic-centric view

In the Prologue to *The Lord of the Rings*, we learn that the adventures told in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are contained in *The Red Book of Westmarch*, starting with Bilbo’s stories, who then passed it on to Frodo, who handed it to Sam and his descendants afterwards. The story brought the Halfling’s view to the readers. It is suggested that *The Lord of the Rings* was, in fact, a translation of the *Red Book*, as can be found in the frontispiece of the book: “*The Lord of the Rings* translated from the Red Book of Westmarch by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien: herein is set forth the history of the War of the Ring and the Return of the King as seen by the Hobbits”.

Still in the Prologue, the Hobbits are thus described:

Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth [...]. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom [...].

36. Tolkien, J.R.R., Carpenter, H. (Org.), Tolkien, C. (Assist.). *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Op. cit., Letter 181, p. 237.

37. Id., Letter 131, p. 160.

Chapter Five

Equals in virtue

Aristotle claims that perfect friendship is only possible between those who are equals in virtue. However, we have demonstrated that, in the saga of the Ring, all characters undergo a process of development, either evolving into virtue or declining into vice. Equality, therefore, is not immediately established in most of the heroes we have studied.

We are now going to reflect about the practice of virtue, so necessary for friendship to approach the one considered perfect and to move away from the ones considered incidental, in the Aristotelian conception. To do that, our attention will turn especially to the friendship between unequals, how it is configured in these cases, and how it can be changed, that is, how inequality can be effaced and friendship become perfect — or at least close to it, given that, in the Christian ethics upon which Tolkien was based, a common man cannot be wholly good, but, however virtuous (a condition for one to be a good friend), one would still have some flaws.¹

Among the examples of friendship between unequals, in his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle points out the one that ensues between those who rule and those who obey. Such a friendship seems important here because it is exactly the one between Frodo and Sam — not to mention others, such as Gandalf towards the Fellowship, and then Aragorn, in Gandalf's absence and as king etc.

The two Hobbits have a Master-Subject relationship: Sam is Frodo's gardener, and he is the son of the Gaffer, Hamfast

1. See Luke 18:19: "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God".

Those who beyond other men set their hearts on noble deeds are welcomed and praised by all; but if all men were vieing with each other in the pursuit of what is noble, and were straining every nerve to act in the noblest possible manner, the result would be that both the wants of the community would be perfectly satisfied, and at the same time each individually would win the greatest of all good things — for virtue is that.¹⁰

Olórin and Nienna

The Istar Gandalf plays a crucial role in the victory in the War of the Ring, and his participation goes beyond his wizard powers. He contributes, especially, in ensuring that one of the most important virtues be practiced by Frodo: mercy. Inasmuch as friendship is concerned, we have briefly considered all the free peoples of Middle-earth who were present in the Fellowship of the Ring, whose nine members would oppose the nine Nazgûl. The ninth member, Gandalf, was not from Middle-earth, but from Aman, the Undying Lands, because he was a Maia. He must, therefore, be studied more closely, along with the Valië Nienna, of whom he was a pupil.

In *The Silmarillion*, it is said that the original name of the wizard was Olórin,¹¹ in the elvish language Quenya, spoken by the Elves that dwelled in Valinor. He was considered the wisest among the Maiar, and dwelled in Lórien, the lands of Irmo, the Vala of Dreams, but he would often go to Nienna's house,

[...] and of her he learned pity and patience [...] he was the friend of all the Children of Ilúvatar, and took pity on their sorrows; and those who listened to him awoke from despair and put away the imaginations of darkness.¹²

10. Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Op. cit., p. 306.

11. The word *olori*, in Elvish, corresponded to the concept of “dream”, as in a mental image, generated by imagination and memory, which was able to clarify reality. Later, the Middle-earth Elves gave him the name “Mithrandir”. He was also called “Tharkûn” by the Dwarves, and “Gandalf” by the Men.

12. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Silmarillion*. London: HarperCollins, 1999, p. 22.

However, to achieve Gandalf's forgiveness, Saruman had to suffer one penalty: to relinquish temporarily his position in the Order of the Istari. Saruman would have to give up his objects, the key to the tower and his staff, as a proof of repentance and humbleness. The traitorous Istar, however, did not suffer humiliation and, on the contrary, chose mockery and hatred. When Saruman decides to turn his back to Gandalf, the latter passes sentence and expels Saruman from the Order and the Council, locking him in the tower of Orthanc, invigilated by the Ents.

At last, with Saruman's madness and Gandalf's gesture of mercy, the White Rider assumes his position in the order of the Istari and in the White Council. He is the master of tradition, the light of the Valar and of Ilúvatar, the One. Symbolically, Gandalf, the White, expresses, at this moment, the social function of the *Self*, who affirms the identity of the group, discerns the elements that interfere in the process of individuation, and imposes the truth, the justice, and the responsibility before challenges.²⁵

From gardener to master

When Sam and Frodo are in Minas Morgul, climbing the stairs of Cirith Ungol to reach the fires of Mount Doom, following Gollum's suggestion, the Hobbits have a dialogue which reveals the plot itself, their roles in that story, and the meaning of their quest. Sam says:

'[...] The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr. Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them [...]. But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually – their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had,

25. Klautau, D. G. 'Do Cinzento ao Branco: o processo de individuação a partir de Gandalf em O Senhor dos Anéis'. *Ciberteologia: Revista de Teologia & Cultura*, n.10, 2007, pp. 9-10.

Choices lead to decisions

Sam has his crucial opportunity to show his bravery when he is faced with the fearsome giant spider Shelob, when he returns from a fight with Gollum that prevents him from defending Frodo from that enemy. According to Aristotle, “by habituating ourselves to despise danger, and to face it, we become courageous; and when we have become courageous, we are best able to face danger.”⁴⁶ Sam, along with Frodo, had already been to many terrible places: they crossed the Barrow-downs; escaped from the Nazgûl; continued their journey, in spite of losing Gandalf in Moria; crossed the Dead Marshes, among other perils, before facing the terrifying Shelob.

The ordeals Sam had faced strengthened his character, and at that moment he had enough courage to face the malignant spider. When he found his master on the floor, being dragged by Shelob, he charged. Sam did not have enough time to think; he acted as he had been acting until then. At that moment, he was strong enough to face a creature which no one dared to face, not even Sauron himself. He needed some external artifices beyond his own strength, and he counted on luck — or divine providence — to beat her, but this would not have taken place if Sam had been a coward before her.

The artifices he used were the tools that helped him against Shelob, such as Frodo’s elven sword, Sting, apart from the Phial of Galadriel, the parting gift given to Frodo by the Elf when the departed from Lothlórien.

[...] cold and hard and solid it seemed to his touch in a phantom world of horror, the Phial of Galadriel. [...]

As if his indomitable spirit had set its potency in motion, the glass blazed suddenly like a white torch in his hand. [...] The beams of it entered into her wounded head and scored it with unbearable pain, and the dreadful infection of light spread from eye to eye. She fell back beating the air with her forelegs, her sight blasted by inner lightnings, her mind in agony.⁴⁷

46. Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Op. cit., p. 38.

47. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. Op. cit., pp. 954-955.

who reached those lands, as a gift for having been Ring-bearers. They were to spend the rest of their days there, in the island of Tol Eressëa, resting and healing their wounds. “The passage over Sea is not Death. The ‘mythology’ is Elf-centred. According to it there was at first an actual Earthly Paradise, home and realm of the Valar, as a physical part of the earth.”⁶²

The master bequeaths his place

After having returned to the Shire and fought off Sharkey and his ruffians, the Hobbits had a season of peace, rebuilding the Shire, and prosperity. Frodo, however, felt weak and ill, because the wound in his shoulder caused by the leader of the Nazgûl on Weathertop, two years before, had not healed completely. Besides, everyone in the Shire talked about the great deeds of Merry, Pippin, and Sam, but as for Frodo, people did not remember him, something that afflicted master Gamgee.

Frodo, a noble, wise, and fair Hobbit, leaves the Shire voluntarily responding to a request made by his best friend, the wizard Gandalf. In Rivendell, already bearing a wound in his shoulder that would never heal, he understands his call and decides to volunteer to bear the Ring into the terrifying Mordor. He starves, he feels exhaustion, thirst, and pain. He loses his senses and much of his capacity for choice under the power of the Ring; he suffers the humiliation of succumbing at the very end of the journey. But Frodo is not the hero of the story. He brings within him all that a real-life human being in fact is; a being with flaws and doubts. According to Tolkien:

[...] every event or situation has (at least) two aspects: the history and development of the individual [...], and the history of the world [...] — still there are abnormal situations in which one may be placed. ‘Sacrificial’ situations, I should call them: sc. positions

62. Tolkien, J.R.R., Carpenter, H. (Org.), Tolkien, C. (Assist.). *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Op. cit., Letter 181, p. 237.

Black Gate Opens”, and “The Field of Cormallen”, taking into consideration the cuts between scenes as proposed by the movie version.

Intercut battles

The movie adaptation evidently deviates in some respects from the literary text. The actions in the chapter “Mount Doom” are split in two episodes of the movie: “The Tower of Cirith Ungol” and “The End of All Things”, an interval of about thirty minutes, which includes information from preceding chapters of the book (including from the second volume, *The Two Towers*) or succeeding ones.

In the movie, Sam and Frodo’s journey is interposed by battle scenes with the Captains of the West, led by Aragorn, against Sauron’s troops, in front of the Black Gates, as a means to attract the Dark Lord’s attention. In the book, the same scenes are divided in parts (which the author calls “Books”, six in all), and the reader has to go back in the narrative timeline and the pages to establish a connection between the events.

The last volume of the saga, *The Return of the King*, for instance, is divided in Books V and VI. Book V tells the adventures of the members of the Fellowship of the Ring that have been left behind by the Ring-bearer — Aragorn, Gimli, Gandalf, Legolas, Merry, and Pippin — and it mostly relates the episodes concerned with the battles and their consequences. Book VI tells the story of the Ring’s destruction with Frodo, Sam, and Gollum, and the outcome of the saga. This allows the reader to go deep into what Frodo and Sam experienced *and* what the other heroes, distant from the Ring, experienced. Thus, no part is overshadowed by the other; on the contrary, there is an exchange between them, and each separated group of the Fellowship adds to the other — the deeds of the two Hobbits are emphasised, though, since the Ring, the great driving force of the plot, is with them.

In the movie, the scenes are synchronically presented,

Attracting the Nazgûl is important because they were the only ones who could warn Sauron about the danger. The battle was, therefore, essential to attract all the forces of evil, whether intelligent or not. The eagles are a sign of good omens, meaning hope, divine help, the triumph over Evil. Their presence gives energy and hope to those in battle. In the book, they appear only at the end of the battle, when Pippin defeats the troll and, just like in the movie — and despite the fact that he did not defeat the troll, as in the book — the Hobbit cries: “‘The Eagles are coming! The Eagles are coming!’”¹⁰⁵

The Climax of the (non) hero

The movie scene of Frodo and Sam at the crack of Sammath Naur, in Mount Doom, is similar to the book episode: Sam finds Frodo by the edge of the abyss, and the tension grows because all he has to do is to throw the Ring in the fire, and nothing, apparently, prevents him from doing so. This is what the book tells:

[...] at the very Crack of Doom, stood Frodo, black against the glare, tense, erect, but still as if he had been turned to stone.

‘Master!’ cried Sam.

Then Frodo stirred and spoke with a clear voice, indeed with a voice clearer and more powerful than Sam had ever heard him use [...].

‘I have come,’ he said. ‘But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!’ And suddenly, as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam’s sight.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, the movie plays with close-ups to build tension, and Frodo and Sam have a dialogue:

Sam: *Frodo!*

Frod: *I’m here, Sam.*

Sam: *Destroy it – go on! Throw it in the fire! What are you waiting*

105. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings*. Op. cit., p. 1169.

106. Id., p. 1237.