

PHILIA AND METHOD: A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY ON PLATO'S  
"LYSIS"

by

ERIC D. HETHERINGTON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New  
York

2009

© 2009

ERIC D. HETHERINGTON

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in satisfaction of the  
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Stefan Baumrin

---

---

Date

---

Chair of Examining Committee

Iakovos Vasiliou

---

---

Date

---

Executive Officer

Steven M. Cahn

---

Peter Simpson

---

William Earle

---

John Kleinig

---

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## Abstract

PHILIA AND METHOD: A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY ON PLATO'S  
"LYSIS"

by

Eric D. Hetherington

Adviser: Professor Steven Cahn

*Philia and Method: A Translation and Commentary on Plato's "Lysis"* presents a translation of Plato's dialogue on friendship and a commentary that explores the cultural, literary and philosophical aspects of the dialogue. The translation aims to provide readers with an English version of the dialogue that eschews word-for-word literalness but retains some formality and avoids modern idioms.

The analysis of friendship offered in the dialogue is composed of two parts. In the philosophical arguments of the dialogue Plato explores self-directed reasons for friendship. In the literary setting, characters and situations Plato shows us the other-directed aspects of friendship. Only if we consider these two aspects of friendship can we reach a complete understanding of it. The dialogue presents friendship as a voluntary relationship based on caring for the other for the benefit of both friends and their ability to come to know the good. Friends are fungible on Plato's account because what is important is the character of the friend not the person.

The dialogue can also be studied for the methods of argumentation that Plato employs. In some of the dialogue's arguments Plato criticizes argumentative strategies that were prevalent in Greek thought before him. One of the dialogues central arguments, that concerning the 'proton philon', has a form similar to the 'third man' argument from the "Parmenides" and other arguments in Plato that struggle with the nature of Platonic forms. Thus, my commentary explores not only Platonic ideas about friendship but Platonic argumentative methodology as well.

The dissertation contains two appendices. In one I examine Vlastos's interpretation of the "Lysis". His interpretation has been influential, but my argument aims to show that his interpretation is not conclusive when we consider the evidence for it in the dialogue alone. It requires Vlastos's chronological understanding of the Platonic corpus. In the second I examine a recent argument about the literary aspects of the dialogue that suggests that Socrates should be considered an unreliable narrator. I argue that there is little evidence for that reading within the text and there are good philosophical reasons for not thinking of Socrates in this way.

## Preface

This work comprises a translation and commentary on Plato's *Lysis*. The translation is of the Oxford Classical Text as prepared by John Burnet and aims at capturing the literary finesse of Plato's text while keeping the philosophical argumentation plain and accessible to those that cannot read Greek. There is a certain kind of arrogance in translating Plato or any other philosopher; it requires believing that you both understand the philosophy being espoused and that you can render it into another language without offending the beauty of the original. I hope to have charted the course between the Scylla of over-modernization and the Charybdis of literalness. Unlike Lombardo's recent translation, my own has kept a certain level of formality in language both because it seems to better represent the original rhythm of the language, but also to remind readers that they are not reading a contemporary short story. Unlike Bolotin's translation I have placed felicity in English prose above word-for-word accuracy. Word-for-word accuracy can help those learning Greek, but can lead to distraction to the Greekless reader. I have translated for those who may not need or desire to learn Greek and those who value accuracy in sentence sense over word-for-word substitution. In preparing my translation I have paid particular attention to recent scholarship on the family of words using the "phil"-stem. Following Konstans (1997), I maintain that "φίλος" corresponds fairly well with the English word "friend", but that "φιλέιν" and "φιλία" refer to a wider class of relationships and affection more generally. The translation appears as chapter one.

Chapter two is a methodical commentary that closely follows the text to reveal the logical, philosophical and literary qualities of Plato's work. The commentary's focus is

the text of the *Lysis* and I reference other works of Plato insofar as they can shed light on what is going on in the *Lysis*. If there are important similarities with other dialogues, I mention them; if there are important dissimilarities, I examine them. My reading of the *Lysis* does not rely on any overarching thesis about the Platonic corpus. I do not, for example, take anything for granted about the development of Plato's philosophy or about the chronology of his writings. I have dissected one dialogue in hopes of understanding it; how this relates to overarching theories about Plato was not my concern.

My commentary explores the philosophical, literary, and cultural aspects of the dialogue. I argue that the philosophical arguments of the *Lysis* are important both for the content of those arguments, which attempt to explain the nature of friendship, but also for the structure those arguments take. The dialogue is not merely an attempt to explain friendship but also a subtle examination of the logical forms arguments took in Plato's time and offers a critique of many of them. Thus, we see Plato dealing with notions of similarity and opposition as foundations for explanation and, of most importance to the Platonic corpus, the argument about the "proton philon" at 219d – 221e can be seen as related to the arguments about infinite regresses and the theory of forms in the *Parmenides*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus*. There is no distinction in Plato between the philosophical arguments and his literary finesse; the literary characteristics of the dialogue further Plato's philosophical ideas. The characters of the dialogue (Socrates and future Athenian citizens), their actions (philosophical conversations), and the manner in which they undertake these conversations all relate back to the goal of explaining friendship. To appreciate these literary qualities requires some cultural literacy. Hippothales' longing for *Lysis* and the importance of the paleastra as the dialogue's

setting would be lost without examining the cultural role such things had in ancient Athens.

The model of friendship that arises in the *Lysis* is explained in chapter three of the dissertation. Friendship is an impersonal, voluntary social relationship aimed at bringing about intellectual fulfillment for both friend and befriended. What distinguishes Plato's thought from many others is the impersonal nature he gives to friendship. What is important in a friend are the qualities he has that may bring about our intellectual fulfillment; who the person is or the person *as* a person is not particularly important. Our obligation is to knowledge of the good and not the individuals that help bring about that knowledge. I defend this interpretation with the literary and philosophical analysis of the preceding chapter.

There are two appendices that deal, not with the *Lysis* directly, but with contemporary scholarship. One of these is mainly philosophical, the other concerns the literary qualities of Plato. In the first appendix I look at Vlastos's reading of the *Lysis* from his essay, "The Individual as the Object of Love in Plato". Vlastos's argument is important because many later writers take it as foundational. I suggest that Vlastos's reading is not independent of his more general project of explaining Plato in a chronological fashion. If his general approach to the dialogue is not demanded by evidence, there are other readings of the dialogue that may also bear philosophical fruit. The second appendix concerns Planeaux's recent argument that we consider Socrates as an unreliable narrator in the *Lysis*. I explain what it means to be an unreliable narrator and argue that this is not warranted by the text of the *Lysis*. I also offer a more general analysis of why his thesis is generally ill suited to understanding Plato.

### Acknowledgements

This dissertation would never have been possible without three philosophical mentors. Robert Gurland helped me throughout my undergraduate career giving me good practical advice, educating me in jazz and philosophy and encouraging my intellectual pursuits wherever they led. Reginald E. Allen taught me Greek and instilled in me a love of Plato. Stephen Cahn shepherded this dissertation from infancy to completion. I owe great debts to these philosophers; I am forever grateful to them.

Peter Simpson's comments on a preliminary draft of my dissertation made me bring my ideas about Plato's conception of friendship into sharper focus and gave me renewed excitement in the project when I needed it. William Earle's comments on a draft led me to be more precise in parts of my argument that needed it. Stefan Baumrin and John Kleinig both selflessly gave of themselves with very short notice; their comments helped me to see the broader implications of my work on Plato.

My family's support has been unwavering over the years. My parents and sister have always fostered and been interested in my work from the very beginning of my philosophical studies. My wife and children have put up with me disappearing for hours upon hours to work on my dissertation; I am sorry to have been apart from them but grateful for their support.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Preface.....	vi
Chapter One: Plato’s <i>Lysis</i> .....	1
Chapter Two: A Philosophical Commentary on the <i>Lysis</i> .....	40
Chapter Three: Plato’s Conception of Friendship in the <i>Lysis</i> .....	118
Appendix A: Vlastos’s Interpretation of the <i>Lysis</i> .....	140
Appendix B: Appendix B: “ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας εὐθὺς Λυκείου”: The Prologue of Plato’s <i>Lysis</i> and Unreliable Narration.....	151
Notes .....	168
Bibliography .....	188

Chapter One: Plato's *Lysis*

Socrates

**203**

I was coming from the Academy straight to the Lyceum following along just outside of the wall. After I came opposite the gate where the Panops Spring is, here I met Hippothales, son of Hieronymous, and Ctesippus of Paianeus, and other youths standing together in a group. Seeing me Hippothales approached saying, "Socrates, where have you been and where do you go?"

"From the Academy," I said, "I go straight to the Lyceum."

**B**

"Come here," he said, "straight to us. Won't you approach? It is certainly worthwhile."

"Where," I said, "do you mean and who are the others?"

"Here," he said, "to the right of me in this nook straight down from the wall is an open door. We spend time here ourselves and many others who are very beautiful."

"Indeed, what is this and what is the activity?"

**204**

"A Paleastra," he said, "It has been built recently. The activity for the most part is discussion. We kindly wish to include you in part of it."

"Well!" I said, "Who teaches here?"

“Your friend and admirer,” he said, “Mikkos.”

“My God,” I said, “he is not a common man, but a master of his craft.”

“So, you wish to follow,” he said, “and also settle right here with us?”

“First, I should hear why I should enter and who is the beautiful one.” **B**

“It seems differently to some of us, Socrates.”

“To you,” Hippothales, “who is it? Tell this to me.”

And he blushed from being asked. And I spoke, “Hippothales, child of Hieronymous, you need not speak again about whether you love or not. For I know you are already carried into love. I am common and unserviceable in other matters, but it seems to me, somehow from God, I can immediately determine **C** that which is lover and beloved.”

And he heard and blushed a lot.

So, Ctesippus, son of Asteios, said, “You blush, Hippothales, and hesitate to speak the name to Socrates. If he spends a little time with you, Socrates, you will be tortured by hearing what he often says. Anyway, he has made us deaf and has filled our ears with Lysis. Indeed, if he drinks a bit, you awaken hearing **D** the name ‘Lysis’. And he describes him in detailed dreadful prose that he pours over us, but it isn’t as dreadful as whenever he attempts poesy and prose. And, what is even more dreadful is when he sings about his darling in a wondrous voice, which we must suffer hearing. And now, questioned by you, he blushes.”

“Lysis,” I said, “seems to be a young one. I think this because I did not **E** know him from hearing his name.”

“For not often is he called by his own name,” he said, “but still he is called by his father’s name because his father is very well renowned. Already I know well that you aren’t unaware of his looks. Indeed, this alone is sufficient to recognize him.”

“Let it be said,” I said, “who it is.”

“The eldest son of Democrates of Aixone,” he said.

“Well!” I said, “Hippothes, you discovered a love that is absolutely noble and youthful. Come and display these things to me in order that I might see if you understand that which it is necessary to say about the lover to him and to others.” **205**

“Socrates, do you value any of the things he says?” he said.

“Are you in fact denying saying these things?” I said.

“Not I,” he said, “but I don’t make poems and don’t write things about my darling.”

“He isn’t healthy,” said Ctesippus, “but he both babbles and is mad.”

And I said, “Hippothes, I do not want to hear any of the songs you have made about the youth, but your intention in order that I might understand the manner in which you behave towards your darling.” **B**

“Perhaps he will tell this to you,” he said, “for he knows exactly and he has been reminded, if, as he says, he has always been talked deaf by hearing me.”

“By the Gods,” Ctesippus said, “entirely so. Furthermore, it is ridiculous, Socrates. Indeed, being a lover and to have nothing personal to say even though paying attention to the boy more than others—how is that not ridiculous?” **C**

Indeed, the whole city sings about Democrates and Lysis, the grandfather of the boy, and about all his ancestors—the wealth and the horseracing and the Puthos victory and Isthmian games and Nemian games—both the four-horse and single-horse chariots. He makes poems and says these things about them and, in addition, even to these older, silly things.”

“For just the other day, he described the stories of Heracles to us in some poem. His ancestor received Heracles hospitably because he was related to **D** Heracles having been born from the God and the daughter of the deme’s founder, just as old women sing, and many other things, Socrates. Saying and singing these things, he compels us to listen to them.”

And hearing this I said, “O ridiculous Hippothales, do you both compose and sing your victory song before you have prevailed?”

“But, I neither compose nor sing about me, Socrates,” he said.

“Indeed, you don’t think so,” I said.

“How is this?” he said.

“Most of all,” I said, “these songs extend to you for if you take this boy **E** when he is such, the glory is yours having said and sung the songs just as if you had been victorious because you got the boy. But if he flees from you, then the greater the praise you have said of the boy, the greater your deprivation of both beauty and good and you will seem to be ridiculous. Really, dear friend, the **206** skilled lover doesn’t praise the beloved before he is caught, being afraid of how the future will be. And at the same time the beautiful, whenever someone praises and glorifies them, are filled up with pride and arrogance. Or do you think not?”

“I do,” he said.

“Then, the greater braggarts they become, the harder to catch?”

“Indeed it is likely.”

“Really, what sort of hunter does it seem to be if the hunter frightens and makes the game harder to catch?”

“Clearly a poor one.”

**B**

“And indeed, to not charm but to drive wild with words and songs is very unmusical. Is it so?”

“It seems to me.”

“Indeed, Hippothales, see that you don’t make yourself liable for these things because of your poetry. And indeed, I suppose you would not be willing to agree that a man who harms himself with his poetry is ever a good poet, he is hurtful to himself.”

“No, by God,” he said, “for that would be very unreasonable. But indeed, I consult with you about these things, Socrates, if you have anything else, give your advice about what to say so one becomes dear to the beloved.”

“It is not easy to say,” I said, “But, if you were willing to make him talk to me, perhaps I might be able to show you the way in which it is necessary to converse with him instead of the things they declare you say and sing.”

“But,” he said, “it is not difficult. For if you enter with Ctesippus here and, sitting down, he converses, I think then, he will come on his own—for he is fond of hearing discussions, Socrates, and it is different now because, celebrating the Hermaea, the young boys and the older boys are mixed together—

**D**

he will surely come to you. At any rate, if not, he is well acquainted with Ctesippus because of Ctesippus's cousin, Menexenus. For indeed, he happens to be a companion to Menexenus more than all the others. Let Ctesippus call him, if, after all, he doesn't come himself."

"This," I said, "we must do." And taking Ctesippus I went into the palaestra. The others went after us. **E**

We entered finding on the spot the boys had sacrificed and already they had pretty nearly finished the sacrificial rites, playing knucklebones and all were dressed up. Now, many were in the courtyard playing outside, but some were in the corner of the undressing room playing at evens and odds with a great many knucklebones, taking them from small baskets. Others stood around and watched them. And indeed, among them was Lysis wearing a crown and surrounded **207** by the younger and older boys and he stood out by his appearance; the beauty was not the only thing worth hearing about, but both the beauty and the good. And, retiring to the opposite side of the room, we sat down—for it was quiet there—and we started talking to each other. Then Lysis, turning around often, watched us and he clearly desired to come over. For a time he both watched **B** and hesitated to come alone. Thereupon Menexenus entered from the courtyard in the middle of his playing and, since he saw me and Ctesippus, he came and sat down with us. And, seeing this, Lysis followed and sat down near along with Menexenus. And indeed others sat near, especially Hippothales, after seeing a good number sitting and using them as a shield, approached where Lysis would not see, being afraid to be hated by him. And thus he came and listened.

And I looked toward Menexenus and I said, “Dear son of Demophon,  
which of you is oldest?” **C**

“We stand apart on that,” he said.

“And, therefore, which is more noble, you disagree about this?” I said.

“Most assuredly,” he said

“And in the same way, surely also about the one who is most beautiful?”

Then both laughed.

“I won’t ask which of you is wealthier,” I said, “for you are friends—is  
that not so?”

“Very much so,” they said.

“The things of friends are said to be in common, so indeed you won’t  
differ in regard to this, if you speak truthfully concerning the friendship.”

They both agreed.

I was about to try to ask which of them was wiser and more just, but **D**  
right then someone came up to get Menexenus, saying the wrestling teacher calls,  
for he seemed to me to happen to be managing the sacred rites. Then, the person  
there left, and I asked Lysis, “Truly Lysis,” I said, “your father and mother love  
you?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“Therefore, they would wish for you to be as prosperous as possible?”

“For how not?” **E**

“At any rate, does it seem to you that a man could both be happy and a  
slave never getting to do that which he desires?”

“My God, not to me,” he said.

“Therefore, if your father and mother love you and desire you to be happy, then they are willing to do everything so that you may be happy?”

“For how not?” he said.

“They permit you to do that which you wish and never rebuke you and never hinder you from doing that which you desire?”

“Yes, indeed, my God, Socrates, they stop me in a great number of things.”

“How do you say?” I said, “Wishing you to be happy, they stop you **208** from doing that which you wish? Really, tell this to me! If you desired to drive the bridle of the chariots whenever your father competes, would they not allow you but hinder?”

“By God, indeed,” he said, “they would not permit me.”

“But, who then?”

“There is a charioteer who is paid by my father.”

“How do you say this? They turn to a hired hand to do that which he wishes with the horses rather than you? And, beyond that, they pay him in silver for this very thing?”

“But, why not?” he said. **B**

“But, the pair of mules, I imagine they turn to you to rule over them and if you wish to take the whip to strike, they would permit this?”

“How could they permit it?” he said.

“What is this?” I said, “is no one allowed to beat them?”

“Of course,” he said, “the mule-driver.”

“A slave or a free man?”

“A slave,” he said.

“And a slave, as it seems, they value greater than their son, and they turn to him for their things more than you and they permit him to do that which he wishes and you they hinder? And yet it seems to me so. Do they permit you to rule yourself or don’t they rely on you for this?”

“For how could they rely on me for that?” he said.

“But, who rules you?”

“This tutor,” he said.

“But surely he is not a slave?”

“But surely; indeed he is ours,” he said.

“It is truly terrible,” I said, “that one who is free is ruled by a slave. Now, again, what does the tutor do in ruling over you?”

“Sometimes,” he said, “he brings me to school.”

“Indeed, do the teachers also rule over you?”

“It is altogether so.”

“And, indeed, the teachers rule over you?”

**D**

“All the time.”

“Therefore, your father willingly sets over you very many lords and masters. But, when you come home to your mother, she allows you to do that which you wish so that you are happy with her, either with the wool or the loom,

whenever she is weaving? For she hinders you not at all whether with the flat blade or the comb or other tools she lays hold of for weaving?"

And he laughed. "My God," he said, "Socrates, not only does she hinder, but I would be beaten, if I touched." **E**

"Heracles," I said, "certainly you have not done anything wrong to your father or mother?"

"My God, not I," he said.

"And so for what do they dreadfully prevent your happiness and your doing that which you wish, and the whole day they always keep you being a slave and, in a word, you do very little which you desire? So that, to you, as it seems, there is no advantage having your possessions, but always others rule over them rather than you; not even your noble body, but even this another shepherds and attends to it. You rule nothing, dear Lysis, nor do you do anything that you desire." **209**

"For I am not yet old enough, Socrates," he said.

"Perhaps this is not what hinders you, dear son of Democrates. I think both your father and mother turn to you and do not wait while you come of age for this much anyway: whenever they wish something to be read or written for them, you, as I think, are the first of the household they turn to. For is it so?" **B**

"Certainly," he said.

"Therefore, it is permitted for you to write the words in the order in which you wish. And, it is permitted to read in like manner. And, whenever, as I think, you take the lyre, neither your father nor mother hinder you from stretching and

loosening the strings that you wish, and to pluck and to strike with the lyre-pick.

Or do they hinder?"

**C**

"Certainly not."

"What could be the reason, dear Lysis, which here they do not hinder, but in those things we just now spoke of, they do hinder?"

"Because I think," he said, "I know these things, but not those."

"Well," I said, "my best boy, therefore, your father does not wait for your coming of age for all things, but when he believes your thinking better than his, in this way he turns to you both for himself and his things."

"Indeed, I think so," he said.

"Good!" I said, "what of this? Doesn't your neighbor have the same rule for you as your father? He will turn to you to rule his own home, whenever he **D** considers you to be better in knowing household management than himself or will he be in charge himself?"

"I think he will turn to me."

"What of this? It seems the Athenians will entrust their things to you whenever they perceive that you know well enough?"

"Indeed!"

"By God," I said, "and what about the great king? His eldest son, the one that will become the king of Asia, will the king rather entrust him to throw into the sauce that which he wishes when the meats are being boiled or will he **E** entrust us, if we reach him and we point out to him that we know better than his own son concerning the preparation of meat?"

“Certainly to us,” he said.

“And indeed, he will not allow him to throw in even a small bit, but, us, if we wished to take handfuls of salt, he would let us throw it in.”

“For how not?”

“And, if his son’s eyes were weak, would he allow him to bind his own eyes, if he did not think him a physician or would he hinder it?” **210**

“He would hinder.”

“And indeed, if he supposed us to be physicians, and if we wish to sprinkle some ashes in his open eyes, I think he would not hinder, thinking we truly know.

“You speak the truth.”

“And then, he would turn to us rather than himself and his son for all things he believed us to be wiser in than them?”

“Necessarily, Socrates,” he said.

“This is how it is dear Lysis,” I said, “In these things, in which we become in our right mind, all of them would turn to us, both Greeks and barbarians and **B** both men and women. We will do in these things that which we wish and no one will be willing to hinder us, but we will be free in regard to these things and rulers of others. These things will be ours—for we will profit from them—in other things, which we do not possess, no one will turn to us for what to do, but all will hinder us as much as they are able, not only the foreigners, but also our father **C** and mother and even if one of them is more dear, we will be obedient to them in

these things, even if they are foreign to us, for we will not profit at all from them.

Do you agree?"

"I agree."

"Then, will we be friends with anyone and will anyone love us for these things, in which we are of no help?"

"Clearly not," he said.

"Now therefore, neither your father nor anyone else loves you, insofar as you are useless?"

"It doesn't seem so," he said.

"Therefore, if you become wise, dear boy, everyone will be your friend **D** and akin to you—for you will be useful and good—if not, neither an other nor your father will be your friend; neither your mother nor kin. At any rate, is it possible, Lysis, to think great in these matters, if one is not yet wise?"

"And how?" he said.

"If you have a need for a teacher, you are not yet wise."

"Truly."

"Therefore, you are not noble, if you are still without sense."

"My God, Socrates" he said, "it doesn't seem so to me."

And when I heard him I looked toward Hippothales, and almost made a **E** mistake. For it came to me to say, "Thus, Hippothales, this is how it is necessary to talk with your darling, lessening and humbling him, but not like you puff up and indulge." I looked down at him pained and confused by what had been said and I remembered that, even standing close to Lysis, he wished to escape being

seen. Then I recovered myself and refrained from speaking. And meanwhile, Menexenus came back and sat down near Lysis, at the place he had stood up **211** from. Then, Lysis, rather childishly and in a friendly way, secretly from Menexenus, said to me, “Socrates, that which you say to me, tell it to Menexenus.”

And I said, “You tell him, Lysis, For by all means you stayed focused on it.”

“Most certainly,” he said.

“Therefore, try,” I said, “to remember as well as possible in order that you can say these things clearly. If you forget one of these things, then ask me **B** again whenever you next happen upon me.”

“Well, I will do that, Socrates,” he said, “know that it is entirely so. But, speak to him of something else so that I can also hear until it is time to go home.”

“Well, it is necessary to do this,” I said, “especially since you order it. But see that you act as my ally if Menexenus attempts to refute me. Or, don’t you know that he is fond of arguing?”

“My God yes,” he said, “exceedingly so. It is because of this that I wish you to converse with him.” **C**

“So I may become ridiculous?” he said.

“No, my God,” he said, “but so that you will punish him.”

“Why?” I said. “It is not easy for he is a fearful man, a student of Ctesippus. And, he is present—don’t you see him—Ctesippus.”

“Don’t let anyone be a concern to you, Socrates,” he said, “but converse with him.”

“If I must,” I said.

Then, while we were saying these things to ourselves, Ctesippus said, “Are you two feasting alone, not giving us a share of your words?” **D**

“But surely,” I said, “we must share. For, this one doesn’t understand something I’ve said, but he says he thinks that Menexenus knows and he urges me to ask him.”

“Then why don’t you ask?” he said.

“Well, I will ask,” I said, “And tell me, Menexenus, that which I will ask you. For since childhood, I happen to desire a certain possession, just as others happen to desire other things. For one desires to acquire horses, one dogs, one gold, and one honor. I am mildly disposed toward these things, but I very **E** passionately desire the acquisition of friends and I would wish to have a good friend rather than the best quail or cock and, by God, even rather than both the best horse and dog. And I think, by the dog, rather than the gold of Darius I would sooner accept a companion—rather even than Darius himself. Thus I am very true to my friends. So, seeing you, you and Lysis, I have been astounded **212** and call happy that which, being so young, you two quickly and easily possess. You have acquired a friend very quickly and also he you. For I am so far from this possession, so that I do not know in what way one becomes a friend to another, but indeed these things I wish to ask you in as much as you two are experienced.

“And tell me: whenever one loves another, which becomes a friend, the **B** lover of the beloved or the beloved of the lover or is there no difference?”

“No difference,” he said, “at any rate it seems to me.”

“How do you say this?” I said, “Both become friends of each other if only one loves the other?”

“To me,” he said, “it seems so.”

“What? Is it not possible for one who loves to not be returned affection by the one whom he loves?”

“It is.”

“What? And is it possible to hate the one who loves? It seems the sort of thing that sometimes lovers experience with their darlings. For, loving as much as possible, they think they are not loved in return and even that they are hated. **C** Or, does this not seem true to you?”

“Indeed very true,” he said.

“Therefore, in such a case,” I said, “one loves and one is loved?”

“Yes.”

“Then, which of the two of them is a friend of the other? The one who loves of the beloved, whether he also loves in return or even hates or the beloved of the lover? Or, is neither a friend of the other in a case like this when both do not love each other?”

“At least it is likely to be so.”

“Now it seems different to us than it had seemed before. For then, if **D** one were to love, then both were to be friends; but now, if they don’t both love, then neither is a friend.”

“It is likely,” he said.

“Now then, no one is a friend to the lover unless it returns the love.”

“It does not seem so.”

“They are not horse-lovers whom the horses don’t love in return, nore quail-lovers, nor dog-lovers and indeed wine-lovers, lovers of gymnastics, or even philosophers, whom wisdom does not love in return. Or, does each one love **E** these things, however they are not friends, and the poet spoke falsely when he said,

Happy is the man who has children for friends and single-hoofed  
horses

And dogs to hunt and a guest from foreign lands?

“Indeed, it does not seem so to me.”

“But, does he seem to speak truthfully to you?”

“Yes.”

“Therefore, the beloved is a friend to the lover, as it seems, Menexenus, whether he loves or hates. Like when new born children, some not yet loving and some already hating, whenever they are punished by their mother or their father, even though they hate them at this time most of all, but they are dearest to their parents.”

“Indeed it seems to me to be thus.” he said.

“Therefore, from what has been said, the lover is not the friend, but the beloved is.”

“It seems so.”

“And therefore, the enemy is the one who is hated, but not the one who hates.”

“It has been made clear.”

“Therefore, many are loved by their enemies, hated by their friends, and **B** are friends to their enemies, and enemies to those who are friends, if that which is loved is a friend but that which loves is not. And this is without much reason, dear companion, rather I think it is indeed impossible to be an enemy to a friend and a friend to an enemy.”

“You seem to speak truly, Socrates,” he said.

“Then, if this is impossible, the lover is a friend to that which is loved.”

“It has been made clear.”

“That which hates is an enemy of that which is hated.”

“Certainly.”

“Therefore, it will turn out we necessarily agree with the things which we spoke of earlier, often times there is a friend of one who is not a friend, and **C** even many times of an enemy, whenever one loves one who is not a friend or one loves one who hates. And, often times, there is an enemy of one that is not an enemy or even a friend, whenever one hates one that does not hate or one hates one who is dear.”

“I agree,” he said.

“Really indeed, what are we to make of it,” I said, “if neither the friends nor the beloved nor the ones who both love and are loved will be friends? But, even beyond these other things, are there yet others we say become friends to each other?”

“Not by God, Socrates,” he said, “indeed my doubts are not resolved.”

“Can it be, Menexenus,” I said, “we inquire not at all correctly?” **D**

“Indeed, it seem so to me, Socrates,” Lysis said, and at the same time he spoke, he blushed. For it seemed to me what he said escaped from him unintentionally because his mind very much held to what had been said; it was clear that he was listening.

Then, wishing to give Menexenus a rest and being made glad of his love of wisdom, turning quickly to Lysis and making my argument I said, “Lysis, **E** you seem to me to speak the truth that if we had been considering correctly, then we would not have wandered so. But, we should not go this way that we have turned down—for indeed that seems to me a difficult road. It seems to me necessary to go look at the words of the poets for they are to us just as fathers of wisdom and leaders. And perhaps, they express in no slight way in words **214** concerning friends and who they happen to be. But, they say the God himself makes them friends, leading them towards each other. And, somehow they say these things, as it seems to me, in the following way—

Always God leads the like to the like

And he makes him well known. Or, have you not met with these words? **B**

“Indeed I have,” he said.

“Therefore, you have also met with the writings of the wisest that say these very things, that the like is necessarily always a friend to the like? They are, I suppose, the ones that converse and write about nature and the whole.”

“You speak the truth,” he said.

“Then,” I said, “they speak well?”

“Perhaps,” he said.

“Perhaps half of it,” I said, “ or even perhaps all of it, but we do not understand. For it seems to me that the closer the useless lets the useless come C to him and even is in company with the useless, he becomes hated, for he does wrong. And perhaps it is not possible for wrong-doers and those who have wrong done to them to be friends. Is it not thus?”

“Surely,” he said.

“Therefore, half of what was said would not be true, especially if the useless are the same as each other.”

“You speak the truth.”

“But, it seems to me they mean that the good are similar to each other and are friends but the bad, just as it has been said about them, never are similar even themselves to themselves, but are both unstable and uncertain. And that which D is unlike itself and different, hardly would become similar or a friend to the other. Or, does it not seem to you thus?”

“Indeed,” he said.

“Accordingly, this is what is hinted at, as it seems to me, my companion, when they say the like are a friend to the like, as the good is a friend only to the

good alone, and the bad enter into true friendship not with the good and not even the bad. Does this seem correct to you?"

He nodded assent.

"Then, already, we have what friends are. For, the argument makes known to us that the good are." E

"Indeed, it seems entirely so," he said.

"And to me," I said. "And yet, I am annoyed at a little thing in it. Come now, by God, let us see what I really suspect. Is the like to the like a friend insofar as he is like and such a one is useful to such a one? Or, rather thus: can anything at all that is like anything at all be able to give aid or to do harm which it couldn't do itself to itself? Or, would one suffer anything which it couldn't **215** suffer itself? Indeed, how can they be beloved of each other, and not at all be a help to each other? How is it thus?"

"It isn't."

"And, how is that which is not beloved a friend?"

"In no way."

"Well then, on the one hand, the like is not a friend to the like; on the other hand, the good, insofar as they are good, not insofar as they are like, would be a friend to the good?"

"Perhaps."

"What? Would not the good, insofar as they are good, be nearly sufficient by himself?"

"Yes."

“And so, one who is sufficient is in need of nothing because of his sufficiency.”

“For how not?”

“And so, if he is not in need of anything, then neither would he hold **B** anything dear.”

“Not at all.”

“And so, if he did not hold anything dear, then he would not love anything.”

“Certainly not.”

“And, not loving, he is not a friend.”

“It doesn’t seem so.”

“How, really, in our view, will the good be friends to the good in the first place? Not longing for anything from each other—for they are sufficient for themselves even being by oneself—and so they are no use to each other? Indeed, in what way can they value each other highly?”

“None,” he said.

“And indeed, if they did not value each other highly, they would not be **C** friends.”

“It is true.”

“At any rate, consider, Lysis, in what way we have been led astray. Indeed, have we been deceived in the whole?”

“Exactly how?” he said.

“I heard someone say something at an earlier time, and I remember it exactly, that the like is most hostile to the like and the good is most hostile to the good. And, in particular, he brought forth Hesiod as a witness, saying that,

And potter holds a grudge against potter and bard against bard

And beggar against beggar

**D**

And indeed in all other cases, thus, he said it is necessary that the like are filled full of jealousy and eager rivalry and hatred mostly of each other but are filled with friendship for those who are unlike. For the poor man is compelled to be a friend to the rich man and the weak to the strong for the sake of their help, and the afflicted to the physician, and indeed in all cases the one who doesn't know loves and holds dear the one that knows. He kept proceeding with his argument even **E** more magnificently, saying that it is impossible in every case for like to be friends with the like, but it was the opposite of this. For that which is most opposite is most dear to that which is most opposite; each thing sets its heart upon its opposite, but not the like. For the dry of the moist as well as the cold of the hot and the bitter of the sweet and the sharp of the blunt and the empty of satiety and the filled of an emptying, and thus, the rest for the same reason. For the opposite is nourishment to its opposite and the like is of no benefit to the like. And indeed, dear companion, it seemed very clear for he spoke well.” **216**

“But, to you,” I said, “how does it seem he spoke?”

“Well indeed,” said Menexenus, “at least when heard like this.”

“Therefore, do we put forth that the opposite to the opposite are most dear?”

“Certainly.”

“Well!” I said, “Is that not strange, Menexenus? And, the all-knowing men, the ones skilled at arguing from contradictories, will gladly leap on us straight away and ask if hatred is the most opposite to friendship? How shall we **B** answer them? Or, is it not necessary to agree that they speak the truth?”

“It is necessary.”

“Then, they will say, the enemy to the friend is dear or the friend to the enemy?”

“Neither,” he said.

“But, is the just a friend to the unjust or the wise to the undisciplined or the good to the bad?”

“It doesn’t seem to me to be so.”

“But yet,” I said, “even if one is a friend to a friend because of being most opposite, necessarily they are friends.”

“Necessarily.”

“Therefore, neither the like is a friend to the like nor the opposite is a friend to the opposite.”

“It doesn’t seem so.”

“ Yet, we should look carefully at this, perhaps that which is truly a **C** friend escapes our notice even more, it being none of these things, but that which is neither the good nor the bad becomes a friend of the good in the end.”

“What do you mean?” he said.

“But, my God,” I said, “I don’t know, but I am dizzy myself because of the perplexity of the argument, and it may be the ancient saying that the beautiful is a friend. At any rate, it seems to be something soft, smooth and sleek and **D** being of such a kind it probably easily slips and slides by us. For I say the good is beautiful. And, do you not think so?”

“Indeed.”

“Therefore, I say, as a diviner, that which is neither good nor bad is a friend of both the beautiful and the good. Listen to what I say and divine. There seems to me, as it were, to be three certain kinds: the good and the bad and that which is neither good nor bad. Does it seem so to you?”

“Also to me,” he said.

“And neither the good to the good nor the bad to the bad nor the good to the bad are to be friends, just as the earlier argument allows none of these. **E** Indeed it is left, if anything is a friend to anything, that which is neither the good nor the bad is a friend of the good or of things of the same sort as itself. For surely it cannot become a friend to the bad.”

“True.”

“Furthermore, earlier we said the like is not a friend to the like. Is it so?”

“Yes.”

“Therefore, neither to the good nor to the bad is such a kind as this itself a friend.”

“It is clearly not.”

“Therefore, it happens that whatever is neither good nor bad becomes **217**  
a friend to the good—alone to it alone.”

“Necessarily, as it seems.”

“Then, children,” I said, “is what is being said now guiding us rightly? If  
we should have to examine the healthy body, it wants neither the medical arts nor  
health. For it is sufficient, so that no one is a friend to the physician because of  
their health. Is it so?”

“No one.”

“But, I think the sick because of the disease.”

“For how not?”

“Indeed, sickness is bad, and the medical art is useful and good.” **B**

“Yes.”

“But yet, the body, insofar as it is a body, is neither good nor bad.”

“Thus.”

“And so, the body is compelled by sickness to welcome and love the  
medical arts.”

“It seems to me.”

“Therefore, that which is neither bad nor good becomes a friend of the  
good because of the presence of the bad.”

“It seems so.”

“Indeed, it is evident that this is before it becomes bad itself because of the  
bad which it has. For indeed, when it has become bad, it would have no desire for

the good and it would not be a friend. For we said it was impossible for the bad C to be a friend to the good.”

“Yes, impossible.”

“Indeed, consider that which I say. For I say that, on the one hand, some things are of such a kind as themselves because of the sort of thing that is present in them, and, on the other hand, some are not. Just as if one might wish to anoint some matter with some color whatsoever, somehow it is present—that which has been plastered to that which has been anointed.”

“Certainly.”

“Then, surely, at that time, the plastered is of the same sort, with respect to color, as what is on it?”

“I don’t understand,” he said.

**D**

“But, thus,” I said, “If someone rubs your golden hair with white lead, at that time, is it white or is it appearing white?”

“Appearing,” he said.

“And certainly, whiteness is present itself.”

“Yes.”

“But all the same, it would not at all be any more white, but the presence of whiteness is not a white thing nor black one.”

“True.”

“But indeed whenever, friend, old age brings upon it this color itself, at that time it becomes even of such a kind as is present, white by the presence of white.”

“For how not?”

**E**

“Indeed, this is what I ask now: if something is present to something else is it of such a kind as what is present? Or, if it is present in a certain way, it will be, and if not, not?”

“Rather the latter”, he said.

“And therefore, what is neither bad nor good sometimes has the presence of bad but is not yet bad, but there are times when already it has become so.”

“Certainly.”

“Therefore, whenever it is not yet bad but has the presence of bad, the presence itself makes it desire the good. But, the presence of doing bad robs itself of the desire of the good at the same time also the friendship of the good. For **218** yet, it is not neither bad nor good, but bad. And, a friend to the good is not bad as we said.”

“For how not.”

“On account of these things, we might indeed say the already wise no longer love wisdom, whether they are gods or men. Again, none love wisdom being ignorant and thus are bad. For the bad and the ignorant in no way love wisdom. Indeed, they are left, the ones having this bad, ignorance, but not yet **B** by it becoming senseless and stupid, but yet aware that they do not know that which they don’t know. Indeed wherefore even up to this point the ones that are neither bad nor good love wisdom, but the great many bad do not love wisdom, nor do the good. For it appeared to us in the earlier argument that neither the

opposite of the opposite nor the like of the like is a friend. Or, do you not remember?"

"Certainly, it appeared so."

"Now, therefore," I said, "Lysis and Menexenus, most of all we have discovered that which is the friend and not. For we say, regarding the soul and C the body altogether, that which is neither bad nor good is a friend of the good on account of the presence of the bad."

They both consented and agreed completely that it was so.

And I myself rejoiced whole-heartedly, just like a hunter being contentedly in the possession of that which I had been hunting. But then, I don't know whence some strange suspicion came into me that the things we had agreed to were not true and being vexed I said directly, "Bless me! Lysis and Menexenus, it is a dream that we have been wealthy."

"Why?" said Menexenus.

**D**

"I'm afraid," I said, "just like men who are imposters, we have encountered this sort of thing in arguments concerning the friend."

"Indeed, how?" he said.

"Let us look at this," I said, "that which would be a friend, is he a friend to someone or not?"

"Necessarily," he said.

"Then, is it for the purpose of nothing and because of nothing or is it for the purpose of something and because of something?"

"For the purpose of something and because of something."

“The thing, for the purpose of which a friend is a friend to the friend, is a friend or neither a friend nor enemy?”

“I don’t follow very well,” he said.

“That’s very likely indeed,” I said, “but perhaps you will follow, and I suppose I will know better that which I mean. The sick, we were just saying, is a friend of the physician. Is it not thus?”

“Yes.”

“Therefore because of illness and for the purpose of health he is a friend of the medical arts?”

“Yes.”

“And indeed the illness is a bad?”

“How not?”

“And what of health?” I said, “good or bad or neither?”

“Good,” he said.

**219**

“We said, then, as I thought, that the body, being neither good nor bad, because of illness, that is a bad, is a friend of the medical arts, and the medical arts is good. And, for the purpose of health, the medical arts have acquired the friendship, and the health is a good, or is it not?”

“Yes.”

“And, is health a friend or not a friend?”

“A friend.”

“And illness an enemy.”

“Certainly.”

“Therefore, what is neither bad nor good because of the bad and the enemy is a friend of the good for the purpose of the good friend. **B**

“It seems so.”

“Therefore, it is for the purpose of the friend of the friend the friend is a friend because of the enemy.”

“It seems so.”

“Well,” I said. Since we have come here, boys, let us turn our minds to it, let us not be deceived. For that which is a friend of the friend has become a friend--I let this go by --and indeed the like to the like became a friend, which we said to be impossible. But, all the same, let us consider this, so that what is now being said does not deceive us. The medical art is a friend, we said, for the purpose of health.” **C**

“Yes.”

“Therefore even health is a friend?”

“Certainly.”

“Therefore, if it is a friend, it is for some purpose.”

“Yes.”

“Indeed, that thing is a friend, if it is going to follow what we agreed to earlier.”

“Certainly.”

“Therefore again, it will be a friend for the purpose of a friend?”

“Yes.”

“Then, isn’t it necessary for us to give up going this way or to come to some beginning principle, which will no longer lead on to some other friend, but will come to that which is the first friend, and for the purpose of which we say **D** all the other friends are friends?”

“It is necessary.”

“At least this is what I mean: all the other things which we said are friends for the purpose of that thing, just as they are like phantoms of it and deceive us, and it is for the purpose of that first thing, which is truly a friend. For let us consider thus: whenever one makes much of something, for example, sometimes a father prefers his son over all of his other possessions. Indeed, would one of this sort make much of some other one of his many possessions for the purpose of his son above all? If he perceives his son had drunk hemlock, then he would **E** make much of wine, if he perceived this to save his son?

"Indeed," he said.

"Therefore even the vessel in which the wine was placed?"

"Certainly."

"Then, at that time, does he value equally a earthen drinking cup or his own son or three cups of wine or his son? Or, I suppose it is thus: all the earnestness such as this is not directed at the things which are prepared for the purpose of other things, but directed to that for which all the other things are **220** prepared. Not that we don't often speak of making much of gold and silver. But it is none the more the truth, but that is what we make of everything, whatever it

clearly is, that for the purpose of which gold and all the other preparations are prepared. Shall we speak thus?"

"Certainly."

"Therefore, it is the same argument concerning the friend? For, as far as we say a friend is for the purpose of the other friend, in an expression we **B** clearly say the word. But, it may be the friend is itself that in which all the other things called friendships end."

"It does seem to be so."

"Therefore, indeed the friend is not a friend for the purpose of a friend?"

"Truly."

"Indeed, this has been dismissed: one who is a friend is not a friend for the purpose of a friend. But, then, is the good a friend?"

"Indeed, it seems to me so."

"Then, the good is loved because of the bad, and it is thus: if, of the three things which we just now said--of the good and of the bad and the neither good **C** nor bad--the two were left, and the bad is out of the way and no one should lay hold of either the body or soul or other things, which indeed we say, themselves in themselves, are neither bad nor good. At that time, would the good be of no use to us, but would it have become useless? For if nothing could still harm us, we **D** would have need of no help at all, and thus indeed at that time it would become clear that because of the bad we loved and held dear the good, like the good is a drug for the bad and the bad is a disease. And, if there is no illness, the drug is

not necessary. Thus, the good by nature is loved by us, the ones between good and bad, because of the bad, and itself for the purpose of itself has no use?"

"Indeed," he said, "it is thus."

"Therefore, that friend to us, into which all others end—we said those who were the friends for the purpose of another friend—is not like them. For, they **E** have been called friends for the purpose of a friend, but the nature of a friend appears to be completely opposite to this. For, it has been shown to be a friend to us for the purpose of an enemy, and if that which is an enemy would go away, no longer, as it seems, would it be a friend to us."

"It doesn't seem to me," he said, "as it was just now said."

"By God," I said, "If the bad is left behind, will there yet no longer be **221** hunger or thirst or other things of this kind? Or, will there be hunger, if there are both men and other animals, but indeed it will not be harmful? Even thirst, and the other desires will be but won't be bad, which has perished? Or, is it a ridiculous question, what will be or will not be at that time? For how does it seem? But, then at least we know this: now it is possible for one who is hungering to be harmed, and it is possible for him to be benefited. Is it so?"

"Certainly."

"Therefore even one who is thirsting and desiring other things of this **B** sort is sometimes to desire beneficially, sometimes harmfully, and sometimes neither of these ways?"

"Very much indeed."

"Therefore, if the bad things are being destroyed, how does it benefit that which doesn't happen to be bad, to be destroyed along with the bad?"

"Not at all."

"Therefore, the desires that are neither good nor bad will exist even if the things which are bad are destroyed."

"Clearly."

"Therefore, it is possible for one who desires and loves, not to love that which he desires and loves?"

"It doesn't seem so to me."

"Therefore, there will be some things that are friends, as it seems, even with the bad being destroyed."

"Yes."

**C**

"If indeed the bad was the cause of something being a friend, then, this being destroyed, one could not be a friend to another. It would be impossible for the cause itself of something to be destroyed, yet somewhere that thing is."

"You speak correctly."

"Therefore, we have agreed that what is a friend loves because of something. And indeed we agreed, now and then, that because of the bad the neither good nor bad loves the good?"

"That is true."

"Now then, as it seems, it appears there is some other cause of loving and being loved." **D**

"It seems so."

"Then, as we just now said, Is the desire the cause of friendship and the thing which desires is a friend to that which he desires and whenever he desires or is that which we just said to be a friend some nonsense just like a long poem?"

"Possibly," he said.

"But at any rate," I said, "the one who desires surely desires that which he is in need of. Is it so?"

"Yes."

**E**

"Therefore, that which is in need is a friend of that which it is in need?"

"It seems to me."

"And it becomes in need of what it is deprived of?"

"How not?"

"Indeed, as it seems, it happens that love, friendship, and desire are for what is one's own, this is clear, Menexenus and Lysis."

They both agreed.

"Then, if you are friends to each other, in some way you naturally belong to each other."

"Exactly," they said.

"And, boys, if one desires or loves another," I said, "he would not desire nor love nor hold dear, if in some way it didn't happen to belong to the beloved either in soul or some character of the soul or kind or aspect of it?"

"Certainly," said Menexenus, but Lysis was silent.

"Well!" I said. "Indeed, it has become clear that we must love what naturally belongs to us."

“It seems so,” he said.

“Therefore, it is necessary for the genuine lover and not the pretend lover to be loved by his darling.”

Then Lysis and Menexenus in some way nodded assent with difficulty, **B** but Hippothales was giving off all sorts of colors because of his pleasure.

And I said, wishing to examine the argument, “If there is a difference between kinship and the like, we might be saying something, as it seems to me, Lysis and Menexenus, concerning what a friend is. And, if it happens that the kin and the like are the same, it is not easy to reject the previous argument, that the like to the like in regards to the likeness is useless. And, to agree that a friend is useless is discordant.

“Do you wish then,” I said, “since we are drunk with the argument, to **C** agree and put forth that kin is different from the like?”

“Certainly.”

“Then, shall we assume the good to be kin to everyone, but the bad is alien? Or, the bad is kin to the bad, and the good to the good and the neither good nor bad to the neither good nor bad?”

They agreed thus: it seemed to them that each one is kin to its kind.

“Therefore again,” I said, “boys, we have fallen into the first argument **D** we rejected concerning friendship. For the unjust to the unjust and the bad to the bad will be no less a friend than the good to the good.”

“It seems so,” he said.

“And this? If we assert that the good and the kin are the same, is it anything other than the good being a friend only to the good?”

“Certainly it is so.”

“But already we supposed we refuted ourselves on this. Or, do you not remember?”

“We remember.”

“Then, what can we still do with the argument? Or, is it clear that there **E** is nothing to do? I wish, then, just as the wise in a court of law, to review everything that has been said. For if neither the beloved nor the lovers nor the like nor the unlike nor the good nor the kin nor the other things we have gone through—for indeed I don’t even remember all of them because there are so many—but if none of them is a friend, I have nothing else to say.”

And, having said that, I already had in mind to disturb one of the older **223** boys. And then, just like some spirits, the tutors of Menexenus and Lysis approached with their brothers, and they called and summoned them to return home, for it was already late. At first, we and the ones standing around tried to drive them away, but indeed they thought nothing of us, but were irritated and, with a slight accent, called none the less. But it seemed to us they had been **B** drinking too much at the Hermaea and were impossible to handle. So, we put an end to the conversation. Nevertheless just as they were leaving I said, “Now, Lysis and Menexenus, we have become ridiculous, especially me, an old man, and you. For these people will go away saying that we think that we are friends to

each other—for I put myself with you—but we have not yet been able to find out what a friend is.

Chapter Two: A Philosophical Commentary on the *Lysis*

Plato scholars have not always appreciated the *Lysis*. In his *A History of Ancient Greek Philosophy*, W.K.C. Guthrie called the dialogue “not a success”, says that “even Plato can nod,” and reports that F. M. Cornford described it as “an obscure and fumbling essay” (Guthrie 143). A careful look at the dialogue, however, reveals a logical and subtle structure. In this commentary I have divided the dialogue into ten sections: The Prologue (203a-204e), Pederasty and Encomium (205a-206d), Parental Love (206e-210e), Love and Friendship (211a-213d), Similarity (213e-215c), Opposition (215d-216c), The Good, The Bad and The Neither Good-Nor-Bad (216c-219c), The Proton Philon (219d-221e), Kinship (221e-222e) and Conclusion (223a-223b).

The Prologue introduces us to the characters and setting of the dialogue, which prepares us for thinking about Socrates’s involvement with some of the fine youth of Athens on a festival day at a paleastra. It is not a surprise for Socrates to find one of these youths, Hippothales, infatuated with one of the younger boys at the paleastra and the dialogue moves to a brief discussion of how to seduce a boy and a demonstration by Socrates of how a seducer is better off downplaying the boy’s beauty and social status rather than building him up. From the introduction we have moved to a discussion of one of the important kinds of

relationships in ancient Athens that is founded on reciprocity. In making Lysis see his powerlessness Socrates examines the relationship between a boy and his parents and, in so doing, introduces a second kind of relationship that is also based on reciprocity. In the next section of the dialogue Socrates begins to examine the logic of love and friendship to try to determine how these two things relate to one another. So, having introduced us to two kinds of relationships based, at least in part, on reciprocity, Plato looks at the logic of two concepts that seem *prima facie* based on reciprocity, love and friendship. If we can get a handle on the how, for example, *loving Lysis* relates to *being a friend of Lysis*, we may shed light on the nature of the relationships that have been introduced already. Having now introduced the subject of the dialogue both with examples and in theory, Plato considers two possible foundations for these relationships that are found in previous Greek authors: similarity and opposition. In each of these sections of the dialogue Socrates and the boys find theoretical difficulties with explaining just how these common suggestions for the foundation of friendship can account for friendship. In the next section Plato introduces a distinction that may help solve the problem; those who think similarity or opposition can serve as a foundation for friendship have made the mistake of thinking things are either good or bad, but Plato introduces the idea that things can be good, bad or neither good-nor-bad. He goes on to offer an expanded argument about similarity and opposition based on this trichotomy with the result that friendship may be seen as the kind of relationship that the neither good-nor-bad wish to have with the good.

In this analysis reciprocity seems to not be present in the relationship because the neither good-nor-bad seems to offer little to the good, which is seen as self-sufficient. The next part of the dialogue investigates a theoretical problem with this analysis: it seems to entail an infinite regress unless there is some thing for which all friends are friends. This results in the conclusion that true friendship is what the neither good nor bad has for the good, where the good is not a particular good thing, but good simpliciter. But, this leaves a practical problem for Plato: if this suggestion is correct, then we are wrong when we say, for example, that Menexenus and Lysis are friends because Menexenus and Lysis are both neither good-nor-bad. So, if it is correct that friendship is what those beings that are neither good nor bad have for the good, then we need a second analysis of friendship that explains what we mean when we talk about two boys being friends. As an answer to this question Plato raises the notion of kinship, the idea of belonging to one another, and notes that if this solution is to work we must be able to distinguish kinship from similarity or we will be moving in circles. Before this problem can be addressed the boys are taken from Socrates, but not without Socrates's pointing out that, whatever our solution to this problem, what Socrates and the boys have done here is as close to true friendship as limited beings can achieve. In introducing kinship as a possible foundation for friendship Plato re-introduces the idea of reciprocity and it now seems that friendship with the good is not based on reciprocity, but what we usually call friendship, such as may be found between the boys and Socrates, is a reciprocal relationship.

The dialogue moves from the introduction of a topic, practical examples of that topic, a review of culturally accepted explanations of the topic and their deficiencies, the introduction of a solution to the problems unaddressed by the accepted explanations, further development of the solution, the introduction of a problem engendered by the new solution and an introduction of a possible way to solve the problem, and a conclusion with a reminder of the practicality of friendship. The argumentative strategy is to set up a problem, review received views, introduce a new solution, and leave the audience with a new problem with which to grapple.

#### **I. 203a—204e: The Prologue of the *Lysis***

The dialogue is narrated by Socrates and opens with him making his way from the Academy to the Lyceum when he chances upon Hippothales, Ctesippus and some other boys at the Panops Spring. Socrates is traveling outside but along the city wall, which is just like what Phaedrus suggests he is on his way to do at the beginning of *Phaedrus*. Phaedrus states that Acumenus, a doctor, has suggested that walks along country roads are more refreshing than city streets and, perhaps, Socrates is here following similar advice.<sup>1</sup> Hippothales makes his only appearance in the Platonic corpus in this dialogue while Ctesippus also appears with a speaking role in the *Euthydemus* and is reported present in the *Phaedo* (59b). He is the cousin of Menexenus<sup>2</sup>, who appears later in this dialogue as the good friend of Lysis and has a dialogue named after him. Dramatically,

the *Lysis* predates the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo*. In the opening passage here Ctesippus chides Hippothales for fawning over Lysis and tells Socrates that Hippothales tortures their friends with his continuous praise of Lysis. It is this admission by Ctesippus that gets Socrates to question Hippothales about his beloved and moves the dialogue to its first argument concerning encomium.

Ctesippus' annoyance at Hippothales infatuation with Lysis is in contrast with Ctesippus' own infatuation with Clinias in the *Euthydemus*. In that dialogue, Ctesippus, who in *Lysis* tends to dismiss Hippothales' infatuation with Lysis as ridiculous, seems just as taken with Clinias as Hippothales is with Lysis. Clinias, like Lysis, is described as physically beautiful. Nails (2002) puts the *Euthydemus* at a slightly later narrative date, so one might assume that Ctesippus in the *Lysis* is still too young to appreciate Hippothales's longings. A better interpretation is that it is part of an example of Plato's literary mastery as Ctesippus's character actually remains consistent in both dialogues. In the *Lysis* he seems brash and headstrong, as when he interrupts Hippothales in the initial discussion about Lysis, and that same brashness can be seen in the *Euthydemus* at 284e where Ctesippus rushes to defend Clinias's honor and gets caught up in Euthydemus's rhetorical tricks. At 285a Ctesippus's headstrong character almost has him come to blows with Dionysodorus and at 288b he straightforwardly insults the two visiting sophists. Thus, Ctesippus's dismissal of Hippothales's infatuation has more to do with Ctesippus's not suffering fools gladly—whether because of infatuation or sophistic rhetoric—than with his not appreciating erotic feelings.

It is no accident that Plato has Ctesippus appear in both the *Lysis* and *Euthydemus*. There is a thread of argumentation running through the *Lysis*, *Euthydemus* and *Menexenus* and a clue to these connections is the repetition of characters with Ctesippus appearing in *Lysis* and *Euthydemus* and Menexenus appearing in *Lysis* and *Menexenus*. The first philosophical argument in *Lysis* will discuss the use of encomium in attracting a lover and *Menexenus* examines the use of praise in funeral orations, which is a kind of encomium for the city's populace taken as a whole. *Euthydemus* examines and criticizes popular rhetorical strategies. Taken together, then, the three dialogues present a series of criticism of rhetoric and show philosophy's superiority.

When Socrates first meets the boys he asks what they are doing and they explain they are attending a new paleastra under the tutelage of Mikkos, who turns out to be a friend and admirer of Socrates. Not much is known about Mikkos (Nails 206), so it is impossible to tell if the mention of Mikkos here is intended to be a nod toward his skill as a teacher or, perhaps, a bit of criticism of him. On the one hand, he is called an “ἑταῖρος” of Socrates, which suggests a closeness to Socrates and his teachings. So, perhaps, having the dialogue take place at his paleastra is intended to honor him. On the other hand, Socrates is about to enter the palaestra and quietly take over as the teacher. This might indicate that Mikkos was not very good and that his pupils needed a skilled teacher like Socrates to complete their education. The boys encouragement of Socrates to join them in the paleastra would immediately tell Plato's intended

audience that the dialogue was happening on a festival day and would quite possibly tell them specifically that it was the Hermaea. In general, only the students and their teachers were allowed inside the palaestra with high penalties imposed on trespassers. In his study of Greek athletics Miller writes, “we hear in fourth-century Athens schoolrooms opened only after sunrise and closed before sunset, and no older person was allowed in the schoolrooms with the paides except the didaskalos and his immediate relatives. Entering a classroom illegally was punishable by death.” (Miller 189)

Socrates tells the boys that he wants to know who the beautiful one is at the palaestra before he will enter and join them and, when Hippothales tells him there is disagreement about that, he asks Hippothales who he thinks the beautiful one is. Hippothales blushes, which causes Socrates to explain that he has a god-given gift when it comes to love that allows him to know lover and beloved. Hippothales blushes again and Ctesippus, along with complaining about Hippothales, lets Socrates know Hippothales’ beloved is Lysis, the eldest son of Aixone.

Socrates’ claim here to be an expert in love may be borne out by the speeches he gives about love in the *Phaedrus* despite his claim that Phaedrus must be behind the speeches. Socrates’ denial of responsibility for the speeches is in keeping with his style in other dialogues where he gives his interlocutors credit for arguments he himself has made. In the first speech in *Phaedrus* (238e – 242a) he paints a negative picture of the lover as someone like Hippothales who seeks

the favors of a boy. In that speech he says that a lover will want to hold possession of the boy and so will thwart the boy's attempts to become better since, once he is better, he will no longer need the lover. In the later speech (256a – 257a) Socrates reveals that if the lover and his beloved embrace philosophy, their friendship will be good and the lover will not hinder the boy's progress. If the lover and beloved fail to embrace philosophy, however, they will not follow reason and give into passion. These two examinations of the lover, one jealous and possessive and the other philosophical and pedagogical, correspond in the *Lysis* to Hippothales and Socrates.

The prologue is free from philosophical argumentation, but that does not mean it is free of philosophical import. It gives us two kinds of information that are important to the philosophical content of the dialogue. First, we are given the setting of the dialogue: a newly built palaestra, run by an admirer of Socrates, on the festival day of the Hermaea. A palaestra was a school for the future citizens of Athens where they were educated intellectually and physically. The setting of the dialogue here tells us that the issues that will be addressed are important not only for the intellectual development of the participants, but the city itself.<sup>3</sup> The boys who are educated at the palestra are future citizens and so future leaders of Athens. By setting the dialogue here Plato indicates that the issues to be discussed are not only important for the education of the individual but for the future stability of the state. Plato's assessment that the good of the individual is commensurate with the good of the state can be seen in the *Republic* at 368e

where Socrates offers an analogy between justice in the city and justice in a man saying that the city is larger than a man and so justice may be more easily observed in it. His suggestion is that he and his interlocutors investigate it in the city first because of this and then return to look at the individual. At 435a-c, when Socrates is about to start examining the tripartite nature of the soul, he explains that the reason for considering such a structure for the soul is that they have just seen how the state should be divided and, based on the earlier analogy, man must be similar. At 435b Plato writes, “Then a man won’t differ at all from a just city in respect to the form of justice; rather he’ll be like the city” and at 441d, “And isn’t the individual courageous in the same way and in the same part of himself as the city? And isn’t everything else that has to do with virtue the same in both?”<sup>4</sup>

Plato presents the idea that the individual and the state partake in the same virtues and so aim at the same good, so there should be no distinction between what is good for the state and what is good for the individual.<sup>5</sup> Socrates here may be furthering that position by educating boys like Hippothales and Lysis that are likely one day to play a role in guiding the state. Educating them is a way to educate the state so, perhaps, Athens in the future will be better. That Socrates, who is not a teacher by profession but avocation, must conduct this education indicates that this is a missing part of the education regularly offered by the paleastra to future citizens. The theme and importance of education is evidenced in Socrates’ stated travel—from the Academy (one gymnasium) to the Lyceum

(another gymnasium) and stopping at a palaestra certainly brings the importance of education for the discussion into focus. As in other dialogues, the setting in which philosophy will take place highlights the practical importance of philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Here, the setting indicates that the discussions in the *Lysis* are relevant for politics and the role of citizenship in the state.

Haden (1983) points out that it probably no accident that the festival day in the dialogue is the day to celebrates Hermes. Hermes is the guardian of wayfarers, which seems an apt description of Socrates given his walk outside the city. Hermes' appearance is that of a fine youth, such as Socrates will converse with in the dialogue, and, as father of Pan, he is intimately connected to sexuality, which plays an important role in the first argument of the *Lysis*.<sup>7</sup>

The setting also draws connections to the legal charges faced by Socrates that lead to his death. The charges were three: not acknowledging the gods of the city, introducing new divinities, and corrupting the youth of the city. *Lysis* provides an explanation for why Socrates is seen to corrupt the youth and, if we read it with this charge in mind, it is not hard to see why the average Athenian might believe the charge true. Socrates, an older man, enters the palaestra on the only day of the year it is allowed and proceeds to conduct discussions and arguments that seem to show that parents don't love their children or, if they do, we don't know why and seems to claim that we don't know what friendship is. Also, by talking with this group of boys, he has taken the boys away from the religious festivities of the day, which could be seen as an act of impiety. To the

philosopher, all of these things may appear within reason; to the average citizen, it looks like corruption of the youth that aims to alienate them from Athenian society and religion.

The prologue also introduces us to the kinds of relationships that the dialogue will investigate. We are introduced to three kinds of relationships here: older man to older teenagers (Socrates to Hippothales and Ctesippus), older teenager to older teenager (Hippothales and Ctesippus), and older teenager to younger teenager (Hippothales to the yet-to-appear Lysis). A fourth kind of relationship, an older man with younger teenager is introduced later when Socrates converses with Lysis. This allows us to see how power and reciprocity can play out among different classes of people. Socrates relationship to the boys is not yet developed here, but with Ctesippus' outburst about Hippothales praise of Lysis we see the kind of banter expected between close friends. Ctesippus description of Hippothales tells us about the kind of lovesick activities that is usual of infatuated teenagers. It is important to notice the relations these relationships have to equality and power. The relationship between Hippothales and Ctesippus, like-aged teenagers who consider themselves friends already, is a relationship of equals. The other kinds of relationships described here all involve an inequality such that one member of the relationship has power over the other. We can define a general notion of "power" in the following way: "A has power over B" means that A has the ability to make B do as A wishes.

The power here is both intellectual and physical. The physical power comes from the older member being able to physically force the younger member to their will. In the case of this physical power it is likely that the younger boys are necessarily subservient: their physical size precludes them from reversing the relationship. As we'll see in the discussion of pederasty, although there is this physical power, Athenians prefer wielding power intellectually: Hippothales wants to seduce Lysis, not rape him. The use of this intellectual power results in a kind of reciprocity: the young submit to the relationship in exchange for education and gifts. The intellectual power comes from the older member not only being able to educate the younger, as Socrates tries, but also being able to influence the younger with poetry, as Hippothales tries with Lysis. Seduction by poetry will not pass the test for an appropriate relationship as Socrates lays out in *Phaedrus* because poetry, unlike philosophy, does not lead to a life based on reason but one on passion. As we will see, the younger member of the pair need not be coerced into accepting the subservient role: the boys willfully submit to Socrates's questioning even when he gets the better of them. Socrates, in this regard, is much more successful than Hippothales has been with poetry: Hippothales has yet to acquire Lysis as his darling with poetry, but Socrates subdues him with philosophy quite easily. The relationship that develops between Socrates and Lysis (who is explicitly shown to have an unusual proclivity for philosophy at least three times in the dialogue) is an example of the proper relationship defined in the *Phaedrus* at 256a: "if the victory goes to the better elements in both their

minds, which lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy, their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding.” Unlike with physical power, this intellectual power is not necessarily irreversible: the young may become more clever than their older partner. At least some of this seems to happen throughout the dialogue as Lysis becomes more bold with his responses to Socrates’ philosophic questioning. In this case the young boy, becoming a lover of wisdom, becomes bold and sure-footed; his hopeful lover, relying on poetry, is forced to continue hiding behind others unable to compete with the truth.

Plato opens the dialogue by preparing us for what is to follow: we will see the education of future citizens by Socrates in matters of love and friendship that will bring them closer to philosophical enlightenment. An understanding of love and friendship is crucial not only for successful relations between citizens but also for understanding the relation that should exist between the citizen and the city.

## **II. 205a—206d: Pederasty and Encomium**

Socrates compliments Hippothales on finding such a noble and youthful love in Lysis and asks Hippothales to tell him what kinds of things he says about his lover both to the lover himself and to others. Before Hippothales can respond, Ctesippus chimes in to say that Hippothales is so lovesick that he babbles and makes up poems about Lysis. Socrates explains that he does not care to hear the poems themselves but rather the intention with which Hippothales makes the poems. Thus, Socrates’ interest is not in the aesthetic qualities of the poems but

rather the reason why Hippothales makes them at all. Socrates is interested in the motivation for making love poems, but not the poems themselves. Socrates dismisses the poems to force our examination of the intentions behind the poems. Plato's dismissal of poetry here is because love poems are used to influence the beloved and not necessarily to reveal the truth. Socrates needs to know Hippothales' intentions to know what is leading him to write the poems. If Hippothales truly loves and understands it, he will be able to explain love so that he and Socrates can examine friendship. If he can't explain love, Socrates will have a discussion partner with whom to search for the nature of friendship.

Socrates' dismissal of Hippothales's poetry in favor of his intentions is consistent with Plato's attack on poetry in *The Republic*.<sup>8</sup> In book X Plato mentions an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry (607b) and goes on to argue that poetry must be banned from the ideal city because it brings about injustice in the soul. At 606d Plato writes:

And in the case of sex, anger, and all the desires, pleasures and pains that we say accompany all our actions, poetic imitation has the very same effect on us. It nurtures and waters them and establishes them as rulers in us when they ought to wither and be ruled, for that way we'll become better and happier rather than worse and more wretched.<sup>9</sup>

Poetry, like the other arts, relies on mimesis, or representation, to deliver its message and it appeals to the lower part of our soul, our passions, and not reason.

The poetry Plato deals with in *The Republic* is mythic and social, such as Homer, Hesiod and the dramatists, but Hippothales's poetry is personal love poetry.

Socrates dismissal of Hippothales's poetry suggests that personal love poetry has the same problems as that of Homer and Hesiod. Hippothales's love poetry is a representation of his intentions that appeals to the reader's or listener's passions.

In asking for his intentions Socrates wants to address the true nature of

Hippothales's infatuation so that it can be analyzed directly with reason.

*Phaedrus* 252d-252e gives us some hint as to what we might expect Hippothales to find attractive in Lysis; there Socrates says, "Everyone chooses his love after his own fashion from among those who are beautiful, and then treats the boy like his very own god, building him up and adorning him as an image to honor and worship."<sup>10</sup> Socrates comments in the *Phaedrus* also tell us the responsibilities of someone like Hippothales, longing for his beloved, "So they make sure he has a talent for philosophy and the guidance of others, and once they have found him and are in love with him they do everything to develop that talent."<sup>11</sup> Hippothales fails in the *Lysis* to engage Lysis this way by hiding from the philosophical discussion not even wanting to be seen by Lysis. It is Socrates that fulfills this role for Lysis. These ideas are also present in the *Symposium* at 209b where Socrates, talking about someone who has reached the appropriate age:

he too will certainly go about seeking the beauty in which he would beget; for he will never beget in anything ugly . . . he is much more drawn to bodies that are beautiful than to those that are

ugly; and if he also has the luck to find a soul that is beautiful and noble and well-formed, he is even more drawn to this combination; such a man makes him instantly teem with ideas and the customary activities in which he should engage; and so he tries to educate him.<sup>12</sup>

When we meet Lysis we will see that he meets Socrates' requirements of beauty, nobility and being well-formed. Socrates' interactions with Lysis aim to educate him, so there may be some question as to whether Socrates is stealing Lysis from Hippothales for himself. As we'll see, Socrates is able to engage the boy with philosophy, but Hippothales stands mute and our only indication of his state is toward the end of the dialogue when he blushes upon Socrates success. Socrates throughout the *Lysis* is the proper lover while Hippothales fails in distinguishing himself to Lysis.

The kind of relationship that Hippothales hopes to foster with Lysis is common among his contemporary Athenians, foreign to modern readers, and difficult for modern commentators to explicate. In "Two Views of Greek Love: Harald Patzer and Michel Foucault," Daniel Halperin identifies five theses that form a good starting point for discussing these relationships. The theses, derived from Patzer, are:

(II.1). The relationships involve sex between adult men and boys between twelve and eighteen years old.

(II.2). The relationships terminate by the time the younger member reaches adulthood.

(II.3). The relationships are not based on an inclination by either member to avoid sexual relations with women.

(II.4). Intercrural copulation with the boy playing the passive role is the only honorable sex act between the man and boy.

(II.5). The younger member is not expected to enjoy the sex act, but submit to it out of gratitude and affection.

Reflection on the *Lysis* shows that (II.1) is likely false as both Hippothales and Lysis are under eighteen, but Hippothales is still obviously older and the relationship retains the dynamic of an older and younger partner. Part of the social dynamic changes, however, if, as in this case, both members of the relationship are non-citizens. Hippothales cannot educate Lysis in matters of state if he himself is not yet a citizen. The theses point to a very specific kind of relationship based on an imbalance of power: the older man instigates the relationship and enjoys the sex acts. And, as (II.2) and (II.3) suggest, the relationship is not entirely based on devotion to the young boy but only on devotion to him while he is a boy; manhood breaks any ties that had been formed. This suggests that there is some reason for the erotic attraction that Athenian citizens have to young boys that is lost by the time they get to manhood. I offer an explanation for this below.

The difficulty in understanding these relationships arises, in part, because explicating the relationship requires taking a stand on a contested issue in classical studies about homosexual behavior in ancient Greece. Taking that stand requires taking a stand on the nature of sexuality: are a person's sexual inclinations merely biological (let's call this essentialism) or, in part, determined by cultural conditions (hereafter, constructionism)?<sup>13</sup> Most essentialist writers on this question seem to assume also that the kind of object of erotic interest for a person is either male or female and that the kind of object is fixed. Thus, one desires men or women, but not both, and one's erotic interest is always of the same kind. If these assumptions are correct and essentialism is true, then the explanation for pederastic behavior in Greece has to account for why grown men, who are married and carry out sexual acts with their wives and other women, also engage in sex acts with teenage boys. Some essentialist explanations tend to place these sex acts outside the sphere of the erotic and subjugate them to vestigial ritualistic behavior. If the constructionist is correct, then the task remains to explain the role these relationships had in ancient Greece and explain historically how such relationships arose.

The constructionist better explains the nature of sexuality and offers a better way to understand Greek pederastic behavior as can be seen by reflecting on a serious problem faced by essentialism that is developed in detail in Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*. I will then develop a constructionist position that argues there is a strong connection for the Greeks

between eroticism and politics. A difficult task for essentialism is to explain why essentialism seems consistent with 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Western social practices, but anthropological studies indicate there is a wide variety in sexual practices in communities outside of the West that seem incompatible with essentialism. Thus, essentialism itself seems to be constructed out of contemporary social standards. Beyond this difficulty, it is hard to read Greek authors like Plato (with mentions of Socrates' excitement at catching glimpses of open cloaks) and to view Greek art (such as is chronicled in Dover's *Greek Homosexuality*) and maintain that the pederastic relationships are not erotic and merely ritualistic. What seems a more conservative thesis is simply that the Greeks' understanding of eroticism was wider than our own. I think this wider eroticism can be seen in two ways. First, it is wider in the sense that the acceptable objects of erotic desire in ancient Greece for adult male citizens include both boys and women.<sup>14</sup> Second, it is wider in the sense that what is erotic about the young boys is not simply their physical beauty but what we might think of as their moral beauty. Lysis is desirable not simply because he is physically beautiful but because he comes from the right family and can become a good citizen.

My suggestion is that eroticism for Greek men includes a political element: eros is bound to the nature of citizenship for the Athenians. The idea that eroticism is connected to politics can be seen in the analogy made in Pericles' funeral oration in which he likens the citizen to state relationship as that of erastes to eromenos; he tells the citizens "to gaze, day after day, upon the power of the

city and become her lovers.”<sup>15</sup> Monoson (1994) investigates Pericles’s metaphor in part because there seems to be some tension in the metaphor since it likens the state to the eromenos. The eromenos is the passive partner in the erotic relationship and likening Athens to a passive partner would not stand well in a speech designed to foster civic pride. Monoson argues that what we must remember is that while the eromenos is passive it is the duty of the erastes to make the eromenos a better citizen. The sexual relationship of the erastes/eromenos relationship is set within a broader relationship that has the erastes responsible for bringing about better citizens.<sup>16</sup> The use in the funeral oration thus has the force of saying that the citizens are responsible for bringing about a better state. It also has the effect of making the citizens the primary source of power with the state itself subordinate to them.

The metaphor in the funeral oration is not conclusive proof of an intimate connection between eroticism and citizenship, but it does show a willingness to connect the erotic with the political. The real evidence for connecting the erotic with the political for male Athenians is the fact that the erastes/eromenos relationship is based on reciprocity in which the older man is obligated to make the boy a better citizen and, in admiration or thanks for such instruction, the boy submits to prescribed forms of sex. The fact that these relationships end when the boy reaches the age of citizenship also indicates that there is a social dimension to the relationship and that it is not simply a sexual relationship based on physical attraction. In the *Lysis* this can be seen at 207a where, upon seeing Lysis,

Socrates remarks that Lysis's "beauty was not the only thing worth hearing about" but that he was also "beautiful and good."

It is also not hard to see how this wider notion of eroticism fits in with Plato's philosophical outlook. The evidence provided above from the *Republic* concerning the relation between the state and its citizens shows that the good for an individual is good for the state. Thus, the erotic relationship discussed here is good *for* the erastes *and* the eromenos only if it is also good for the state. The erotic is tied to the political for Plato because his search is for what makes man good so the appropriateness of the erotic relationship is determined by how it brings about the good and it does that by having the erastes educate the eromenos as a constitutive part of the relationship. This seems to be the claim Socrates ends with in the second speech in the *Phaedrus*, namely, that the educative nature of the relationship and embracing philosophy leads to the good.

Ctesippus reports that Hippothales makes poems not only about Lysis's immediate family, such as his father's and grandfather's success at the Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean games both in four-horse and single-horse chariot races, but also about the ancient, mythical connections between Lysis's family and Heracles. Lysis's family began from a union between Heracles and the daughter of Lysis's deme's founder. These are not insignificant things for Hippothales to relate to his audience since the Greeks took athletic competition and success seriously and worthy of great praise. Miller (2004) chronicles several of the ways in which we can see the importance of athletics for Greek culture. First, if we

consider the history of Greek sculpture throughout the fifth century we see a progression towards more realistic portrayal of the human body engaged in athletic endeavors, such as the Diskobolos of Myron. In literature we have several examples of poems written in praise of athletes and their feats and athletic metaphors appear in both the dramatists and throughout Plato. Philosophically, the most interesting example of the importance of athletics appears in the concept of aretê. Aretê combines excellence in mind and body; as Miller writes,

Mind, body and soul must all be engaged, must all be conditioned to lead a life filled with aretê. Athletics must be present, but not dominant, in the whole man. It is no coincidence that the Akademy of Plato was first and foremost a place of exercise for the body, and that the best-preserved portrait of Plato . . . whom we think of as a thinker, a philosopher, and a man of letters, appears on a herm from his gymnasium and that he wears the ribbon of an athletic victor. (Miller (2004), p. 240)

Thus, combining Lysis's family's success in athletic events and his prestigious family origins, Hippothales builds up Lysis as a truly noble and important young man of the city.

Socrates is unhappy to hear that Hippothales makes much of Lysis because it is as if Hippothales composes his victory song before he has won. By saying all these wonderful things about Lysis to Lysis and others, Hippothales has made his beloved much harder to possess. Now, not only will Lysis think much

of himself, but all the other potential suitors will likewise find Lysis more attractive. If, having sung these songs, Hippothales can't have Lysis, he will have been made to look ridiculous and will feel even more deprived of Lysis's beauty. And, having filled Lysis with this praise, he will in all likelihood make Lysis more proud and arrogant. Socrates draws comparisons with a hunter that frightens his prey, a musician that does not soothe but agitates with his music, and a poet that harms himself with his poetry. The first of these comparisons might suggest a predatory aspect to the relationship between the lover and beloved, but the other two comparisons temper that interpretation. The relationship is certainly one of sexual power with the erastes receiving gratification from the eromenos, but that does not entail that it is predatory. The gratification is part of the reciprocity that is essential to the relationship. Socrates's analogies bring vivid imagery to the lovestruck foolishness of Hippothales's poetry.

Socrates's words convince Hippothales he needs advice from Socrates about how to correctly approach his beloved. Socrates tells Hippothales he cannot tell him what to say to Lysis, but if he is given the chance to talk with Lysis he will be able to show Hippothales what to do. Luckily for Socrates it is the day of the Hermaea, so he can enter the palaestra and talk with the boys there. Ctesippus enters with Socrates hoping to get Lysis's attention. Menexenus is best friends with Lysis and the cousin of Ctesippus, so even if Lysis doesn't approach on his own, Menexenus will draw him into the conversation. The plot hatched here to bring Socrates into contact with Lysis is similar to the way in which

Critias and Socrates plot his introduction to Charmides in the dialogue named for him. At 155a – 155b Critias and Socrates decide they'll bring Charmides over to Socrates so that Socrates can cure Charmides' headache. There is some comedy here, as Socrates is not a doctor but philosopher and so will cure the headache through philosophy not medicine. We can also see the importance placed on the young boys of Athens at 155c where Socrates explains, "He did come, and his coming caused a lot of laughter, because every one of us who was already seated began pushing hard at his neighbor so as to make a place for him to sit down."<sup>17</sup> When Hippothales enters the room he hides himself from Lysis so that he may watch Socrates with Lysis. This is unlike what happens in the *Euthydemus* with Ctesippus and Clinias for at 274c we find, "Ctesippus had taken a seat a long way from Clinias, and when Euthydemus leaned forward in talking to me, he apparently obscured Ctesippus' view of Clinias . . . So Ctesippus . . . sprang up and stationed himself right in front of us."<sup>18</sup> Ctesippus's forthright and overt actions to get near his darling contrast sharply with Hippothales hiding behind others so that Lysis cannot see him.

Socrates's claim that he cannot tell Hippothales what to do but must show him is similar to the way the dialogue itself does not provide an answer to questions but shows the reader how to investigate philosophical problems. Just as Socrates is unable, or unwilling, to tell Hippothales the steps to success with Lysis, Plato's dialogue does not tell us what friendship is but shows us both how to inquire into such things and, through the dramatic interplay between Socrates

and the boys, shows us an example of human friendship. The goal of Socrates here is not to simply give Hippothales propositional knowledge of seduction, but to teach by example and by showing; the dialogue itself seems to function in the same way. That Socrates seems willing to show Hippothales how to succeed in seduction suggests that Plato views seduction as a kind of craft, or *techne*, and not a kind of knowledge. In the case of knowledge, Socrates seems committed to the idea that to know something, such as what piety is or what courage is, one must be able to explain the characteristics of those things that are pious or courageous that make them pious or courageous. In the case of crafts, however, we are learning manual skills that do not require that kind of justification.<sup>19</sup> A successful seducer must have great skill but need not be knowledgeable; a claim that harmonizes with Socrates' professions of ignorance.

Socrates's brief statement against encomium here along with the appearance in this dialogue of Menexenus forces a comparison with Plato's dialogue, *Menexenus*, which takes place at a later dramatic date. At the beginning of the *Menexenus* Socrates runs into Menexenus who has just left the council chamber. Socrates asks what he is doing there and notes that at Menexenus's age he is finished with philosophy and must be ready to turn to higher pursuits, such as running the city. Menexenus brushes aside Socrates' suggestion and says that his business was concerning who would speak about the war dead. Socrates described the work of the Athenian orators at 235a-c :

They do their praising so splendidly that they cast a spell over our souls, attributing to each individual man, with the most varied and beautiful embellishments, both praise he merits and praise he does not, extolling the city in every way . . . The result is, Menexenus, that I am put into an exalted frame of mind when I am praised by them. Each time, as I listen and fall under their spell, I become a different man . . . The speaker's words and the sound of his voice sink into my ears with so much resonance that it is only with difficulty that on the third or fourth day I recover myself and realize where I am. Until then I could imagine that I dwell in the Islands of the Blessed. That's how clever our orators are. (Ryan)

As it turns out Socrates has a great teacher of oratory, Aspasia, and with Menexenus's pleading, Socrates agrees to tell Menexenus a funeral oration that he heard from Aspasia. The funeral oration is for the city what Hippothales' love poetry hopes to be for Lysis and, given the city-citizen analogy again, we can expect that Socrates thinks the same about both of them. In the case of the *Lysis* we see encomium failing to get the desired result—it is making the beloved feel small that seduces him, not building him up. In the case of *Menexenus* it at first seems as if the opposite is true—building up the state makes Socrates so high that he can't come down for several days. The explanation for this discrepancy may be in the content of the *Menexenus*'s funeral oration. At least one strain of commentary on the dialogue suggests that the oration is in fact a parody of more

serious orations, such as Pericles's. If we then interpret Socrates's comments in light of the parodic nature of the speech, it might be that, when taken as a whole, the *Menexenus* offers a similar lesson: building up the city fills its citizens not with the truth of themselves but what they want to hear and in doing so fails to provide a truthful depiction of the state. In the *Lysis* Socrates says that building up your beloved will make them harder to get for they will be filled with false impressions of themselves; we see that same message in the *Menexenus* writ large.

### III. 206e—210e: Parental Love

Entering the paleastra Socrates and the others find boys playing games and Lysis is revealed to truly be beautiful and stands out from the other boys. Socrates' group finds a quiet place to sit down and talk. At first Lysis seems interested but keeps his distance, but when Menexenus joins the group Lysis comes and sits down with him. Hippothales shields himself from Lysis so that he can observe Socrates' interaction with the boy. Socrates asks Menexenus whether he or Lysis is older, but Menexenus reports that they disagree about that. They also disagree about who is more noble and they laugh when Socrates asks who is more beautiful. Socrates says he won't ask who is wealthier because if they are true friends this won't differ. This is the first time Socrates brings up the nature of friendship in the dialogue and the idea he poses, that the things of friends are held in common, is not contested by anyone present.

Socrates tells us he was going to ask about whom of the two is wiser and more just, but Menexenus is called away leaving Socrates to converse with Lysis alone. Instead of continuing with the line of questioning that he had begun with the pair of friends, Socrates questions Lysis about parental love. Lysis quickly agrees that his parents love him and that because of this they want him to be as prosperous as possible. Having established this, Socrates begins to develop an argument that seems to lead to a different conclusion. Lysis believes that a man cannot be both happy and a slave forbidden to do what he wants and initially agrees with Socrates' corollary to this that since his parents love him, they must be willing to do everything that will make him happy. So, Socrates suggests, they must let Lysis do whatever he wants whenever he wants to do it.

Lysis is quick to point out that they stop him from doing quite a bit. His father would not permit him to drive the chariots for they have a hired man who does that. His father would not allow him to take charge of the family's mules for they have a slave that does that. A slave who is a tutor, not Lysis, makes decisions about Lysis's comings and goings. And when the tutor brings Lysis to school the teachers tell Lysis what to do. His mother would beat him if he tried to use her weaving tools, so even at home Lysis is forbidden to do many things.

At this point Socrates wants to know if Lysis has done anything to anger his parents for he has argued as follows:

(III.1). A man cannot be happy and a slave forbidden to do what he wants.

(III.2). If his parents love him, then they want Lysis to be happy.

(III.3). His parents prevent Lysis from doing many things and place many people, even slaves, to rule over Lysis.

(III.4). His parents actions seem to prevent Lysis's happiness since his freedom of action is curtailed and he seems much more to be a slave who doesn't benefit at all from being a member of a prestigious family.

The evidence in (III.3) and (III.4) leads us to question both if Lysis's parents love him and whether or not Lysis can be happy. If we recall that Socrates' stated aim in talking with Lysis was to show Hippothales how to act toward a beloved, we see here that Socrates has done the exact opposite of Hippothales. Hippothales built up Lysis in his poems, but Socrates has torn him down. He may be from a prestigious family, but Socrates has shown that he is powerless. Lysis avoids these conclusions by suggesting that the problem is not that his parents don't love him or don't want him to be happy, but that he is not old enough to be able to make decisions.

Socrates dismisses this idea because there are things for which his parents do turn to him. When they need something written or read or they want to hear the lyre, they allow Lysis to do these things. So, it can't be simply because he is too young that they prevent him from doing some things because there are some things he is allowed to do at this age. Socrates wants to know what is it that separates those things that they allow Lysis to do from those things that he is not allowed to do. Lysis suggests that it is a question of knowledge: he is allowed to do those things in which he is knowledgeable, but not those things for which he is

ignorant. Socrates agrees this a good idea and wonders whether his father doesn't wait for Lysis's coming of age, but rather he waits for Lysis's thinking to become better than his own. And, when Lysis becomes a better thinker, he will turn over his affairs to Lysis. Lysis agrees that this is the case and as Socrates suggests more outrageous ideas Lysis continues to agree. Socrates asks whether Lysis's neighbor, the Athenians, and even the great king of Asia will entrust their affairs to Lysis if Lysis is more knowledgeable and Lysis states they will. There is a hint of comedy in these suggestions, of course, because none of these people would trust their affairs to Lysis just because he was more knowledgeable. The comedy section throws serious doubt on Lysis's belief that knowledge alone determines what others will let you do for them. Socrates has had Lysis agree to the following:

(III.5). If Lysis is more knowledgeable, his father will let him make the household decisions.

(III.6). If Lysis is more knowledgeable than his neighbor, his neighbor will let him make the neighbor's household decisions.

(III.7). If Lysis is more knowledgeable than the Athenians, the Athenians will allow him to make state decisions.

(III.8). If Lysis is more knowledgeable than the Great King, the Great King will allow Lysis to make decisions for him in whatever Lysis is more knowledgeable.

While there is some plausibility that his father will allow him to run more of the household as he becomes more knowledgeable, it is safe to assume that the others

will not. The third claim may have particular resonance for those remembering Socrates's trial and conviction. In that case it becomes clear that the Athenians do not make decisions based on knowledge. That Lysis continues to agree suggests how one can get caught up in Socrates persistent questioning and try to hold on to a stated position for too long.<sup>20</sup> The plausibility of (III.5) does show that there may be some relations that are based on this principle and Socrates continues the discussion to show just how we will conceive of love and friendship in those cases.

This discussion connects with Socrates' statements in the *Euthydemus* at 282a – 282b where he makes a very simple case for obedience to parents and lovers. Since every man wants to be happy, it is correct to try to become as wise as possible so that happiness can be achieved. To that end, Socrates says, “there is nothing shameful, Clinias, nor disgraceful if, for the sake of this, he should become the servant or the slave of a lover or of any man, being willing to perform any honorable service in his desire to become wise.”<sup>21</sup> In responding to Clinias's agreement to this point, Socrates points out that this is true “only if wisdom can be taught, Clinias, I said, and does not come to men of its own accord.”<sup>22</sup> The *Euthydemus* seems to contradict (III.1), which entails that happiness required not being subservient. If we seek wisdom, then it is correct to submit to those that are already wise. Socrates seems to get to the same conclusion in a more roundabout way in *Lysis*. Here we reach the conclusion that the unwise should submit to the wise from the other perspective. Socrates asks Lysis whether if he is wise others

should submit to him and he agrees; generalizing this leads to the claim that Lysis should submit to those who are more knowledgeable, like his father and mother, in pursuit of his own happiness. This same outlook, that being in need of wisdom justifies submission to the rule of others is consistent with the end of the argument here in the *Lysis* (see the next paragraph) and also with the political philosophy of the *Republic*.

Socrates concludes from his discussion with Lysis that in those things where we are knowledgeable all people will allow us to do as we wish and seek our guidance, but in those things where we are ignorant everyone will stop us because we will not be able to do well. And so, we will not be friends nor will others love us insofar as we are useless. So, if one becomes wise, everyone will be their friend; if one remains ignorant, no one will be their friend. Socrates concludes this discussion by suggesting that if some one is not yet wise, that person cannot be sure whether they are knowledgeable or not. And, if one needs a teacher, then one is not yet wise. This point is echoed in the *Laches* 194d where Nicias has the following exchange with Socrates:

Nicias: I have often heard you say that every one of us is good with respect to that in which he is wise and bad in respect to that in which he is ignorant.

Socrates: By heaven, you are right, Nicias.<sup>23</sup>

This points to the following form of reasoning being employed in these dialogues. One wants to be happy and to be happy requires wisdom.

Those things in which we are good, we are wise, but those things in which we are ignorant we desire wisdom. If wisdom is able to be taught, then submission to the will of those who are wise is justified by our desire for wisdom that they can impart to us since it is by being wise that we will be happy.

Socrates has continued to diminish Lysis's importance by pointing out that not only do his parents hinder him from doing that which he wishes, he is worthy of being befriended only in so far as he is knowledgeable and useful. And, since we have seen he is knowledgeable about very little, his value as a friend is limited. Thus, Socrates has convinced the object of love that he is in need of a lover and that lover needs to be someone who can impart knowledge to him. In direct opposition to Hippothales, Socrates has minimized Lysis's value while making himself appear to be just what Lysis needs. Thus, in pursuing his beloved, a lover should take care to make himself appear as knowledgeable as possible while making the beloved seem in need as much as possible. At this point Socrates thinks of turning to Hippothales to tell him that this is how one should behave with their beloved, but he remembers that Hippothales wants to remain hidden and so keeps his comment to himself.

This is a curious introductory argument for this dialogue because, while on the face of it it seems to concern parental love, it is also developed for Socrates to show Hippothales how he should behave with his beloved. We have been introduced to the topic of the dialogue through two kinds of relationships. First,

Socrates questions Lysis about his relationship with his parents and how love and friendship fit in to such a relationship. The relationship between Lysis and his parents is not one of equals: his parents, particularly his father, control a great deal of Lysis's life. This is a relationship of power in which Lysis is subservient to his parents, but there is a kind of reciprocity present. In exchange for all they do for him, Lysis is expected to be a good son and do what he is told and care for them in old age. Second, the discussion of parental love has taken place within Socrates' demonstration to Hippothales about how to conduct a love relationship. Socrates has called attention to Lysis's powerlessness in the parental relationship that, unlike Hippothales's encomiastic poems, has made Lysis appear less worthy of a lover's attention. It has also made Socrates more attractive as a lover: his skill in showing Lysis just how powerless he is shows Lysis how Socrates can help Lysis become a better and more knowledgeable man. We begin to see here the kind of reciprocity expected in the erastes/eromenos relationship: the eromenos's beauty is exchanged for the erastes's knowledge.

Even if this exchange of beauty for knowledge is the expected or understood goal of such relationships it poses a problem for our understanding of Socrates. If we assume Socrates is wise, then he should not be swayed by Lysis's beauty. So, we require an explanation for why Socrates, being wise or even just in search of wisdom, would foster relationships with people like Lysis, beautiful but unwise. There is a two part explanation for Socrates's relationship with Lysis. First, if Socrates's use of dialectic and the elenchus is intended to get closer to the

truth about what we can know and what knowledge requires, then philosophical discussion doesn't require that all involved in the discussion are wise, but only that they are potentially wise. Lysis, while not wise, certainly has the potential to be so. Second, Socrates may value wisdom for wisdom's sake and one way to bring about wisdom in the world is to undertake activities, like a friendship with the potentially wise, that may increase wisdom for both Socrates and Lysis through dialogue. If wisdom is valued for its own sake, then it may serve this role of providing reasons for why the wise may be friends with the unwise.

The two kinds of relationships that have been discussed so far, that between a son and his parents and the relationship between the erastes and eromenos are key social relationships in classical Athens. The relationship between sons and parents is treated throughout Greek drama and the erastes/eromenos relationship is depicted in a great number of surviving works of art, especially pottery. At this point in the dialogue it would be clear to Plato's intended audience that the theme of the dialogue will concern important social and personal relationships. It isn't just personal friendship that we are seeking to understand but the bonds that, in many ways, tie the state together. Both of these relationships rely on reciprocity: care of sons is repaid by care of elderly parents; social education is repaid by sexual submissiveness.

It is worth wondering why Menexenus is first introduced in the dialogue only to be taken away almost immediately only to then return right as this discussion ends. We can see that Plato uses Menexenus to bring Lysis into the

Socratic discussion, but why should Plato have him leave the discussion after only three questions? It seems clear that Plato wanted Menexenus present for the arguments that are to follow but not present for this discussion with Lysis. We know from the *Menexenus* that Menexenus will go on to be interested in rhetoric and public speaking and, later in the *Lysis*, it is suggested that he is already known for eristics. So, we have Plato removing a character from this discussion that we could assume would have been able to contribute to it. This suggests two possibilities. Either Plato simply wanted Socrates to be able to demonstrate his skills as a lover without a character present that we would expect to contribute to the discussion or Plato could be using Menexenus's absence to suggest something about Menexenus or, at least, the kind of person Menexenus turns out to be. The historical record for Menexenus is scant, so if this was a personal jibe it is likely lost to time. But, we do know Menexenus is a rhetorician and Plato seems interested in championing the intellectual superiority of philosophy over rhetoric.<sup>24</sup> One possible interpretation of Menexenus's absence in this part of the dialogue is that Menexenus the adult will favor rhetoric over philosophy because of missing parts of Socrates' visit. Later in the dialogue Menexenus will appear to be not as philosophically astute as Lysis. His absence here along with his demeanor in the rest of the dialogue suggest a character who lacks philosophical finesse.

#### **IV. 211a—213d: Love and Friendship**

As Menexenus returns, Lysis privately asks Socrates to ask Menexenus the same questions he had just been asked. Socrates replies that Lysis should pursue that line of questioning with Menexenus at a later time.<sup>25</sup> There is a hint of irony in Plato, in the middle of a fictional dialogue relating a discussion of Socrates, having Socrates tell Lysis to remember Socrates's conversation. This is not the only place in Plato where the remembering and recalling of Socratic discourses is discussed, for in *Laches* at 180e Lysimachus says, "And this present conversation reminds me of something—when the boys here are talking to each other at home, they often mention Socrates and praise him highly."<sup>26</sup> These instances in Plato suggest the importance both of Socrates the man and his method for in these cases what is being praised is not just the man but his conversations and that they are worthy of study. The quote from the *Laches* is also another example of Socrates being praised among the youth, but being relatively unknown for his philosophy among older men for Lysimachus's next statement is, "I've never thought to ask if they were speaking of the son of Sophroniscus."<sup>27</sup> Shorey (1933) suggests it might simply be a Homeric device meant to avoid having to repeat the conversation, but this interpretation is unacceptable. If Plato simply didn't want to have to repeat the argument for Menexenus's sake, there would be no need to dwell on his missing it. Instead, Plato uses this as an opportunity to highlight the importance of remembering the words of Socrates.

Lysis agrees to talk with Menexenus later about these matters, but asks Socrates to talk with Menexenus about something else because Menexenus is known for arguing and Lysis hopes Socrates will humble him. Socrates agrees and tells Menexenus that what he wants more than anything else are friends and, since Lysis and Menexenus are such good friends, Socrates wants to question him about the way by which one becomes a friend to another.

Socrates begins with a question: is the lover in virtue of being in love a friend of the beloved or is the beloved in virtue of being loved a friend of the lover or are lover and beloved friends to each other in virtue of the loving relationship? These questions seek a solution to the unstated question of what is the relation between love and friendship. The unstated assumption here seems to be that love begets friendship. We can use simple logic to explicate the argument revealed through the discussion of Socrates and Menexenus.

Let  $L(x, y)$  be a binary relation meaning “x loves y” and  $F(x, y)$  be a binary relation meaning “x is a friend of y”. Socrates gives us the following options:

$$(IV.1). L(x,y) \Rightarrow F(x,y)$$

$$(IV.2). L(x,y) \Rightarrow F(y,x)$$

$$(IV.3). L(x,y) \Rightarrow [F(x,y) \ \& \ F(y,x)]$$

Menexenus first opts for (IV.3), but Socrates points out that it should be possible for a person to love another without having the beloved show any affection for the lover. Not only might the beloved not return affection but that the beloved might

hate the lover. This situation happens particularly with lovers of young darlings, which ties this part of the dialogue to the last section. Particularly with darlings, lovers become so enamored that whatever amount of affection the darling returns isn't enough and the lover feels hated. For all of these reasons, Socrates and the boys abandon (IV.3). Socrates asks Menexenus if we should accept (IV.1) or (IV.2) or accept a new possibility:

(IV.4).  $[L(x,y) \ \& \ L(y,x)] \Rightarrow F(x,y) \vee F(y,x)$

Menexenus chooses this new option, but Socrates quickly sees a problem. If friendship requires reciprocity of love, then whatever is a friend must be capable of loving its lover. But, we speak of people loving and being a friend to horses, dogs, wine, gymnastics and philosophy. These cases point out the possibility of love without friendship. This possibility seems consistent with the later discussion of the dialogue from 219d – 221e after we have gone through several other options. Here the matter is dropped and (IV.2) is taken up.

Socrates meets Menexenus's acceptance of the idea that the beloved is the friend of the lover with a series of problems. The argument here assumes a dichotomy between friends and enemies such that not being a friend of Socrates entails being an enemy of him. The pairing of principles about friends and enemies is part of Greek popular morality and, as Blondell (1989) suggests, can be summed up with two principles: people are expected to help their friends and people are expected to harm their enemies.<sup>28</sup> Since people are expected to help their friends, it follows that a friend's enemies are your enemies, too. The

possibility of being neither a friend nor enemy is not entertained. Later in the dialogue Socrates will introduce a trichotomy for the good, the bad and the neither-good-nor-bad that will figure prominently in the dialogue's arguments starting at 216c. Socrates suggests that if the beloved is the friend to the lover, then an enemy would be the one who is hated and not the one that hates. Letting  $E(x,y)$  mean “x is an enemy of y”, this conclusion seems to be problematic since it would mean:

(IV.5). Some people are loved by their enemies.  $\exists(x)\exists(y)(E(x,y) \& L(y,x))$

(IV.6). Some people are hated by their friends.  $\exists(x)\exists(y)[E(y,x) \& F(y,x)]^{29}$

(IV.7). Some people are friends to their enemies.  $\exists(x)\exists(y)[F(x,y) \& E(y,x)]$

(IV.8). Some people are enemies to those who are friends.  $\exists(x)\exists(y)[E(x,y) \& F(y,x)]$

(IV.7) and (IV.8) are logically equivalent, but their phrasing places emphasis on different aspects of the claim. Seeing these possibilities Menexenus is convinced that (IV.2) is not correct, which means that (IV.1) must be the correct principle. The lover is the friend of the beloved and the enemy is the one who hates. This means that one could be a friend of the beloved even while the beloved is not their friend or even when the beloved is their enemy. At this point Socrates directly asks Menexenus whether they have been enquiring about these matters in the right way, but it is Lysis who responds that they have been making a mistake. It is suggested that Lysis was so carried away in the conversation that he responded unintentionally. We will see this later in the dialogue when Lysis responds and

Menexenus remains silent. Throughout the dialogue Lysis is portrayed as a serious student of Socrates and by extension philosophy while Menexenus is not. We've already seen Menexenus removed from the earlier conversation, but even once he has returned to the conversation he seems much more like Socrates interlocutors in dialogues like *Euthyphro* in which the interlocutor professes knowledge that he doesn't have. Menexenus goes along with Socrates conversation but does not display any original contribution to the discussion nor does he seem able to quickly process the discussion like Lysis. At 213e Socrates even states that he wishes to give Menexenus a rest and starts addressing Lysis directly. This treatment of Menexenus should be considered in relation to his love of arguments and his later interest in rhetoric. Menexenus, portrayed as a rhetorician and lover of arguments, is not wholly successful at philosophy even when compared to a young boy like Lysis.

The underlying assumption of this part of the dialogue is that there is a neat and clean relation between loving and being a friend and that making explicit that connection will help us understand friendship. But, we have seen that of all the possibilities that might exist between loving and being a friend there are problems. The implicit conclusion is that the relation between loving and being a friend is not a simple logical connection.

#### **V. 213e—215c: Similarity**

Socrates turns to Lysis and suggests they examine the idea that was present in the poets that “Always God leads the like to the like”. At 214b Socrates references earlier philosophers who examine nature and the whole in relation to similarity. This poetic assertion and work of the Presocratics, leads to the first premise of the argument in this section:

(V.1). The like is necessarily attracted to the like and they are friends.

Letting  $S(x,y)$  be a symmetric relation that stands for “x is similar to y”, we can see the logical structure of this claim as:

(V.1)  $\square \forall x \forall y [ S(x,y) \supset [F(x,y) \ \& \ F(y,x)] ]$

As Kerferd (1966) reports, the idea of the like being attracted to the like has a long history in Greek thought. Kerferd suggests that the belief in a substantial relation of similarity grows out of an earlier mystical or magical belief in attraction by similarity and that, for the Presocratic philosophers, the relation of similarity is a principle of physics. Empedocles’ philosophy has the effect of dividing the principle into a classificatory or logical principle and a physical mechanism that causes the attraction. This means there are three possible interpretations for the justification of (V.1): Plato, *contra* Empedocles, intends (V.1) as embodying both the physical and logical senses, Plato intends (V.1) as a physical principle, or Plato intends (V.1) as a logical principle. In *Lysis* the principle appears to be treated as a logical principle: Socrates's examples are about how certain things, such as the good and the useless, relate to one another and not about physical attraction. In that sense it is evidence for the claim that

post-Empedocles Greek philosophers began treating the classificatory principle (like with like) as distinct from a postulate of physics. What justified treating the principle as a logical principle may have been conceptual confusion on the part of Greek philosophers who failed to faithfully distinguish similarity from identity, so that things that are like can be said to be one and not many. If this is correct, then the principle of (V.1) is justified by a principle of identity.<sup>30</sup>

Lysis initially seems content with this idea, but at 214c Socrates points out two counter-examples to (V.1): it can't be that the like are always friends to the like because the useless are not friends to the useless and a wrongdoer to a wrongdoer is not a friend. If two people are useless, then if one tries to help the other it will likely turn out wrong or badly. And, with wrongdoers, they are more likely to harm each other, doing wrong, than to help. Thus:

(V.2). Some things that are like one another are not friends.  $\exists x \exists y [S(x,y) \ \& \ \neg F(x,y) \vee \neg F(y,x)]$

So, if similarity is to form the basis of friendship, then it must be similarity in some particular qualities or one specific quality. If the basis of friendship was simply being similar, then any kind of similarity would make two people friends. But, the examples of the useless and wrongdoers point out that it can't be just any similarity.

At 214d Socrates suggests that the particular quality in which things should be similar in order to be friends is being good. Letting  $Gx$  stand for "x is good", the revised premise of the argument should be:

(V.3). The good is necessarily always a friend to the good.

$$\square \forall x \forall y [[(Gx \ \& \ Gy) \supset S(x,y)] \supset [F(x,y) \ \& \ F(y,x)]]^{31}$$

Socrates justification for this is that (V.2) seems to have shown that (V.1) taken as a general principle is false, but that does not mean the principle won't hold for a particular category, i.e. the good. If we look at the cases that seem to cause problems for the principle, they were cases in which the apparent similarity was bad (being useless or doing wrong). These facts provide two ways back to the acceptability of (V.1) or a restricted version of it. The easier argument to make would simply be to restrict (V.1) to some categories, but that is not what Socrates does here. Instead, he offers an argument for the bad not being similar to other bad things, which, if successful, would mean that (V.2) does not offer counter-examples to (V.1). Socrates' argument is that the bad are unstable and, since being unstable entails changing, the bad cannot be similar to anything. Socrates' use of instability as a reason for not being similar seems to point to the idea of identity playing a role in justifying (V.1). It is possible for two things to be similar but unstable but it is not possible for two things to be identical and unstable.<sup>32</sup> Consider two things *a* and *b* that share many of the same qualities, including the quality of "being unstable". Suppose the instability puts *a* and *b* into one of two states, *x* or *y*. In a general sense, *a* and *b* are similar even if *a* is in *x* and *b* is in *y* because they share the quality of "being in *x* or *y*", but, "being in *x* or *y*" is an instability since they are also dissimilar when one is in *x* and the other *y* and when they do coincide with both being in *x* it is by accident not

because they share the stable property of “being in  $x$ ”. This looser kind of similarity does not seem sufficient for Socrates who relies on similarity being closer to identity in that if  $a$  and  $b$  are similar, then, using the terminology from before, they are both “in  $x$ ” or “in  $y$ ”.

This reasoning leads Socrates at 214d to suggest two more claims. Letting  $Bx$  stand for “ $x$  is bad”:

(V.4) The good is a friend only to the good alone

$$\forall x \forall y [Gx \ \& \ (F(x,y) \vee F(y,x))] \supset Gy$$

(V.5) The bad are friends to no one.  $\forall x \forall y [Bx \supset \neg F(x,y)]$

Recall we have accepted (V.1) for the sake of argument and so (V.5) follows since Socrates has just shown that the bad cannot be like anything, which means they cannot be friends. (V.4) seems to be justified from (V.3), but in fact there is a change of meaning from (V.3) to (V.4). (V.3) states that the good are necessarily the friends of the good, which leaves open the possibility for the good to also be friends to some others on contingent grounds. (V.4) states that the good are friends only to the good, which rules out the possibility of them being friends to anyone else. The change from (V.3) to (V.4) can be seen arising from Socrates’ discussion of instability and the implicit assumption up to this point in the dialogue that seems to bifurcate the class of things that could be friends into two groups: the good and the bad. Since with the addition of those principles we can move from necessarily being friends to the good to only being friends to the

good because the only other members of the class of possible friends have been shown to be unable to be friends with anyone.

At this point in the argument it seems we could take (V.4) as the conclusion of the argument, but Socrates is quick to point to a possible problem. The argument has given reason to accept (V.4), but perhaps there is a common cause to both the good being friends and their being similar. In that case it might appear that the good are friends because they are similar, but in fact they are friends for another reason. Socrates and the boys agree to:

(V.6) If two are like, then each could do for himself what the other could do for him.  $\forall x \forall y \forall P [[S(x,y) \& Px] \supset Py]$ <sup>33</sup>

And:

(V.7) If two are beloved, then they are useful to one another.

$\forall x \forall y [[L(x,y) \& L(y,x)] \supset [U(x,y) \& U(y,x)]]$

(V.6) follows from the fact that if *a* and *b* are similar, then whatever skills *a* has *b* has as well and so *b* cannot do anything for *a* that *a* couldn't do for himself.

While the boys agree to the principle there seem to be plenty of counterexamples to the claim. It may be true that *b* alone couldn't do anything for *a* alone that *a* couldn't do himself, but there are many things that *a* and *b* might do for each other working together that neither could do singly. In particular, and what makes the quick agreement here odd, is that "allowing for philosophical dialogue" might very well be one of the things that *a* and *b* could do for each other that neither can do singly.<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to think that this counterexample would be missed by

Plato, so the best interpretation of this oversight is that here Socrates suggests something, namely (V.6) which the boys agree to and that Socrates accepts not necessarily on its own merits but because the boys have agreed to it. Neither Plato nor his character Socrates need accept all premises of the arguments employed in the dialogue and this may well be an example of that claim. Taking (V.6) and (V.7) together entails that similarity as a foundation for friendship is a mistake. Friends must be able to do things for each other, but those that are similar cannot. Thus, if (V.4) is true, then it must be for some reason other than that the good are similar to one another. The reason for (V.4) is made explicit at 215a:

(V.8) The good are friends because they are good.

$$\forall x \forall y [(Gx \ \& \ Gy) \supset [F(x,y) \ \& \ F(y,x)]]$$

But a difficulty for (V.8) immediately arises:

(V.9) The good are self-sufficient and need nothing. Let  $Rx$  stand for “ $x$  is self-sufficient” and  $N(x,y)$  stand for “ $x$  needs  $y$ ”:

$$\forall x \forall y [(Gx \supset Rx] \ \& \ [Rx \supset \neg N(x,y)]$$

So, at 215b we arrive at the claims that:

(V.10) The good, being self-sufficient and in need of nothing, does not hold anything dear.  $\forall x \forall y \forall z [(Rx \ \& \ \neg N(x,y)] \supset \neg D(x,z)]$

And,

(V.10) If the good hold nothing dear, then he does not love anything.

$$\forall x \forall y \forall z [(Gx \supset \neg D(x,y)] \supset \neg L(x,z)]$$

(V.9) along with (V.7) entails the good will not be friends to each other because the good, being good, would be at least nearly self-sufficient and so no other could be useful to him. Two beings who are similar and good fail to offer reciprocal gains; there is no place for reciprocity in a relationship based on similarity, since being similar means having the same abilities, nor in a relationship based on goodness, since being good entails self-sufficiency.

The analysis here may appear inconsistent with Socrates speech in the *Phaedrus* at 255b: “It is a decree of fate, you see, that bad is never friends with bad, while good cannot fail to be friends with good.” (Nehamas and Woodruff) The inconsistency is only apparent, however. In the *Phaedrus* the discussion is clearly about a relationship between an older man and a younger boy that is in need of instruction. In the *Lysis* the discussion centers on friendship of equals. It is not uncharitable to read the claim in the *Phaedrus* as glossing the more detailed claim that the boy seeks instruction in the good so that he may become good like the older man with whom he shares a relationship. In that case, the claim of the *Phaedrus* seems consistent with the conclusion from later in the *Lysis* that the neither good-nor-bad seeks friendship with the good. The boy, lacking knowledge, seeks friendship with the knowledgeable man.

This section of the dialogue progresses through a series of ideas to the conclusion that similarity cannot form a foundation for friendship because the kind of thing Plato takes similarity to be, namely a logical relation, cannot be explanatory. We begin with the claim that the like are friends to the like, but this

has to be abandoned because certain kinds of similarity, e.g., being useless, do not seem to ground friendship. Socrates suggests that the bad, like the useless or wrongdoers, are not similar to one another because being bad entails being unstable. The argument moves to consider the claim that the good are friends to the good because of their similarity but the bad, not being similar are not friends. Similarity on its own is found to be insufficient for friendship since those that are similar are able to do for themselves whatever those who are similar to them could do and so we arrive at the good are friends to the good because of being good. But, we find that the good are self-sufficient and would have no need to highly value others, even the good, and so have no need of friends. At this point the idea that similarity grounds friendship has been shown to be problematic and we should look somewhere else to answer our question. All of this points to Plato using the notion of similarity as a logical principle and finding it weak as a source for explanations. If Plato was using similarity in a more traditional metaphysical sense then it would be explanatorily useful because the similarity between objects would be explained by a more basic characteristic of the structure of the world. If, metaphysically speaking, similar objects are attracted to each other, then that might form an explanation for why they are friends. But, what Plato has shown is that similarity does not work in that way. Rather, saying one object is similar to another object is closer to saying one object is identical to another. Similarity, like identity, will tell us that the two objects share characteristics, but it can't explain why they share those characteristics other than "because they are

identical” or “because they are similar.” In the discussion we have assumed two people are friends and want to know what makes them so; being similar has failed to provide any kind of reason for that relationship.

## VI. 215d—216c: Opposition

Having dismissed one suggestion from the poets, Socrates tells Lysis that other poets, like Hesiod, suggest that it isn't similarity that makes people friends but that the like are most hostile to the like. When people are similar they feel jealousy and partake in rivalry, but those who are unlike can find friendship in their differences. At 215d Socrates marshals examples from society, such as the poor being friends with the rich, and at 215e he uses examples from the natural world, like the dry being attracted to the moist to support this idea of opposition as a foundation for friendship. The premise is stated explicitly at 215e:

(VI.1) For that which is most opposite is most dear to that which is most opposite; each thing sets its heart upon its opposite, but not the like.

Let  $O(x,y)$  be a symmetric relation, “x is opposite to y”:

$$\forall x \forall y \forall z [[O(x,y) \supset D(y,x)] \& [S(x,y) \supset \neg D(y,x)]]$$

Menexenus at this point re-joins the conversation and says that this seems right to him. Socrates points out that if they assert this, then the sophists will jump all over them because:

(VI.2) Hatred is the most opposite to friendship.

From (VI.1) and (VI.2) it follows that those who hate would be friends, which is contradictory. And, along with this logical problem, (VI.1) would also entail that the just would befriend the unjust, the wise would befriend the undisciplined and the good would befriend the bad. The first of these three problems might not have the argumentative force that the logical contradiction has, but it is reasonable that two desiderata of a theory of friendship would be that these pairings would not be friends. We have already encountered the problem of the good being friends with the bad, but recall that that was within a previous argument so any reasons given against it there do not necessarily carry over into this argument. In the previous argument we accepted that the good could not be friends with the bad because they were dissimilar and that the bad could not even be similar to other bad things, so they could not be friends at all. None of those reasons hold now that we are investigating whether opposition can be a foundation for friendship. Thus, the prohibition against the good being friends with the bad stated here must carry the same weight as the other two examples: we should assume that a theory of friendship will not have as a conclusion that the good are friends with the bad. That the principle of opposition might lead to counterintuitive conclusions is not enough to dismiss it; part of desiring philosophical clarity is to see what connections intuition keeps hidden from us. The real reason for abandoning (VI.1) is that it leads to a contradiction. Here again we have Menexenus agreeing to a thesis that is quickly dismissed and we are also given a direct reference to the

sophists who might call to mind the older Menexenus we meet in the dialogue named after him.

The conclusion from this and the last section that we will carry with us is stated explicitly near the end of 216b:

(VI.3) Neither the like is a friend to the like nor is the opposite a friend to the opposite.

$$\forall x \forall y [S(x,y) \supset \neg F(x,y)] \ \& \ \forall x \forall y [O(x,y) \supset \neg F(x,y)]$$

### **VII. 216c—219c: The Good, The Bad and The Neither Good Nor Bad**

Acknowledging that the arguments are getting him dizzy and that the goal of arguing seems elusive, Socrates suggests that they may have been hasty in speaking only of the good and the bad. At 216d he introduces a third category: the neither-good-nor-bad. Plato employs a similar maneuver at *Gorgias* 467e where Socrates says, “Now is there any thing that isn’t either *good*, or *bad*, or, what is between these, *neither good nor bad*?” At 467e-468a he explains just what the neither-good-nor-bad things are: “things which sometimes partake of what’s good, sometimes of what’s bad, and sometimes of neither, such as sitting or walking, running or making sea voyages, or stones and sticks and the like.” *Symposium* 202a-202b also shows Plato being careful not to rely on dichotomies when a more fine-grained analysis is necessary. Diotima explains the necessity of acknowledging an in-between category thus: “Then don’t force whatever is not beautiful to be ugly, or whatever is not good to be bad. It’s the same thing with

love: when you agree he is neither good nor beautiful, you need not think he is ugly and bad; he could be something in between.” The arguments up to this point in the dialogue have relied on their being a dichotomy: the good and the bad.

Those arguments threw doubt on four claims:

(VII.1) The good are not friends to the bad.  $\forall x \forall y [[Gx \ \& \ By] \supset \neg F(x,y)]$

(VII.2) The good are not friends to the good.  $\forall x \forall y [[Gx \ \& \ Gy] \supset \neg F(x,y)]$

(VII.3) The bad are not friends to the good.  $\forall x \forall y [[Bx \ \& \ Gy] \supset \neg F(x,y)]$

(VII.4) The bad are not friends to the bad.  $\forall x \forall y [[Bx \ \& \ By] \supset \neg F(x,y)]$

The introduction of the third category brings five more possibilities to consider:

(VII.5) The neither-good-nor-bad are friends to the bad.

$\forall x \forall y [[\neg Gx \ \& \ \neg Bx \ \& \ By] \supset F(x,y)]$

(VII.6) The neither-good-nor-bad are friends to the good.

$\forall x \forall y [[\neg Gx \ \& \ \neg Bx \ \& \ Gy] \supset F(x,y)]$

(VII.7) The neither-good-nor-bad are friends to the neither-good-nor-bad.

$\forall x \forall y [[\neg Gx \ \& \ \neg Bx \ \& \ \neg Gy \ \& \ \neg By] \supset F(x,y)]$

(VII.8) The good are friends to the neither-good-nor-bad.

$\forall x \forall y [[\neg Gx \ \& \ \neg Bx \ \& \ Gy] \supset F(y,x)]$

(VII.9) The bad are friends to the neither-good-nor-bad.

$\forall x \forall y [[\neg Gx \ \& \ \neg Bx \ \& \ By] \supset F(y,x)]$

(VII.5) and (VII.9) are dismissed without explicit argument, but it is easy to see from the previous part of the dialogue that the bad, being of no use or being harmful, are not suitable candidates for friendship. (VII.7) is dismissed on

grounds that we have shown that the like are not friends to the like (213e-215c). So, insofar as the neither-good-nor-bad are similar to each other, they are unsuitable for friendship. This is a curious argument for Plato to use at this point. Earlier, in dismissing the idea that the bad are friends to the bad, Socrates states that the bad are actually not similar to each other because they are unstable. Yet here he offers no argument for why the neither-good-nor-bad are stable or not. For, if they are not stable in a way similar to the bad, then we can't dismiss (VII.7) as Plato does here. We could dismiss it on the grounds that the neither-good-nor-bad might harm each other, but that is not what is argued here. (VII.8) is not discussed by Plato, but it is easily dismissed using arguments from earlier in the dialogue. Since the good are not friends to the good because, being good, they are self-sufficient, it also stands that the good would not be friends to the neither-good-nor-bad for the same reason. Being self-sufficient means the neither-good-nor-bad could be of no use to the good. So, if the neither-good-nor-bad are to be friends, they must be friends to the good as (VII.6) is the only thesis that remains.

Socrates suggests that that which is neither good nor bad becomes a friend of the good because of the presence of some bad. To help this along he develops an analogy with medicine at 217a:

(VII.10) A healthy body wants / needs neither the medical arts nor health.

(VII.11) The sick are friends to the physician because of their disease.

(VII.12) Sickness is a bad

(VII.13) The medical art is useful and good.

(VII.14) The body *as a body* is neither good nor bad.

(VII.10) restates the idea found in proposition (V.9) that what is self-sufficient does not need. If we combine the claims of (VII.11) through (VII.14) we see that a person takes medicine *because of illness for the purpose of health*, which means that medicine is valuable *because of some bad for the purpose of some good*. At 217b Socrates states the general claim:

(VII.15) That which is neither good-nor-bad becomes a friend of the good because of the presence of the bad.

The argument here bears some resemblance to the claim Socrates asks at *Gorgias* 468a: “Now whenever people do things, do they do these intermediate things for the sake of good ones, or the good things for the sake of the intermediate ones?” and concludes that we must do the intermediate things for the sake of good ones and not the other way around. In the case of the *Gorgias* this point is put in terms of kinds of actions, i.e. we do acts that are neither-good-nor-bad for the sake of what is already good. In the *Lysis* the point is made in terms of characteristics of individuals: those that are neither-good-nor-bad want to be friends of the good so that they may become good as well.

Socrates quickly points out that if the neither-good-nor-bad is to become a friend to the good it must happen before the neither good-nor-bad becomes bad itself because of the bad that is present in it. Once it becomes bad, as we have seen, it is no longer capable of being a friend. If this is to be possible there must be a distinction in the way in which bad is present to that which is bad itself and

the way in which the bad can be present to that which is neither good-nor-bad. To explain this difficulty Socrates presents an argument from 217c through 218a to show the ways in which things can be present.

Socrates points out that we need to consider the kind of bad that the neither-good-nor-bad seek to remove from themselves. The bad that they seek to remove must be present, otherwise it could not be removed, but the neither-good-nor-bad must not yet be bad. To explain the distinction he wants to make, Socrates uses an example with white paint and hair. There are two ways in which a man can come to have white hair: white paint can be applied to his hair making white present to it or a man's hair can turn white naturally as he gets older. In the first case, white is present to the hair, but the hair is not white. In the second case, white is present in the hair because the hair is white. Whatever the bad is because of which the neither-good-nor-bad is a friend to the good must be like the paint because if the neither-good-nor-bad was bad in the second sense the bad could not be removed. So, the neither-good-nor-bad can have bad present to it, but not yet being bad, the bad can be removed through friendship with some good. This analysis can also explain Lysis's need for friendship with an older man that is more knowledgeable than him as friendship with that man may remove his ignorance. It also describes a part of the parent-child relationship as Lysis's parents may seek to impart the good to Lysis through their love of him.

At 218b Socrates applies this idea to the nature of philosophy, which supplies an argument for the importance of philosophy. Those who are good no

longer need to love wisdom because they are wise. Those who are bad and ignorant do not love wisdom. Those who are neither-good-nor-bad but are ignorant and acknowledge this ignorance love wisdom because they seek to remove ignorance. The ignorance is the bad that is present in the neither-good-nor-bad because of which the neither-good-nor-bad is a friend of the wise for the purpose of becoming wise themselves. It can hardly be a surprise that this description of the philosopher mirrors Socrates's conception of himself from the *Apology*: a man whose wisdom lies in knowing he does not know but seeks to find the truth.

At 218c Socrates restates (VII.15) and the boys wholeheartedly agree to it: upon securing their agreement Socrates begins to point out a difficulty with the formulation of the principle. He makes the difficulty explicit at 218d:

(VII.16) The thing, for the purpose of which a friend is a friend to the friend, is a friend or neither a friend nor enemy?

The boys have trouble understanding Socrates so he returns to the medical analogy pointing out it was for health (a good) that the sick were friends with the medical arts. The concern in (VII.16) can be restated in the analogy as asking if health is a friend to the sick as well. For, if it is, there must be another proposition of the form expressed in (VII.15) to explain why the sick are friends to health. At 219b Socrates offers two clarifications that the boys agree with:

(VII.17) What is neither bad nor good because of the bad and the enemy is a friend of the good for the purpose of the good friend.

And:

(VII.18) It is for the purpose of the friend of the friend the friend is a friend because of the enemy.

These abstract principles are made clearer returning to the medical analogy. In the analogy (VII.17) becomes: the sick because of illness is a friend of the medical arts for the purpose of health. (VII.18) becomes: it is for the purpose of the sick man's health that the medical arts is a friend because of illness.

Reflecting on this, Socrates at 219d makes explicit his concern about accepting (VII.15) as a foundation for friendship:

(VII.19) It is necessary for us to give up going this way or come to some beginning principle, which will no longer lead on to some other friend, but will come to that which is the first friend for the purpose of which all other friends are friends.

Before turning to the arguments that may get us out of this quandary, it is worth reflecting on the choice of analogy Plato employs. The analogy with health stresses the importance of self-improvement found in Plato's analysis of friendship throughout the dialogue. It is to make themselves better that the sick turn to the medical arts to become healthy and if we extrapolate this to the general case, then part of the foundation of friendship becomes a desire for self-improvement. This same notion was seen in the arguments concerning similarity and opposition in that what prevented the good from being friends was that they had no need for improvement. Whatever being friends entails, it seems for Plato

there must be a sense in which those who are friends better themselves through being friends.

It is also worth noting that at 219b-219c Socrates points out to the boys that to continue their discussion they must, at the least, ignore some of their previous arguments. Their position now requires that once the friendship is achieved, then the like seems to have become friends with the like, which they dismissed earlier. Socrates says that he is willing to let this go by for now because he wishes to continue exploring the idea that there is a purpose for which a friend is a friend. This seems rather convenient and displays Socrates' commitment to ferreting out the consequences of principles even when he claims there would be problems with them. In fact, his argument here seems to rely on the principle that if two people are friends at any one time, then they are friends for all later times. If it is possible to be friends and then to not be friends at a later time, then there is no problem. In that situation, once the neither good-nor-bad becomes good through their friendship with the good they are no longer friends with the good because they would then be self-sufficient and in no need of friendship. It is curious that Plato brings this concern up but does not deal with it sufficiently. It is either another instance in which he has Socrates raise a concern that is overlooked by his interlocutors or Plato thought friendships would be everlasting. Empirical evidence of friendships gone bad would lead credence to the first interpretation: it is simply another thread of argumentation that the interlocutors fail to take up. There is a possibility that Plato did intend friendships

to be everlasting in that it seems true of Socrates' love of philosophy and if we were limited to the neither good nor bad's relation to the good it might be correct, but if we are to include the good's relation to the good there is no reason to think friendships started in one state (when one of the two is neither good nor bad) must continue when they both have become good.

The idea that the foundation of friendship is rooted in self-improvement would tie to the foundation of Plato's political philosophy as was discussed in section I, namely, the analogy between the state and the individual. If the individual seeks self-improvement by friendship with the good and what is good for the individual is also good for the state, then friendship becomes an important relationship both for individuals and the state. By seeking self-improvement an individual is also seeking a better state.

### **IX. 219d—221e: Proton Philon**

Socrates wants to show that the principle from the previous section leads to a conceptual problem about the foundation of friendship. The problem is stated at 219d where Socrates suggests that we need to either give up our current analysis or find a beginning principle to serve as a final foundation. Socrates fears that an infinite regress will result if we do not find such a foundation. To see this problem we can re-write the principle like this:

(IX.1) A is a friend of B because of C for the purpose of D.

A is neither-good-nor-bad, B and D are good, and C is bad. Since D is a good, it is also a friend to A because A, being neither good-nor-bad, seeks self-improvement through friendship with the good. Socrates' assumption here that if D is good, then it must be a friend to A suggests that Socrates is using "the good" in a particular way. At the very least it suggests that we need to interpret the principle from the last section as including a kind of necessity:

(IX.2) A is necessarily a friend of each good

$$\forall x \forall y [ [\neg Gx \ \& \ \neg Bx \ \& \ Gy] \supset \Box F(x, y)]$$

Without at least this principle, Socrates concern is unfounded because there would be no need to assume that A would need to be a friend with D even if D is a friend. (IX.2) is the weakest principle that allows for Socrates concern to make sense, but it is not the only one. At the other extreme, what could ground Socrates concern is that the good is a unitary thing and that while we distinguish between B and D pragmatically, they are in fact identical:

$$(IX.3) \ \forall x \forall y [[Gx \ \& \ Gy] \supset x = y]$$

If D is a friend of A, then there must be a bad, E, because of which another good, F, which is the purpose for which D is a friend. So we would also have:

(IX.4) D is a friend of A because of E for the purpose of F.

But, we now face the same problem: F is a good and so a friend of D, and so there must be some good for the purpose of which F is a friend. This problem will continue for each good that is the purpose for which we are friends with another good. So, Socrates claims that if we are to understand friendship, there must be

some thing for the purpose of which we are friends with all other friends and it is this thing that is truly a friend. Clearly, Socrates is trying to avoid an infinite regress that will result if we do not come to a final foundation. In the most general sense, there is nothing logically problematic with an infinite regress, so the requirement that we must avoid it deserves comment.<sup>35</sup>

The *Lysis* is not the only place where Plato uses the threat of an infinite regress to justify a claim. *Republic* 597c and *Timaeus* 31a-31b offer similar arguments and *Parmenides* 132d-133a.<sup>36</sup> *Republic* 597c aims to show that there can be only one form of bed. The argument runs thus:

(IX.5) We can distinguish three kinds of bed: that of the painter, of the carpenter and of god.

(IX.6) The painter's bed is a representation of the carpenter's bed.

(IX.7) As a representation of the carpenter's bed it is correct to say it is less real than the carpenter's bed.

(IX.8) The carpenter's bed is a representation of the god's bed for just as the painter's bed gets its form from the carpenter's bed, so too does the carpenter's bed get its form from god's.

(IX.9) As a representation of the god's bed, the carpenter's bed is less real.

(IX.10) Whether by choice or necessity, God can have made only one form of bed.<sup>37</sup>

(IX.11) If there were two forms of bed, then there would need to be another bed whose character would be shared by those other two.

(IX.12) God can be seen as author, the carpenter as manufacturer, and the artist merely represents.

In *Republic* 597c the problem of an infinite regress is addressed in (IX.11): there must be one form of bed for if there were more than one, then the characteristics shared by those two would itself compose a form. Thus, there must be uniqueness to forms otherwise God would not have been able to settle on the form which physical instances share.

The *Timaeus* argument concerns the uniqueness of the world. Plato starts with a question:

(IX.13) Could there be more than one world?

The answer is that it is not possible for reasons similar to those given in the *Republic*:

(IX.14) Assume there is more than one world.

(IX.15) It is not possible for there to be a different form for each world.

(IX.16) Assume there is a form for each world. Then there must be a form of these forms and so the form for the world must contain the form for all that is.

The *Republic* and *Timaeus* share an argumentative principle:

(IX.17) The form of  $x$  must be unique because if it is not unique, then the two forms of  $x$  will themselves be representations of the form which describes the essential characteristics of them.

Letting  $Bx$  stand for “ $x$  is the form of Bed”, we can formalize this principle for the *Republic* argument thus:<sup>38</sup>

(IX.18)  $\forall x \forall y \exists z [[(Bx \ \& \ By) \supset x = y] \ \& \ [ \neg x=y \supset [[Bx \vee By \vee Bz] \ \& \ \neg (Bx \ \& \ By) \ \& \ (Bx \ \& \ Bz \supset x=z) \ \& \ (By \ \& \ Bz \supset y =z)]]]$

There is a slight distinction in the two arguments, however. The *Republic* argument deals with the form of bed, which is something that can have multiple physical instantiations. The *Timaeus* deals with the form of the world, which is itself a unique object. This is a significant difference since it offers a way of arguing for the uniqueness of the form not open to the *Republic* argument, namely, a unique object, the world, requires a unique form for, if it shared the form with another it could not be what it claims to be. There can be beds aplenty, however, so a similar move could not be made in that case.

The claim of the *Lysis* and the proton philon appears similar to the *Republic's* claim of beds. The claim there is that there must be some essential characteristics all beds share in virtue of which they are beds. The *Lysis* claims there must be something for the purpose of which all friendships are said to be friendships. In both cases Plato assumes there is a foundation that grounds all the true claims about the world. In the case of beds, it is a form; in the case of friendships it is the proton philon. In the *Republic* and *Timaeus* arguments the forms are of objects, but friendship is a relation between objects and so might bear some relation to Plato's discussion of the form of the Equal in the *Phaedo* at 74a where Socrates states that, "I do not mean a stick equal to a stick or a stone equal to a stone, or anything of that kind, but something else beyond all these, the Equal itself. Shall we say that this exists or not". Plato's discussion of the Equal

there is part of an examination of the theory of recollection, but it might be thought to indicate that there are not only forms of objects, as in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, but also forms of relations. In order for that to be so, Plato would need to conceive of relations as distinct from either objects or predicates such as “is a man”. Cornford persuasively argues that Plato does not do this. In discussing *Sophist* 255c – 255e, Cornford argues that Plato does not categorize relations as we do in modern logic but as a peculiar kind of predicate. So, where modern logic might analyze the statement, “Socrates is older than Plato”, as consisting of a relation between two objects, Plato and his contemporaries would analyze the statement as a description of one property that Socrates has, namely, “being older than Plato”. Thus, relative terms, or terms that apply to objects only in relation to other objects, are treated by Plato just as non-relative terms are. So, the logical structure of claims like “Socrates is a man” and “Socrates is older than Plato” are the same—each tells us about one property of Socrates. We can apply Cornford’s lesson to the nature of friendship in the *Lysis*. A man must be a friend to another and so friendship should be seen in the same way that Plato treats “being tall” or “being older than”. An Individual being a friend of another means that they have the characteristics that resemble the ideal friendship just as a man being taller than his son has characteristics that resemble Tallness. This suggests that friendships all aim towards some final good, the *proton philon*, which the ideal friendship aims at—the form of the good. It can’t be a particular good because we will still be able to ask of those particular goods what the purpose of

our friendship with them is. Thus, only something that is intrinsically valuable can fulfill the role of the proton philon.

The argument proposed at *Parmenides* 132c has been taken to point out a difficulty with the arguments at *Republic* 597c and *Timaeus* 31a-31b. Insofar as the *Lysis* argument is similar, it is worth determining if the *Parmenides* also poses problems for it. The *Parmenides* argument is thus:<sup>39</sup>

(IX.19) Suppose there is a set of particulars,  $\{a, b, c, \dots\}$ , and the form of which the particulars are instantiations,  $F_1$ .

(IX.20) There is a larger set that includes the particulars and the form,  $\{a, b, c, \dots, F_1\}$ .

(IX.21) As the particulars in  $\{a, b, c, \dots, F_1\}$  resemble the form,  $F_1$ , there must be another form,  $F_2$ , that is the form instantiated by  $\{a, b, c, \dots, F_1\}$ .

(IX.22) There is a larger set,  $\{a, b, c, \dots, F_1, F_2\}$ , and this set will require a form,  $F_3$ .

(IX.23) This process can continue *ad infinitum*.

(IX.24) So, either there are infinite forms of kind F,  $\{F_1, F_2, F_3, \dots\}$  or, since there are no foundational forms, there is no form of kind F.

Either conclusion from (IX.24) is a problem for the *Republic* and *Timaeus* arguments since the explanatory role of forms suggested in those dialogues rests on the uniqueness of forms. The relation of this argument to that of the *Lysis* argument is rather different. The important claim for the *Lysis* argument is that the proton philon be intrinsically valuable. The *Parmenides* argument produces a

problem for the uniqueness of forms, but does not produce a problem for them being intrinsically valuable.

Socrates makes an analogy with how we value other things in order to clarify his concern. A father who values his son beyond all else might appear to value a great many other things (medicine if the son is sick, education, etc.) but he values those things only insofar as they are for the son.<sup>40</sup> We speak of valuing gold and silver but we value them only insofar as they allow us to fulfill other needs. So, we may say a sick man is friends with the medical arts but this talk of friendship is secondary to his desiring health. Up to this point in the discussion we have been relying on (IX.1), but what Socrates suggests here is something like:

(IX.25) A values D and so needs B.

The analogy and discussion here are aimed at distinguishing between instrumental value and intrinsic value. Something has intrinsic value if it is valuable for its own sake, but something has instrumental value if it is valuable because it allows someone to achieve some further goal. Socrates's suggestion here is that those things that are of instrumental value are not friends and that what is a friend must have intrinsic value. In the case of the father and son, the son has intrinsic value to the father and the wine and education are only instrumentally valuable to him insofar as they bring about what he intrinsically desires, a successful son. At 220b Socrates states that when we speak we do call someone a friend when they are fulfilling this instrumental role, but that his use of analogy suggests that we

only speak that way and that what is truly a friend is whatever is intrinsically valued. The boys agree and this results in a problem since it means we must abandon (IX.1). (IX.1) entails that at least some of A's friends are friends for the purpose of some other good, which would mean they are only instrumentally valued and we have just agreed that the true friend is of intrinsic value.

Having secured agreement that we must abandon this principle, Socrates asks if the good is a friend and Lysis agrees that it seems so. This means that the good must be intrinsically valuable, but there seems to be a problem for so far we have argued that the good is a friend of the neither good-nor-bad because of some bad. If we are to accept the good is intrinsically valuable, then we need to determine whether friendship entails the existence of the bad. If the good is intrinsically valuable, then the friendship of the neither good-nor-bad to the good must be independent of the bad. From 220d – 221e an argument is presented to show that the loving of the good by the neither good-nor-bad is independent of the bad. Socrates uses an analogy with thirst and hunger to suggest that our desires can be harmful, beneficial, or neither harmful nor beneficial. So, if the bad were to be eradicated, we would no longer be harmed by our desires, but the desires that are beneficial and neither harmful-nor-beneficial would remain. From this the interlocutors agree at 221b that it is not possible for someone who loves or desires something to not love it:

$$(IX.26) \quad \square \forall x \forall y [ L(x,y) \supset \neg \diamond \neg L(x,y) ]$$

Acceptance of (IX.26) leads to the conclusion that if the neither good-nor-bad loves the good when bad is present, then they must also love the good when bad is not present. At 221c – 221d (IX.26) is used further to show that (IX.1) is false.

The argument is:

(IX.27) (IX.1) requires the existence of the bad to explain friendship.

(IX.28) (IX.26) entails that  $\forall x \forall y [L(x,y) \supset \Box L(x,y)]$ .

(IX.29) If (IX.26) is true, then (IX.1) is false because it requires the bad to explain friendship and so  $x$  loves  $y$  would be contingent on the existence of the bad, but (IX.26) requires that  $L(x,y)$  is necessary and so  $L(x,y)$  cannot be contingent on the existence of the bad.

(IX.30) We should accept (IX.26) over (IX.1) because it has independent motivation (the analogy argument at 221a – 221d)

So, if the bad was no longer existent, any friendship caused by some thing bad would no longer be a friend. But, if some one loves another they must love that other and the disappearance of the bad wouldn't stop that. At 221d we reach the conclusion that this means that we are now back at needing to explain what causes love and friendship since (IX.1) is unacceptable. We are still confused about the nature of friendship, but we know the one who desires surely desires that which he is in need of.

## **X. 221e—222e: Kinship**

Socrates asks Menexenus and Lysis if it seems right that one's desires are for what is one's own; the boys quickly agree:

(X.1) That which is in need is a friend of what is needed.<sup>41</sup>

And

(X.2) What is needed by A is that which A is deprived of.

At 221e there appears to be an abrupt shift from this discussion of need to Socrates' claim that desire is for what is one's own, to which the boys also agree. Socrates asks whether if one loves another if he would not do so if he didn't belong to the beloved in the same way. To this Lysis remains silent, but Menexenus says this is correct. If we love what belongs to us and what is kin, then the genuine lover must be loved by his darling. Here we again see reciprocity as playing a foundational role to the nature of friendship. The lover and beloved now are kin to one another and, being kin, their desires will be consistent and so reciprocal. Hippothales is mentioned again for the first time since the early part of the dialogue and is described as very pleased by what Socrates has said. Menexenus agrees with Socrates.

If kinship is to enlighten our understanding of friendship, then we must be able to distinguish between kinship and similarity.<sup>42</sup> If there is no difference between these, then it wouldn't be easy to now refute the earlier argument against similarity at 213e-215c. That argument ended with the claim that those that are alike are not friends because they are useless to one another. At 222c this difficulty is brushed aside and kinship and similarity are declared distinct so they

may continue discussing the idea that kinship provides a foundation for friendship. If kinship is to be a foundation for friendship, we must determine how to describe kinship in relation to the good. Is it:

(X.3) The good are kin to everyone and the bad are alien to all.

$$\forall x \forall y [(Gx \supset K(x,y)) \& \forall x \forall y [(Bx \supset \neg K(x,y))]$$

Or:

(X.4) The good are kin to the good, the bad are kin to the bad, and the neither-good-nor-bad are kin to the neither-good-nor-bad?

$$\forall x \forall y [(Gx \& Gy) \supset K(x,y)] \& \forall x \forall y [(Bx \& By) \supset K(x,y)] \& \forall x \forall y [[(\neg Gx \& \neg Gy) \& (\neg Bx \& \neg By)] \supset K(x,y)]$$

Menexenus and Lysis agree to (X.4), but, if that is correct, kinship can't be a foundation for friendship because it entails that the good would be friends to the good, which we have dismissed, and that the bad would be friends, which we have also dismissed. Acceptance of this proposition leads us in circles since we began with the claim that kinship would be different from similarity, but that is the very claim that (X.4) denies.

Curiously, (X.3) is left unexamined, but if we consider what we have seen in the dialogue so far, it is not hard to see that one problem might be in explaining how the good could be kin to the bad. Our explanation of kinship cannot rely simply on similarity, but it must in some way explain how someone who is kin belongs to someone else. Thus, the problem would arise in explaining how the bad belong to the good and, if we assume that the good are wholly good, it

becomes harder to see how the bad could be part of them or belong to them. The idea of the good being kin to the bad seems more Christian than Platonic. Christ, who dies for the sins of others, offers one example of how the good may be kin to the bad, but this is not a possibility for Plato.

*Symposium* 205e offers a similar counter-argument to the general claim that kinship, or belonging, can serve the role that is suggested here. Socrates reports Diotima discussing the claim that lovers are people searching for their other halves. She points out that being an other's half or belonging to them is insufficient for love because people are even willing to cut off a limb if it is diseased or beyond repair. Diotima says, "I don't think an individual takes joy in what belongs to him personally unless by "belonging to me" he means "good" and by "belonging to another" he means "bad"." (Nehamas and Woodruff) This is soon followed at 206a with the claim that people love the good and desire it to be theirs forever; this claim harmonizes well with the result from the last section of the *Lysis* that the neither-good-nor-bad seek friendship with the good.

Socrates wants to review everything they have discussed so far because problems were uncovered for each suggestion. If none of these can be shown to provide a foundation for friendship, then Socrates says he will have nothing more to say. One possible way to read this conclusion is to assume that one of the possible foundations we have reviewed is the correct answer. If we think that Socrates's claim that he will have nothing more to say means that there is nothing more to say, then the answer must be contained here and it is the purpose of the

dialogue to get us to reflect upon these ideas to find the right solution. Such an interpretation may be an overstatement. A more limited interpretation requires only that Plato has presented us with a collection of possible ways to understand friendship based on historical ideas (both poets and philosophers) and those solutions that are most readily thought of. That none of these seems successful indicates not that the answer is present here, but that the answer is not yet revealed.

#### **XI. 223a-223b: Conclusion**

Socrates doesn't get his wish as the tutors of Menexenus and Lysis arrive—drunk from the Hermaea—and demand that the boys return home. Socrates' closing remark that they are friends but can't define what it is to be friends points to the need for philosophy.<sup>43</sup> We say things that seem correct to us and make judgments, like who our friends are, without knowing whether we are correct. The concluding remark might also be an example of how practice and theoretical understanding do not always overlap. Socrates and the boys throughout the dialogue have done what friends do and certainly seem to be friends, yet they remain unable to say just what friendship entails. Thus, the practical matter of being friends is achieved without the theoretical understanding of friendship and, perhaps, when Socrates remarks earlier that he does not have a friend it is because he sees having a friend as dependent on understanding what friendship is. Without understanding what friendship is, we cannot be certain that

our friends are our friends—we may merely be acting the part. There seems some similarity here when Socrates discusses the charges against him in the *Apology*. From 20 through 24b Socrates explains how he had questioned poets and craftsmen in hopes of understanding their arts and at 22c states, “I soon realized that poets do not compose their poems with knowledge, but by some inborn talent and by inspiration, like seers and prophets who also say many fine things without any understanding of what they say” (translation by G.M.A. Grube) A similar point is made at 193e in the *Laches* when Laches agrees to Socrates’s statement that “. . . our deeds are not harmonizing with our words. In deeds I think anyone would say that we partook of courage, but in words I don’t suppose he would, if he were to listen to our present discussion.”<sup>44</sup> We’ve seen in the case of Menexenus and Lysis a pair of craftsmen of human friendship—neither of them are good, but in their limited human capacity they exhibit the reciprocal characteristics of friendship, but lack understanding of what makes them friends. In including himself among them at the end Socrates admits that being like friends does not entail understanding friendship. His parting statement that the discussion has made them all look ridiculous is similar to the end of the *Charmides* where Socrates laments his worth as an inquirer after being unable to define temperance. At 176a Socrates tells Charmides, “my advice to you would rather be to regard me as a babbler, incapable of finding out anything whatsoever by means of argument, and yourself as being exactly as happy as you are temperate.”<sup>45</sup>

## **XII. *Lysis* Redux**

At the end of the dialogue we are in a better position to examine the structure of the dialogue in order to understand Plato's argumentative strategy. The prologue, free from argumentation, sets up important information for the reader about the setting and characters of the dialogue. The young boys at the palaestra along with Socrates' trip from one gymnasium to another highlights the theme of education and the early banter between Hippothalies and Cteisippus brings to mind the bonds of friendship. Moving to the discussion of encomium and pederasty we meet the first philosophical concerns of the dialogue. On the one hand, this section ties into Plato's general attack on rhetoric; on the other, it introduces the first kind of social, reciprocal relationship that will be at the heart of this dialogue. Plato's discussion of Lysis and his parents introduce a second social, reciprocal relationship and begins to show the difficulty of explaining what being dear entails from the people in the relationship. The pederastic relationship and the ties of familial bonds are both highly important in classical Athens, so the importance of these issues would be clear to Greek readers. Both of these relationships have important social roles, so being able to explain the foundation of these roles is an important task for philosophy. At that early point in the dialogue, Plato has identified what the subject of the dialogue will be. The next part of the dialogue examines what we might think are the most obvious solutions: similarity and opposition. But, these traditional ways of explicating

friendship are shown to fail and Plato offers an explanation for why they fail: they accept a false dichotomy. With this problem identified, Plato goes on to formulate a solution not available to those that relied on the dichotomy, namely that friendship is a relation between the neither-good-nor-bad and the good. Plato explains that this does lead to a philosophical problem of identifying that for which all friends are friends. The introduction of the neither-good-nor-bad has led to friendship being philosophical (founded, as it is, on the neither-good-nor-bad's desire for the good) and so leaves us still with explaining what we mean when we speak of two men being friends. As a final point Plato suggests that human friendship is based on kinship; but, this can work only if we can distinguish kinship from similarity. That exercise is left to the reader as Plato ends the dialogue with Socrates claiming friendship with the young boys.

Socrates assumes that knowledge about something requires being able to give a definition of it; if we cannot define something then we lack understanding and, while we might have true beliefs about it, we won't know it.<sup>46</sup> The last line of the *Lysis* suggests Socrates himself fails to have this kind of knowledge of friendship, which is consistent with Socrates general claim of ignorance as described at *Apology* 21d3-7:

I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not

think I know what I do not know. (translated by G. M. A. Grube in Cooper (1997), p. 21)

A modern reader might find it strange that in a dialogue about friendship, any discussion about friendship between a man and a woman, to say nothing of friendship between women, is missing. The *Lysis* considers important social reciprocal relationships and because of this does not feature the relationships of women. The only mention of women in the dialogue comes in discussing Lysis's parents and it is clear from that discussion that the role of women is limited. Lysis's mother might punish him if he tried to use her loom, but it is his father that will punish him for other offenses. If we consider the dialogue aimed at Greek citizens, this omission might not seem so glaring. In the case of the son-parent relationship, the erastes-eromenos relationship and relationships between men (or boys) there are citizens or future citizens on each side of the relationship. It is these relationships we must understand if we are to pursue an investigation into what makes man good because, if we recall the analogy between the individual and the state, it is what makes the state good that will also make man good. And, to know what will make the state good is understanding the correct kind of relationships for its citizens to have with one another. Recall that the son-parent relationship is discussed from the point of view of the son: how should he, as a son and future citizen, relate to his parents and not how the father should relate to the son. It is the duties of the future citizen to the state and other citizens

that matter; the father, who is already a citizen, has a social but not political obligation to non-citizens.<sup>47</sup>

Plato's relationship to women as a social class is curious: in dialogues such as this one they are left out altogether, but in other dialogues certain women are at least claimed to have done remarkable things (consider Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* or Aspasia's speech in *Menexenus*). The answer to this may lie in the educative nature of the dialogues. The intended readers of *Lysis* would not expect a discussion of friendship to deal with the citizen's relationships with women nor with women's relationships to each other. Seeing women as non-political and subservient to their husbands or fathers would mean the relationship between a citizen and the women in his life is a different kind of relationship than that discussed in the dialogue. The intended readers would also have little use for a discussion about women's relationships to each other. To serve his readers Plato would feel no need to discuss women in relation to friendship.<sup>48</sup>

### Chapter Three: Plato's Conception of Friendship in the *Lysis*

#### **Introduction**

In my commentary I have argued that the *Lysis* is a rich dialogue that reveals not only Plato's thoughts on friendship but also an analysis of argumentative strategies and criticism of them. Understanding the structure of those arguments is important in understanding the dialogue fully, but it is also true that the content of those arguments and the subject of the dialogue generally is friendship. In this chapter I examine just what the nature of friendship is according to the *Lysis* and what justification for friendship emerges from the dialogue. Plato's conception of friendship in the *Lysis* is complicated by a tension between how friendship is portrayed in the dramatic character of the work and how the dialogue's arguments address the nature of friendship. If we examined just the arguments of the *Lysis* we would miss some issues about friendship that Plato addresses dramatically but not in argument. The arguments of the dialogue concern one aspect of friendship, namely, as it fulfills the needs of the one befriending the other, but several of the dramatic elements show a different aspect of friendship: friendship as a gift freely given to the other by the one befriending them. The arguments look to see what friends have in common and what friends can do for one another. The dramatic elements, such as Socrates' actions with the boys and the continued references to parent-child relations (an affectionate

relationship that doesn't fit the arguments) point to friendship as a gift given to others. We must look at both of these aspects of friendship in the light of the *Lysis* in order to see what Plato is telling us about friendship.

I begin by considering in a general way, independent of Plato, what characteristics we expect from friendship, both in terms of friendship-as-need and friendship-as-gift. I then use this general analysis for a comparison with what we find in the *Lysis*. I continue the analysis by also outlining what justification for friendship we can find in the *Lysis*. I conclude by suggesting what valuable lessons we can learn from Plato about the nature of friendship.

### **I. General Criteria for Friendship<sup>49</sup>**

Philosophical questions about friendship can be divided into two categories: questions about the nature of friendship and questions about the justification for friendship. The first question concerns what must obtain for one person to be a friend of another; what are the criteria by which we may know when one is a friend? The second question concerns why one person should be a friend to another; what benefit—to the one doing the befriending, the befriended or community—does friendship produce? The two categories are not wholly distinct since what one believes the friendship relation requires may well influence why we should have friends. So, there is an intimate relation between the two kinds of questions, but at least at the outset, it is convenient to separate them. Plato is interested in both kinds of questions and his analysis in the *Lysis*

runs the two together. In brief, Plato's arguments presents the nature of friendship as being for intellectual fulfillment and the need for that intellectual fulfillment is justified as it achieves the good for the individual and the state. Friendship brings about intellectual fulfillment by close, intimate social contact between those who can engage in philosophical reflection. Because we should desire intellectual fulfillment certain kinds of people—those best able to interact in philosophical conversations—are best suited for friendship. Since what is important is the person's abilities and not the person themselves, friends are replaceable. If they can no longer help in intellectual fulfillment, then they are no longer needed as friends. The drama of the dialogue agrees with the arguments in that it shows friends bringing about intellectual fulfillment but it shows this as being given as a gift to the boys from Socrates. The gift aspect of friendship is also found in the discussion about the parent-son relationship early in the dialogue (206e-210e) and the way in which that relationship is brought up again later in the dialogue (219d-e). If Socrates is wiser than the boys, then his offering to converse with them and educate them is a gift; so too with parents and children: the care given by parents to their children go beyond what could be expected if it was done for self-interest. Parental love and care involves parents bestowing gifts on their children.

It is important for the discussion of friendship to disambiguate it from love.<sup>50</sup> Love is a feeling or attitude one person may have for another, but friendship is a relation between two people. It makes sense to talk of unrequited

love, but not unrequited friendship. Feeling love or desire for another does not presuppose that the other shares these feelings, is aware of them, or even that they are aware of the lover at all. The same cannot be said of friendship. If A is a friend of B, B is aware and knows A (this will follow from what is said below). This is one way in which friendship is distinct from simple benevolence. I may be benevolent to my neighbor—perhaps always shoveling the snow from his sidewalk before he wakes up—but if he never knows who does this for him I am not his friend.

The distinction between friendship as need and friendship as gift is explored in C. S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* as part of his exploration of the nature of love. For Lewis, love is ultimately grounded in love of God, but we need not agree with his theology to use the distinction he makes.<sup>51</sup> As an example of the dual aspects of friendship he writes, "Need-love says of a woman "I cannot live without her"; Gift-love longs to give her happiness, comfort, protection—if possible, wealth." Lewis's insight is that there is not a single nature to friendship, but that it includes two complementary but distinct parts. On the one hand, friendship does something for the one doing the befriending: friends fulfill needs we have that we cannot fill on our own. On the other hand, friendship involves a desire to provide for our friends that which they cannot get on their own. Both aspects of friendship must be addressed to have a complete account of friendship. If we approach friendship with only our needs in mind, then we will not be befriending others but merely using them for our own needs. If we approach

friendship only in terms of gift-giving, we will be seen by others not as a friend, but a servant. Friendship requires both aspects to be complete.

What must be the case for A to be a friend of B? Since friendship seems to rely on a kind of reciprocity, we could start with the question, “what makes A and B friends?” but I have avoided this wording as it assumes but does not show why this kind of relationship is reciprocal. While I believe that reciprocity plays an important role in friendship, at least some arguments in the *Lysis* question that assumption in the section “The Good, The Bad and the Neither Good-Nor-Bad” (216c–219c). The arguments in the dialogue that seem to result in the idea that friendship might not be reciprocal either fail or change the question at hand from the nature of friendship to the justification for friendship.

We can start thinking about friendship by noticing that it is a voluntary social relationship: A is a friend of B because A wants to be such. In this way it differs from familial or clan relationships based on biological or social criteria; people in familial or clan relationships bear those relations independent of their desire. Second, it seems correct to say that if A is a friend of B, then A cares for B’s welfare more than A cares for the welfare of strangers or non-friends. Of course, A also probably cares for the welfare of his family more than strangers, so this alone does not single out friendship, but it is one thing we expect from a friend. Third, if A is a friend of B, then A and B must share in some joint activity. If A never had any contact with B, we would not say he is friends with B even if, perhaps out of general benevolence, he cared about B. Even if A cared

for B's welfare more than anyone else, if they did not share in some activity it would not be right to call A B's friend. This care that A has for B's welfare also must be to the end of promoting B's own good. If, for example, B was A's slave, A might value and care about B not as a person unto himself, but only insofar as it benefited A. A friend doesn't only care about the befriended but does so for the befriended's sake. Along with this idea of caring for the friend for their own sake, it also seems correct that A wants to be friends specifically with B—not just someone like B or merely with characteristics similar to B, but that by becoming friends A comes to value B as a particular individual. It is also the case that we often assume that if A is a friend of B, then B is a friend of A. Reflecting on these assumptions, we have the following criteria for friendship:

(I.1) Friendship is a voluntary social relationship.

(I.2) Friendship is based on caring for the befriended.

(I.3) The care one friend has for the befriended is directed at the welfare of the befriended for the befriended's sake.

(I.4) Friendship requires close, social contact.

(I.5) A friendship is with a particular person—not just somebody that has certain interests or characteristics, but a specific individual.

(I.6) Friendship is reciprocal: if A is a friend of B, then B is a friend of A.

(I.1) can be seen in both aspects of friendship: we choose both who we believe can fulfill our needs and also to whom we wish to give of ourselves. (I.2) and (I.3) embody the idea of friendship-as-gift: our friend is important to us for their

own sake not merely because they can do something for us. The fact that they can fulfill our needs might make them candidates for friendship, but our care for them makes them friends. (I.4) relates to both aspects of friendship as it is through such close contact that we have our needs fulfilled and are able to give to others. (I.5) results, perhaps, from the shared activity of friends. As friends share more—giving to each other and being fulfilled by them—our bond to that person grows stronger. We begin our friendships with strangers, but the activity of friendship strengthens our ties to particular people and not the characteristics that first attract us to them. Reciprocity, as described in (I.6), again points to the dual nature of friendship as composed of need and gift. As a friend fulfills the needs of their friends and is made better by them and they desire to give of themselves to the friend, the more reciprocity shown by friends, the closer the friends become. Allowing these six criteria to form the basis of our understanding of friendship, we can now turn to see how Plato deals with these criteria in the *Lysis*.

## **II. Plato on Criteria for Friendship in the *Lysis***

Plato clearly signals that friendship is a voluntary social relationship throughout the dramatic elements of the dialogue. In the Prologue (203a-204e) Socrates chances upon some youth and accepts their invitation to converse with them. Except for Menexenus and Ctesippus, who are cousins, there are no family ties mentioned between characters and there are no formal ties between Socrates and the boys. This is not an enforced encounter nor one mandated by custom.

We can also see Plato's acknowledgement of the voluntary nature of friendship by the way he first briefly discusses erotic relationships (205a-206d) and familial relations (206e-210e) before moving on to friendship. By doing this he has delineated three distinct kinds of interpersonal relationships: erotic love, family and friends. Erotic love is shown to be pursued by one in hopes of getting possession of the other. Hippocrates is pursuing Lysis, but does not want Lysis to feel the same as him but rather he wants Lysis to be his possession or conquest. We can see this in the language Socrates uses at 205d-205e in discussing Hippothales hopes for having Lysis:

And hearing this I said, "O ridiculous Hippothales, do you both compose and sing your victory song before you have prevailed?"

And:

"Most of all," I said, "these songs extend to you for if you take this boy **E** when he is such, the glory is yours having said and sung the songs just as if you had been victorious because you got the boy. But if he flees from you, then the greater the praise you have said of the boy, the greater your deprivation of both beauty and good and you will seem to be ridiculous. Really, dear friend, the **206** skilled lover doesn't praise the beloved before he is caught, being afraid of how the future will be. And at the same time the beautiful, whenever someone praises and glorifies them, are filled up with pride and arrogance. Or do you think not?"

“I do,” he said.

“Then, the greater braggarts they become, the harder to catch?”

“Indeed it is likely.”

“Really, what sort of hunter does it seem to be if the hunter frightens and makes the game harder to catch?”

All of this takes the beloved to be a possession of Hippothales—he is a thing to be hunted, caught and kept from fleeing—and not an equal or a friend. Whether or not erotic love is voluntary or not is not discussed in the *Lysis*, but the *Phaedrus* gives reasons for thinking it is not at 254a:

Now when the charioteer looks in the eye of love, his entire soul is suffused with a sense of warmth and starts to fill with tingles and the goading of desire. As for the horses, the one who is obedient to the charioteer is still controlled, then as always, by its sense of shame and so prevents itself from jumping on the boy. The other one leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer, trying to make them go up to the boy and suggest to him the pleasures of sex.<sup>52</sup>

The crooked horse is out of control and drives erotic desire; it is not voluntarily decided by the soul to pursue this but the soul finds itself in this condition. Erotic love, as described in both the *Lysis* and *Phaedrus*, is close to friendship-as-need: it concerns only how the beloved can fulfill the needs of the lover.

The *Lysis* also shows familial love to not be voluntary like friendship but demanding mutual caring in the section “Parental Love” (206e-210e). At 209c-d Plato describes how Lysis’s father will come to rely on Lysis just as Lysis has relied on him as a boy. He writes, “therefore, your father does not wait for your coming of age for all things, but when he believes your thinking better than his, in this way he turns to you both for himself and his things”. At 210d Plato states that his father will love him insofar as he is useful, which suggests his father appreciates him for his usefulness. Thus, the kind of obligation we find discussed here are expected of children and not given completely voluntarily but because of it is expected of children to behave in this way. Again this addresses friendship-as-need for the parent, but it is clear that getting Lysis to the point of being a better judge about some subject than his parents is a gift to Lysis from them. Lysis can only fulfill the role of a friend-as-need if he is given freely the education required to make him useful.

The parent-child relationship is mentioned by Socrates again later in the dialogue at 219d—219e, although in this initial discussion Socrates claims they will move away from it. We may consider what rhetorical force this discussion of the parent-child relation has in a broader discussion of friendship. Keeping in mind the dual nature of friendship we can see that while Socrates and Lysis have discussed the relationship in terms of what Lysis and his parents get out of the relation it is clear that there must be more to the parent-child relation. As it stands the discussion could just as easily be about Lysis’s father’s favorite slave, whom

he also might value insofar as he is useful. What is left out of this discussion are the ways in which Lysis's parents give to Lysis for his own good, not theirs. Sons may very well be useful to their parents, but the very lack of a discussion about what parents give freely to their children draws the reader's attention to that aspect of the relationship.

Both erotic love and family are put to the side after the discussion of parental love so that we may turn to the voluntary relationship of friendship.<sup>53</sup> The early discussion and laying aside of these kinds of relationships suggests that Plato is presenting friendship, though possibly sharing some characteristics with love and familial relationships, as a distinct kind of relationship.<sup>54</sup> Erotic love, which seeks to fulfill the needs of the lover, shares with friendship the characteristic of relying on the other for the fulfillment of our needs. Parenting shares with friendship the giving of gifts along with the need-fulfillment, but, unlike friendship, the parent-child relationship is not voluntary.

Toward the end of the dialogue Plato returns to a kind of involuntary relationship, kinship, and shows how friendship connects to it. While this connection is briefly explored as a possible foundation for friendship it is found insufficient in argument because no argument can be produced to distinguish kinship from similarity, but the dialogue shows this kind of relationship—between Lysis and Menexenus—as friendship. The problem with kinship lies in explaining how it is different from similarity. Plato seems to leave this as a task for the reader:

For if neither the beloved nor the lovers nor the like nor the unlike  
 nor the good nor the kin nor the other things we have gone  
 through—for indeed I don't even remember all of them because  
 there are so many—but if none of them is a friend, I have nothing  
 else to say.

This passage seems to indicate that there is more to say about the possibilities that the dialogue has explored. Given the way kinship is reintroduced and the way in which it has been shown in the dialogue through the dramatic setting and actions it is worth considering why Plato has done this. By drawing our attention again to the arguments of the dialogue and the ways in which they have conceived friendship, Plato may be indicating to the reader that the arguments do not provide a complete explanation of friendship, but the dialogue as a whole does. We must look beyond the arguments to the dramatic elements for a complete analysis. And, if we are to look beyond the arguments to the dramatic elements we are drawn to the gift-giving aspect of friendship that we see in parenting and in the discussion between Socrates and the boys.

Plato has another good reason for re-introducing kinship at the end of the dialogue because kinship and friendship share an important characteristic: they are reciprocal. If A is kin of B, then B is kin of A and, if we are right about (I.6), then a complete account of friendship will explain that this is true with friendship as well. Plato is drawing attention to the fact that kinship and friendship are similar but that similarity cannot simply be explained by a claim like: if A is kin

of B, then A is similar to B. Such an explanation won't work given the argument in "Similarity" (213e-215c).

When Plato abandons the discussion of kinship at 222e-223a he moves from philosophical argumentation to a dramatic ending. The dialogue ends with Socrates asking the boys that he be considered friends with them even though they have been unable to state exactly what makes them friends. By having Socrates say that they are friends at the end after having only met Lysis and Menexenus a short time before, suggests that Plato thinks that what has happened between Socrates and the boys is essential to friendship. This suggests that what Socrates and the boys have gone through is a sufficient basis to be called friends. The heart of friendship must be the intellectual discussions about a philosophical problem. If we look at what happens in the dialogue, we see men and boys of good character discussing a philosophical problem in hopes of helping each other come to know something that they can't figure out on their own. This outlook is shared in the *Phaedrus* at 256a-b in a discussion about how friendship can result between a man and a boy if they follow the path of philosophy and not fall into the passions of their souls: "Now if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds, which lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy, their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding."

We can also see the dual nature of friendship—encompassing both needing and giving—by considering how Lysis and Menexenus behave in the dialogue. Lysis is shown to be a good friend who sticks with philosophy and

shows a talent for it. Menexenus, acts as a dramatic foil to Lysis. If Lysis is the ideal friend, then Menexenus is the least we can expect from a friend: he is inattentive and leaves the discussion for a time and he is not nearly as astute as Lysis, but he keeps with the conversation hoping for the best. Lysis, the ideal friend, stays with Socrates throughout the dialogue, giving of himself to further his and Socrates's knowledge of friendship (and in doing has Socrates help fulfill his need to know). Menexenus, by leaving and coming back, does not fully give of himself and is not as committed to dialogue with Socrates. Plato's portrayal of the boys draws his readers' attention to what we expect of friends and the shared pursuits friends undertake.

Plato shows us the way friends care for one another through the dramatic setting of the dialogue, Socrates' actions and the arguments in "The Good, The Bad, and The Neither Good-Nor-Bad" (216c – 219c) and "Kinship" (221e – 222e). The dialogue shows Socrates engaging in philosophical conversation with the boys about friendship so they will all understand it better. In this way Plato tells us that friendship brings about the betterment of the friend. Achieving a better understanding of a philosophical topic brings the friends closer to the knowledge of the good. We can see that this is not an accidental characteristic of friendship by the way Socrates behaves early in the dialogue: he is not interested in Hippothales' love poetry as poetry but only his intentions in writing it. He seeks to help the boys through philosophical discussion, not discussions of poetry, which might follow naturally from Ctesippus's mention of Hippothales's poetry.

Nor is he interested in athletic endeavors, which would not be out of place in a paleastra, nor by playing games, such as knucklebones that some of the boys are playing in the undressing room. All of these activities are things we might think that friends share: talking about art, engaging in athletic endeavors, or playing games. But, in each case we are not being the best friend we can be, for if we value the friendship for the sake of the friend, then we should worry about his philosophical enlightenment and all of these other activities take time away from pursuing that higher end. So, while these activities might be a lesser kind of friendship or a kind of bonding that cements friends together, they are secondary to the pursuit of philosophy. This also indicates to us that while friendship is for the benefit of the friend first and foremost, it is also for the good of society. If we recall the alignment of the good of the individual and the state as seen in the *Republic*, then personal friendship also performs an important social function.<sup>55</sup> By making the friends better people and citizens, the state is made better.

Commentators like Vlastos who take the *Lysis* to offer an instrumental account of friendship neglect the aspect of friendship as gift and concentrate solely on the notion of friendship as need and on the conditions that make friendships arise. Making men better and so making the state better are not mere instrumental ends for the one who is doing the befriending, but together constitute an intrinsically good end for all. When we consider the instrumental nature of friendship in relation to the dual aspects of friendship it is useful to distinguish two ways something might be instrumental. First, friendship might be thought to

be instrumental in only one direction: A's being a friend of B might entail that B is used as an instrument for A to reach A's goals without considering the goals of B. But, we might also think of friendship being instrumental in the sense that friendship between A and B means that A and B jointly are an instrument to further A's and B's goals. It is this second sense in which the *Lysis* characterizes friendship; this kind of reciprocal instrumentalism is consistent with our general understanding of friendship. The first kind of instrumentalism, a selfish instrumentalism, is in conflict with the conception of friendship outlined earlier.

Plato's arguments about friendship also suggests that any friendship is only contingently with a particular individual and that what is more important is the kind of person we befriend and the goal of friendship. This is the upshot of the arguments in "The Good, The Bad and The Neither Good-Nor-Bad" and "Proton Philon". In those sections of the *Lysis* we see that what draws us to friendship is a desire for self-improvement through better understanding of what is good. These sections of the dialogue begin with an attempt to understand friendship by means of an analogy with health and medicine. We take medicine because of an illness for the purpose of our health. This formulation indicates that we are now not discussing what friends share or makes them friends but instead looking for a justification for it. We are asked to consider why we have friends and for what purpose they serve. So we are looking to be able to fill out a schema like:

(II.1) A is a friend of B because of C for the purpose of D.

The suggestion made is that A is a friend of B because of some ignorance for the purpose of becoming good. The “Proton Philon” section of the dialogue deepens this analysis by offering reasons for the idea that there must be a final friend—some thing must be the final foundation that needs no further justification for A to be its friend. This is an intellectual foundation for friendship, what matters is not who the friend is but what that friend can do for his friends. This makes friendship largely impersonal—what matters is the kind of relationship one has not with whom one has it. What matters is that friendship brings us to self-improvement and not who the friend is that helps this happen.

The whole dialogue stands as evidence for the claim that friendship involves shared, intimate social contact. When Socrates ends the dialogue by saying he wants to be counted among the boys’ friends, he clearly indicates that whatever has been going on in the dialogue is an example of friendship. When the dialogue begins Socrates has not even met Lysis and Menexenus so they could not have been friends previously. This tells us not only that shared activity is required for friendship but what kind of activity: intellectual discussion aimed at answering a philosophical problem. Friendship leads to intellectual development of the friends; it is by helping each other develop in this way that the bonds of friendship arises.

Rowe reports that “The Lysis has rather little interest in the idea of reciprocity as such, except incidentally. Of course, insofar as the dialogue is about *philia* in the narrow sense (i.e., our attachments to other people), reciprocity

will be involved, and Socrates acknowledges this at several points.” (Rowe 2000, 215) It is true that the dialogue does not have explicit arguments about how reciprocity fits into friendship but it is not quite right to say the dialogue has “rather little interest” in it. First, the literary form of Plato’s dialogue requires reciprocity in conversation. The text does not report a speech by one speaker nor a lecture by Socrates to the boys, but a discussion that requires reciprocity to succeed. Second, human friendship is founded on a more general reciprocity of caring for each other’s well-being. So, while it is true that Plato leaves unanswered questions about the expectation of reciprocity or what kind of reciprocity we owe our friends, it still seems that the dialogue shows reciprocity to be important in understanding friendship. Both aspects of friendship, as need and as gift, rely on reciprocity for the relationship to be a friendship. Plato does not suggest we use others to fulfill our needs without also being a friend nor does he suggest the giving of gifts is merely one-sided in friendship. To be a friend to another requires that we reciprocate the affection and help we receive from them. To say that a dialogue on friendship has little interest in reciprocity involves a misunderstanding of the nature of friendship.

### **III. Platonic Criteria of Friendship**

Platonic friendship has been shown to rest on the following principles:

(III.1) Friendships are relationships entered into voluntarily.

(III.2) Friendships are based on caring for the individual for his benefit.

(III.3) Plato sees an individual's good as consistent with the good of the city, this benefit is also for the one who is befriending as well. By making friends better I make myself better too.

(III.4) These relationships require intimate social contact because there is no other way to bring about shared intellectual activity.

(III.5) (III.2) and (III.4) entail that the individual is not as important as the kind of person—friends are replaceable because what is important is their ability to bring us out of ignorance.

(III.6) Reciprocity plays a role in that the kind of self-improvement we seek—in particular becoming more philosophically aware—requires discussions with others. Philosophical discussions require that the participants give of themselves by laying out their ideas for others to consider and review. Socrates's actions throughout the dialogue show how a friend gives of himself to make the other a better person.

There is a good deal of consistency between Plato's understanding of friendship and the model I laid out earlier in the paper. The major disagreement is between (I.5) and (III.5). Plato's arguments offer an impersonal model of friendship because the intellectual nature of friendship should drive us towards certain kinds of people—those that can make us and ourselves more enlightened, but not towards particular people. A second difference is that Platonic friendship requires that the shared social activity be intellectual, but it is possible to think that this is too constricting and that it is only shared social

activity that is required. Plato has good reason for requiring that the shared activity be intellectual in character. Friendship requires caring for the other person for their own good and if we believe that people are made better by becoming wise, which is Plato's position, then if one truly values another as a friend the person befriending the other will want them to be made wise. To do that we must undertake shared intellectual pursuits.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The *Lysis* reveals the dual nature of friendship through Plato's skill as a philosopher and literary stylist. In argument he discusses the ways in which friendship is founded in our needs. Through the dramatic elements of the work he addresses the gift-giving aspect of friendship. The dichotomy in the way these aspects of friendship are addressed requires an explanation: why has Plato dealt with some aspects in argument and others through literary means? There are three possibilities:

(IV.1) It was accidental on Plato's part.

(IV.2) Friendship-as-need can be argued for; Friendship-as-gift cannot be.

(IV.3) Arguments for friendship-as-gift were to be addressed in another work.

(IV.1) seems unlikely given the great care in both argumentation and literary style the dialogues as a whole exhibits. They do not appear to be haphazardly constructed but rather well-thought out texts both in terms of argumentation and they settings in which those arguments take place. (IV.3) is possibly true, but

even if that were the case, it would not explain why here in the *Lysis* Plato has chosen to look at friendship as he has. It is also the case that this aspect of friendship is not addressed elsewhere in argument. This leaves us with (IV.2) for which I think a reasonable argument can be made. Plato's line of thinking may be thus: friendship begins in our needs, so what requires argumentation is related to friendship-as-need. What grows out of friendship-as-need, however, is the stronger bonds found in friendship-as-gift. There is no argument to be made for friendship-as-gift because once one understands the nature of friendship-as-need and the good that comes from it, as Socrates seems to understand and, perhaps, parents do, there is no need to also argue for friendship-as-gift. Understanding friendship-as-need involves seeing the value of friendship-as-gift that does not require argumentation but can be shown through example. One such example is the conversations between Socrates and Lysis throughout the dialogue.

There are two issues addressed in the dialogue: the nature of friendship and the justification for it. The arguments of the sections "The Good, The Bad, and the Neither Good-Nor-Bad" and "Proton Philon", explain what justifies and necessitates friendship, while most of the rest of the dialogue is aimed at exploring the nature of interpersonal friendship. What makes someone a friend of an other are their good qualities (Lysis is described early on as καλός τε κἀγαθός and he is clearly the one Socrates wishes to befriend most). This has philosophical importance: if what makes Lysis friendworthy are his good qualities, then Plato's understanding of friendship is impersonal. It is only

contingent that Lysis is worthy of being a friend; what is morally required of friendship is that it is with those that are καλός τε καὶ ἀγαθός. Those who are of good character are worthy of being friends as they will be the ones who can best achieve the ends of friendship. What binds Socrates and Lysis as friends is their shared philosophical conversation: all those who seek or have the good are worthy of being friends. Without sharing such conversations there is nothing that binds the two together in pursuit of the good, which “The Good, The Bad, and the Neither Good-Nor-Bad” suggests is necessary. Some might not agree about the impersonal nature of friendship because they place the importance of friendship on the individual person and not their actions or character, but the Platonic conception of friendship might lessen their concern in the following way. What makes us friends is impersonal, but wanting the good brings about the good for both friends and the state. Friendship brings about not just better individuals, but a better society for all. But, on the whole, these do not seem to be the kind of relationships people seek out. Platonic friendship requires holding people to high intellectual standards. If we do not hold them to the highest standards, then they cannot fulfill our need for a partner in philosophy and we are not giving of ourselves fully since we would be giving less attention and care to them than we can. Insofar as we fail to behave in these ways, we fail those we wish to have as friends and fail to be a friend.

Appendix A: Vlastos's Interpretation of the *Lysis*

Vlastos's "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato" (hereafter, IOLP) investigates Plato's treatment of love in multiple dialogues including the *Lysis*. Vlastos presents a developmental approach to love in the dialogues according to which the *Lysis* is an early dialogue that ends in *aporia* about the nature of the *πρῶτον φίλον* and is devoid of Plato's mature metaphysics. According to this view, the solution to Plato's theory of love is found later in the *Republic* and *Symposium*. As many later writers on the *Lysis* take Vlastos's argument as a starting point, it is important to understand what Vlastos argues. Vlastos takes the following for granted in IOLP:

1. We can distinguish early Platonic dialogues from middle and late dialogues.
2. Early Platonic dialogues reveal a Socratic philosophy that is distinct from the mature Platonic philosophy.

He uses these assumptions to argue for two claims related to the *Lysis*:

3. The *Lysis* is an early Platonic dialogue.
4. The *Lysis* reveals a Socratic philosophy free from Plato's mature idea of transcendental forms.

In this brief essay I show that independent evidence for (1.) is weak and so if we are to accept (2.) – (4.) it must be because they are better supported internally—within the *Lysis*—than the alternative. I then suggest that Vlastos fails to provide

enough evidence to think that (2.) – (4.) are forced on us because of the internal evidence. The dialogue is open to more than the developmental interpretation favored by Vlastos and those who take his work as foundational to their own readings of the dialogue.

### **I. Platonic Chronology and Stylometric Evidence**

Howland (1991) presents an argument for thinking that any chronology is underdetermined by current evidence. The evidence for any such chronology is of two kinds: testimonial and stylometric. Ancient testimony seems both scarce and unenlightening. Aristotle in *The Politics* mentions that Plato wrote *The Laws* after *The Republic*. Diogenes Laertius suggests that many revisions of the opening of *The Republic* had been found. Dionyis of Halicanais writes that Plato was widely believed to revise his work even during his final days.<sup>56</sup> On the one hand, Aristotle gives reason for thinking *The Laws* are composed later than *The Republic*; on the other hand, Diogenes and Dionyis give reason for thinking that either work could have been revised after the initial composition. We need not examine the problem further; the evidence presented by Howland is sufficient to show that ancient testimony comprises reports that can be used in various ways and do not speak with a unified voice. With his proximity to Plato it might be tempting to favor Aristotle over others, but given the little evidence for Platonic chronology in Aristotle it is hard to base such an important premise on it or, at least, acceptance of it is not demanded by this level of evidence.

Stylometry is the statistical study of grammar and style in an attempt to place a group of works, in this case the dialogues, in relative chronological order. The successful use of stylometry relies on two things. First, there must be an independent way of establishing a chronological reference point. Second, there must be context independent elements of Plato's style to establish the chronological evolution of his prose. (Howland 206) If there is no independent evidence for a reference point, then charting changes in style might go in either chronological direction. If there are no identifiable context-independent elements of style, then we cannot be sure that the stylometric evidence is charting the evolution of prose style because it could be relying on context-dependent choices. As a gross analogy, consider a contemporary writer charged with writing a letter in the style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. If the writer is very good, then, on stylometric grounds, the composition might be given a much earlier date of composition. Howland's conclusion is that no stylometric analysis of Plato has yet to meet these requirements.

The falsity of (1.) alone does not entail the falsity of (2.) and (3.) since (1.) is a claim about our epistemic ability in relation to the other claims. The falsity of (1.) does cause problems for accepting (2.) and (3.), however, since without (1.) there is little motivation for how we could reliably confirm (2.), (3), and (4.). Since we cannot reliably distinguish the order of composition, we could get at the same idea as (2.) through (4.) by dropping the temporal aspect of the claim and making it this instead:

5. Some dialogues reveal a Socratic philosophy that is distinct from Plato's philosophy and the *Lysis* is one of the dialogues of Socratic philosophy.

Evidence for these claims would have to be found in the *Lysis* and IOLP does try to give some evidence for it, but I will argue that the evidence offered by IOLP does not guarantee the truth of (5.). The important aspects of Vlastos's argument are thus:

6. The *Lysis* does not rely on Platonic metaphysics.

7. The *Lysis* presents an instrumental theory of friendship.

## II. Parental Love, the Medical Arts Analogy and Instrumentalism

Vlastos begins his analysis by looking at the argument from 206e - 210e concerning parental love. He argues that the argument in that part of the dialogue leads to the conclusion that a necessary condition for one person, A, to love another, B, is that B produces good. Vlastos makes this claim based on 210c-d:

Now therefore, neither your father nor anyone else loves you,  
insofar as you are useless.

And:

Therefore, if you become wise, dear boy, everyone will be your friend and akin to you—for you will be useful and good—if not, neither an other nor your father will be your friend; neither your mother nor kin.

Vlastos relies on these passages to suggest that being loved involves being useful and that a completely useless person would be without friends.<sup>57</sup> But, the passages leave it ambiguous for whom B must produce good to be a friend to A.

There are three possibilities:

8. A loves B if and only if B produces good for B.

9. A loves B if and only if B produces good for A.

10. A loves B if and only if B produces good for someone else.

(8.) would suggest, for example, that Lysis's father might love Lysis only if Lysis produces good for Lysis and so friendship would not be instrumental but affection for those that care for themselves. This is in fact consistent with the second passage where Socrates suggests if Lysis becomes wise he will have many friends since becoming wise intrinsically better the individual who is wise and only accidentally better those with whom he interacts. Thus, reading Plato as presenting (8.) in the dialogue at this point is not without merit. Vlastos, however, chooses to take the example involving medical arts at 218e to be an indication that Plato accepts (9.):

“Therefore because of illness and for the purpose of health he is a friend of the medical arts?”

“Yes.”

“And indeed the illness is a bad?”

“How not?”

“And what of health?” I said, “good or bad or neither?”

“Good,” he said.

Vlastos takes this example to mean the sick loves the medical arts for their health, not health in general. The sick love medicine for their own health because it will make them better, but they are not friends to medicine because medicine in general promotes health. There is something strange in Vlastos jumping from 210c-d all the way to 218e because the dialogue actually makes its way through several other arguments between these passages and the line of argument started at 206e ends at 210e as Menexenus returns to the discussion. So, there is a question as to how these two passages should be connected if at all.

Vlastos’s jumping from 210d to 218e is symptomatic of an analytical reading of the dialogues that looks at the arguments without paying too much attention to the dramatic structure in which those arguments are presented. The dialogue, however, is not one long argument and, paying attention to the dramatic structure reveals that the argument of which 210d is part ends at 210e when Socrates and the boys decide to try a different approach to the problem of friendship. Between 210e and 218e at least four separate arguments are explored. Moving haphazardly through the dialogue, as it appears that Vlastos has done here, leads to associating parts of two separate arguments as if they are one.

Vlastos takes 219d2-4 to show that, according to the theory here, unless a man is the *πρῶτον φίλον*, then it is a mistake to say that we love him for his own sake. Plato writes:

Then, isn't it necessary for us to give up going this way or to come to some beginning principle, which will no longer lead on to some other friend, but will come to that which is the first friend, and for the purpose of which we say all the other friends are friends?"

In my commentary I suggest that the proton philon is knowledge of the good and that our desire for the good is what grounds friendship. Plato addresses the fact that this does not explain human friendship when one of the pair is not the proton philon. He states that we need an account of why we call people friends when one is not the proton philon. Painting this as not loving the other for his own sake makes it sound worse than it might be from Plato's point of view. If knowledge of the good is the reason for which we are friends and our friend brings that about then we do love him insofar as he partakes of the good; we do love him for himself insofar as he is good and we seek that which is good. Also, if in writing the *Lysis* Plato had the political philosophy of the *Republic* in mind, then knowledge of the good makes both friends better.

Vlastos goes on to treat the *Lysis* as if the conclusion of the parental love argument is the conclusion of the dialogue: on p. 13 he writes, "let us try out what we heard from Socrates in the *Lysis*. 'You will be loved,' Socrates told Lysis there, 'if and only if you are useful.'" This is clearly a reference to that early argument of the dialogue, but even within the dialogue Socrates and the boys give up on this proposition.

### III. Begging the Question and Platonic Metaphysics in the *Lysis*

Vlastos argues that the *Lysis* offers no solution to the question of what the *πρῶτον φίλον* is. Vlastos reaches this conclusion because he assumes that the dialogues chronicle the development of Plato's thought, a position he makes explicit in the Appendix to IOLP. Indeed, at the beginning of the appendix he makes his opposition to the alternative, the view that Plato's philosophy remains consistent throughout the dialogues, by posing the issue like this: "I can at least point out the frailty of the evidence on which the Platonic ontology of the middle dialogues has been read into the *Lysis*." Thus, Vlastos begins with the assumptions that the metaphysics of Plato develop over time and that the *Lysis* is early. He presents the evidence for the "later" metaphysics as being two cases of the same problem: misunderstanding Greek. His first point concerns the use of *παρειμι*, *παρουσία* at 217 d-e:

Καὶ μὴν παρείηγ' ἄν αὐταῖς ταύτῳ τοῦτο λευκότης. --Ναί.--  
 Ἄλλ' ὁμως οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον ἄν εἶεν λευκαί πω, ἀλλὰ παρούσης  
 λευκότητος οὔτε τι λευκαί οὔτε μέλαιναί εἰσιν.--Ἀληθῆ--Ἄλλ'  
 ὅταν δὴ, ὦ φίλε, τὸ γῆρας αὐταῖς ταύτῳ τοῦτο χρῶμα  
 ἐπαγάγη τότε ἐγένοντο οἷόνπερ τὸ παρόν, λευκοῦ παρουσία  
 λευκαί.--Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;--Τοῦτο τοίνυν ἐρωτῶ νῦν δὴ, εἰ ὦ ἄν τι  
 παρῆ, τοιοῦτον ἔσται τὸ ἔχον οἷον τὸ παρόν· ἢ ἐὰν μὲν κατὰ  
 τινα τρόπον παρῆ, ἔσται, ἐὰν δὲ μή, οὔ;--Οὔτω μᾶλλον, ἔφη.--  
 καὶ τὸ μήτε κακὸν ἄρα μήτ'ἀγαθὸν ἐνίοτε κακοῦ παρόντος

οὐπω κακὸν ἔστιν, ἔστιν δ' ὅτε ἤδη τὸ τοιοῦτον γέγονεν.--Πάνυ γε.-- Οὐκοῦν ὅταν μήπω κακὸν ἦ κακοῦ παρόντος, αὕτη μὲν ἡ παρουσία ἀγαθοῦ αὐτὸ ποιεῖ ἐπιθυμεῖν· ἡ δὲ κακὸν ποιοῦσα ἀποστερεῖ αὐτὸ τῆς τε ἐπιθυμίας ἅμα καὶ τῆς φιλίας τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.

He cites Shorey's observation from *What Plato Said* that "a subtle digression on the meaning of *presence* either illustrates the unity of Plato's thought or indicates that the *Lysis* is "late"." (Shorey 1933, 117) Vlastos maintains that the use of *παρεῖμι* and related words is insufficient for thinking it represents the technical use Plato makes of them in other (for Vlastos, later) dialogues. He relies on two points. First, *παρεῖμι* is as old as Homer (he cites *Odyssey* 17, 347) and common in other Greek writers, such as Aeschylus and Democritus. Second, the *πρῶτον φίλον* argument is sometimes taken to conclude that what is a friend is the good and "the good" is assumed to be the Platonic idea of the good in part because of the use of *εἶδωλον* at 219d3:

Τοῦτο δὴ ἔστιν ὃ λέγω, μὴ ἡμᾶς τᾶλλα πάντα ἃ εἶπομεν  
ἐκείνου ἔνεκα φίλα εἶναι, ὥσπερ εἶδωλα ἅττα ὄντα αὐτοῦ,  
ἐξαπατᾶ, ἢ δ' ἐκεῖφο τὸ πρῶτον, ὃ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἔστι φίλον.

Thus, his claims are:

11. the use of *παρεῖμι* does not commit Plato to a metaphysical sense of presence or participation in the *Lysis*.

12. the use of εἶδωλον does not commit Plato to a metaphysical sense of transcendental forms in the *Lysis*.

Vlastos takes these two as sufficient to show “later” Platonic metaphysics are not present in the *Lysis* and concludes with the claim that “If the mere use of εἶδωλον is to be taken as evidence, and conclusive evidence, that a metaphysical doctrine is being propounded, then what has to be shown is that its use here has metaphysical import.” (Vlastos, p. 37)

In fact, Vlastos’s criticism does not preclude the possibility of Platonic metaphysics being found in the *Lysis* since, at most, the two claims reach the conclusion that the vocabulary of the dialogue is ambiguous: it is consistent both with and without Plato’s “later” metaphysics. Vlastos has demonstrated the ubiquity of the use of these words in ancient Greek, so their mere use by Plato doesn’t signal technical use by Plato. It is also true, however, that Plato does use these words in discussing his “later” metaphysics. If the vocabulary alone won’t determine the correct reading of the Greek here, then we can seek to look at how the text coheres with other Platonic texts. At this point Vlastos will look at only the other dialogues that he believes are “early” and so will find no trace of Platonic metaphysics. Vlastos’s background assumption that the chronology of the dialogues reveals significant philosophical changes determines what dialogues he compares the *Lysis* to in determining the correct interpretation of the disputed words. But, if we approach the corpus without these divisions we may well be struck by the similarity of the argument here in the *Lysis* with arguments in other

dialogues that even Vlastos would acknowledge as metaphysically mature, such as the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Parmenides* (see Chapter Two, Section IX).<sup>58</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The approach to the Platonic dialogues developed by Vlastos has been widely accepted and so it is important to examine whether that approach is demanded by evidence or if other ways to read the dialogues might be fruitful. In this brief essay I have shown two things. First, relying on the work of Howland I suggest that the independent evidence for this kind of approach is negligible. Second, I've shown that when it comes to the *Lysis* the internal evidence for reading the dialogue as Vlastos suggests is not overwhelming. Vlastos's brief analysis of the argument about the proton philon neglects the strong argumentative ties that argument has to dialogues that Vlastos himself would count as "late". Since both external and internal evidence do not require a developmental reading of the dialogues generally and the *Lysis* specifically, we can approach the dialogue with an open mind looking for connections to other Platonic writings wherever we may find them.

Appendix B: “Ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας εὐθὺς Λυκείου”: The Prologue of Plato’s *Lysis* and Unreliable Narration

### **I. Is Socrates an Unreliable Narrator?**

Plato opens the *Lysis* with Socrates twice saying he is going εὐθὺς (straight) to the Lyceum from the Academy. The dialogue opens with “I was coming from the Academy straight to the Lyceum,” and, just five lines later, when asked by Hippothales about his comings and goings Socrates again says, “I go straight to the Lyceum.” In case these two mentions of going straight weren’t enough, Hippothales emphasizes it again in the very next line when he tells Socrates to come “straight to us.” Plato’s emphasis on Socrates straight travel to the Lyceum makes it reasonable to ask what point, if any, there is to making sure the reader knows the course of Socrates’ journey. The dialogue takes place at the new palaestra run by Mikkos and does not concern the Lyceum, so why make a big deal out of where Socrates was coming from and going to?

Planeaux (2001) argues that the repetition of εὐθὺς in relation to going to the Lyceum from the Academy was meant to signal caution to the Athenian reader so that they would be on guard when Socrates speaks in the dialogue. Planeaux suggests that this description of Socrates’ journey, along with other key pieces of evidence, suggest that Socrates is an unreliable narrator. First coined by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, an unreliable narrator is a literary device employed to throw doubt on the credibility of the text’s narrator and show that the narrator’s norms differ from the author’s. It is usually employed in texts written in the first person and the author often leaves it ambiguous as to how much of the narrator’s words should be

considered unreliable. The unreliability can be unintentional (e.g. if the narrator is a child) or intentional (e.g. if the narrator of the murder mystery is the murderer), but clear signs are provided to the thoughtful reader that alerts them to the possibility that all is not as it appears.

Booth uses the distinction between reliable and unreliable narrators to distinguish between a narrator who “acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author’s norms)” and one who does not. (Booth 158) This kind of unreliability is different from irony, lying or deliberative deception. Booth’s unreliable narrator suffers from lack of self-knowledge: “the narrator is mistaken, or he believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him” or “the narrator claims to be naturally wicked while the author silently praises his virtues.” (Booth 159)

Socrates, on this interpretation, is either being misleading or, even worse for the interpretation of Plato, does not share Plato’s norms.<sup>59</sup> The interpretation requires that Socrates’s stated or implied reasons for action are different from those of the author. Planeaux does not seem to abide by Booth’s definition, though he does reference Booth, and instead merely argues that Socrates’s intention is different from what he says it is—Socrates is a deceptive narrator on Planeaux’s reading.<sup>60</sup> I begin by examining Planeaux’s case for the claim that Socrates is an unreliable narrator and I argue that there is a more charitable and straightforward interpretation of Socrates’ statements that doesn’t require that we consider Socrates an unreliable narrator. Having shown that we need not think of Socrates as unreliable in *Lysis* I give a

second argument for the conclusion that unreliable narration is a literary technique ill-suited for philosophic texts, particularly ones written by Plato.

## II. Planeaux's Evidence

Planeaux's argument begins with his discussion of Socrates' use of εὐθὺς to describe his trip. The route straight from the Academy to the Lyceum would not take Socrates outside and along the city wall (203a2) nor would it bring him near the Panops Spring (203a3). Going straight to the Lyceum would actually entail going through the city proper and ending, as Planeaux writes, "[going] past the agora, and through the Diochares Gates". (Planeaux 60) Planeaux notes that in telling Hippothales that he is going "straight to the Lyceum" (203b1), Socrates omits what path he is taking to get there, which Planeaux takes as even more proof that there is something fishy in Socrates' opening statement. Hippothales, well aware of Athenian geography, would know that Socrates is lying if he said he was coming straight from the Academy to the Lyceum, so Socrates doesn't tell him where he started his trip. As a final piece of evidence for deception in the opening lines, Planeaux remarks that being present at the Panops Spring is truly bizarre if Socrates' route was straight because being near the Spring entails being farther away from the main entrance of the Lyceum than would have been necessary. Thus, there is an inconsistency in the very opening lines of the dialogue: either Socrates went straight to the Lyceum or he went out along the city wall and arrived at the Panops Spring, but he could not do both. So, knowing that Socrates does indeed end up at the Panops Spring, we must conclude that he was deceitful about going straight to the Lyceum.

Planeaux thinks that this would not be obvious to modern readers but would be obvious to Plato's intended audience. Consider a modern New Yorker standing at 35<sup>th</sup> Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue who tells you he is going "straight to Madison Square Garden by skirting around Central Park". Just as the average New Yorker would be baffled by such a statement the average Athenian would be puzzled by Socrates' pronouncement of his travel and, in both cases, we should seek an explanation for the apparently contradictory statement.

It is not just Plato's use of "εὐθὺς" that makes Planeaux question Socrates' reliability. The Panops Spring, where Socrates meets Hippothales, Ctesippus and the other boys is not on any direct route to the Lyceum and even puts him out of sight of the main entrance to the Lyceum. Moreover, Socrates seems unaware of the newly built palaestra even though it is nearby the Lyceum where he often spent time and he seems surprised to find his friend and admirer Mikkos teaches there. Planeaux takes this information to be evidence for the claim that Socrates' intended destination all along was the Panops Spring and the new palaestra. Planeaux argues that if we take Socrates' statements at face value, his ignorance is astounding and so there must be even more going on in both claiming the indirect route to be direct and in feigning ignorance about the new palaestra and its teacher.

The Socratic deception continues when we first meet the dialogue's title character. Socrates knows Hippothales and he knows Lysis' family, but we are to believe that he does not know that Hippothales was courting Lysis nor does he know Lysis' name even though he is the eldest son in the family. And, when Lysis first appears in the dialogue, Socrates seems to recognize Lysis and even refers to him by

name without being introduced to him. Planeaux asks, “How could Socrates have recognized Lysis at first sight if . . . he was unaware who the son of Democrates was?” (Planeaux 63) The conclusion Planeaux offers is that Socrates has contrived the whole encounter so that he may meet Lysis.<sup>61</sup> Planeaux does not discuss whether Hippothales is in on the deception or not, but, if Planeaux’s evidence is convincing, then it is ambiguous whether Socrates has put this secret plan in action on his own or with the help, if not encouragement of Hippothales. On the one hand, perhaps Hippothales has sought Socrates’ help with acquiring Lysis; on the other hand, perhaps Socrates wants Lysis for himself.

Planeaux finds the setting of the dialogue to add evidence to his interpretation because we come to find out that Socrates has arrived at the new paleastra during the last day of the Anthesteria, the Hermaea. The Hermaea was not only the day wrestling school teachers were paid, but also one of the few times grown men like Socrates would be allowed into a palaestra with young boys because such a place was usually off-limits to grown men except the teachers. It is worth remarking that Socrates’ trip in the *Lysis* concerns two gymnasia, the Academy and the Lyceum, and a palaestra. In discussing gymnasia and palaestra it is important to realize that Greeks used the terms to refer both to specific kinds of buildings and also to the areas that surrounded those buildings. A palaestra was a four-sided building with three sides of single colonnades and a double colonnade on the north side and could be considered the “ancient equivalent of the schoolhouse.” (Miller 178-179) A gymnasium was bigger than a palaestra and was a three-sided building with two-sides being colonnades of at least 200 meters long with the connecting wall covering at least 100

meters. The fourth side of the building was open, so the size of a gymnasium could vary as well as the specific architecture depending on location. (Miller 184) The two gymnasia we are concerned with here were considered to be very large as Miller states in the case of the Academy and Lyceum “we should envision something like a college campus with areas of trees and grass surrounding buildings,” and “the Akademy has been estimated at about 180,000 square meters. (Miller 185) While strictly speaking a “gymnasium” and “paleastra” are distinct kinds of buildings, if we take the term “gymnasium” more broadly to mean the area surrounding the building, we might find a paleastra at a gymnasium. These impressive physical structures were the places that trained both the body and mind of future citizens from the time they are young boys up to, in some cases, twenty years old.<sup>62</sup> Thus, Socrates’ trip is from one large school to another, but he is stopped along the way by encountering this new paleastra and its students. This should tell us that at least part of what the dialogue will concern is the education of the future citizens of Athens.

Miller reports that outside of the Hermaea even the boys’ paidagogoi would remain outside the school and punishment for unauthorized people entering a palaestra could be death.<sup>63</sup> So, had Socrates shown up any other time of year not only would he not be allowed in the paleastra, but the younger and older boys would have been separated, and so the discussion of the dialogue could not have taken place.

Planeaux’s claims are thus:

1. Socrates is deceptive in the opening line of the dialogue—he cannot go “εὐθὺ Λυκείου” and be at the Panops Spring.
2. This deception would be obvious to the Athenian reader.

3. 1 and 2 prepares the reader to be on the look out for further deception by Socrates, which we see in:
4. Socrates' deception about his knowledge of the building of the new paleastra and who teaches in it.
5. Socrates' deception when he claims ignorance of Lysis's identity.
6. The dialogue takes place on the Hermaea, which is more evidence for Socrates' secretly planned visit to the paleastra.
7. Reflecting on 1 through 6 leaves us with the conclusion that the *Lysis* is not a chance meeting between Socrates and young teenagers, but a set-up masterminded by Socrates so that he can meet and talk with Lysis.

I am going to argue that 1 is false, which means there is no deception for the Athenian reader to be aware of or which could prepare the Athenian reader for further deception. Not to worry, though, as I will also argue that 4 and 5 are false and, while it is true that the dialogue takes place during the Hermaea, it is false that this lends credence to the "Socrates as unreliable narrator" thesis. If I am right that 1, 4, and 5 are false we have little reason to accept 7.

### **III. Objection 1: Going Straight to the Lyceum and being at the Panops Spring.**

Planeaux mentions two alternatives to his thesis that the use of "εὐθὺς" should raise the eyebrows of the intended reader. One alternative explanation for the apparent contradiction is that Plato was careless in the construction of the opening passages of *Lysis*. This alternative is unacceptable given what we know about Plato as a meticulous writer who, according to ancient sources, revisited his dialogues

throughout his old age. This ancient evidence for Plato's meticulousness and the philosophic purpose of the dialogue makes it highly unlikely that the triple use of "εὐθὺ" in the opening of *Lysis* results from a mistake or carelessness. Planeaux is right to dismiss it.

The second alternative is that by "εὐθὺ" Plato intended to mean that Socrates was going quickly to the Lyceum. Planeaux's argument against this alternative is philological: if Plato had intended to mean "quickly" there are more common ways to express that in Greek than by use of "εὐθὺ". Planeaux suggests both "ἐπείγομαι" and "ταχέως". "ἐπείγομαι" translates to "I hasten" and "ταχέως" means "quickly," so if Plato intended to suggest that Socrates was trying to get to the Lyceum quickly, either of these makes the point much better than the "straight" of "εὐθὺ". Planeaux may be right that there are more straightforward ways to express "quickly" in Greek, but none of these others would allow for the repeated use of the word like "εὐθὺ" because the different uses would require different forms of "ἐπείγομαι" and "ταχέως" would seem strange in at least the last of the three occurrences. Plato was a prose stylist as well as a philosopher and the repeated use of the word may be more for literary rhythm than philosophic import.

Even if we accept Planeaux's thesis about "εὐθὺ" being a poor word choice for "quickly", there is a third alternative for Plato's use of "εὐθὺ" that Planeaux fails to distinguish. There is a sense in which we talk of "going straight to the Lyceum" that does not mean we are going quickly or that we are taking the shortest route possible, but that we are going there without any intermediate stops. So, Socrates' claim that he was going "εὐθὺ Λυκείου" could mean that he was going directly to the

Lyceum without suggesting he was going quickly or taking the shortest route. Liddell and Scott's lexicon does offer "directly" as a possible translation of "εὐθὺς" and to say "I go directly to the Lyceum" does not entail that I go quickly or that I take the shortest path possible, but that I go there without stopping anywhere else.

That the dialogue takes place during the Hermaea might give even more of an explanation as for why Socrates is going to the Lyceum "εὐθὺς" but not through the city, which normally might be the direct route. The Hermaea involved revelry throughout the city and it may well be that, on this day, the most convenient route to the Lyceum is as Socrates describes because going through the city would involve getting slowed down by the festival. Thus, Socrates is going "εὐθὺς" in the best way possible on a festival day.

This leaves us with two alternatives: "εὐθὺς" as a clue to the reader that Socrates is being less than truthful about his actions or "εὐθὺς" as simply indicating the manner—"directly"—by which Socrates intended to make his way to the Lyceum. The second alternative offers a straightforward reading of the opening of the dialogue that, instead of becoming bound up in Socrates' secret motives, makes it very plain what happened to Socrates. On his way to the Lyceum during the Hermaea he runs into young boys playing at their new paleastra and, being interested in the youth of Athens and wanting to understand the bonds of friendship (211e), is distracted from his original intent of going to the Lyceum.

The repetitive use of "εὐθὺς" is a part of Plato's masterful prose, but it need not indicate subtle hints to the intended reader. Rather, it points out Socrates' overwhelming desire to converse with others whenever the possibility arises.

Socrates tells us he is going directly to the Lyceum, he tells Hippothales he is going directly to the Lyceum, but when Hippothales suggests he comes directly to the youth instead, Socrates obliges. We can see “εὐθὺς” not as an indicator of unreliability, but as a marker to make us think Socrates is not just wayfaring outside the city but going with some purpose to the Lyceum. In traveling from the Academy to the Lyceum Socrates may very well be on the look out for young men with whom he could engage in philosophical discussions. Thus, we are shown that even when Socrates has a purpose in his travels—to get to the Lyceum—he cannot turn away from the invitation to spend time with the youth of Athens. It is important for the reader to know Socrates’ path not to become aware of Socrates’ unreliability but as a way to signal the educative nature of the discussion that we will witness in the dialogue and alert the reader of the importance of the discussion for the future citizens of Athens.

#### **IV. Objection 2: Socrates’ claims of Ignorance**

The second part of Planeaux’s argument concerning unreliable narration suggest that Socrates is being deceptive when he claims not to know of the new paleastra and who teaches at the paleastra as well as feigning ignorance about the identity of Lysis. Planeaux’s evidence for his claim about the the paleastra is that since the paleastra was recently built and it is near the Lyceum (a place Socrates visited often), it is unreasonable to think that Socrates would be unaware of it. And, since the teacher of the paleastra is Mikkos and Mikkos is a friend and admirer of Socrates, it is equally unlikely that Socrates was unaware of his position as a teacher.

Recalling Socrates' preoccupation with philosophy and not with more mundane matters, it does not seem a stretch to think the building of a paleastra—or anything else—could go on and remain unnoticed by him. Moreover, if we remember that he may have taken this route because of the Hermaea, it is possible he did not usually pass this palaestra on his way from the agora to the Lyceum. There is no evidence one way or another for this, though. Nails (2002) tells us that there is a Mikkos to be found in records listed among the prefects of various schools whose dates seem compatible with the dramatic date of *Lysis*. That does not tell us much about how close a friend he is to Socrates, but Plato does use the term “ἑταῖρος” to describe him, which Plato also uses to describe those surrounding Socrates on his deathbed. So, are we to assume that Socrates is being deceptive in his knowledge of the paleastra or is he truly surprised to find a paleastra run by his “ἑταῖρος” so close to the Lyceum?

Planeaux again seems to miss a third alternative: Socrates is being playful with his young companions. Remember that Hippothales is somewhere between 15 and 18 years old and Socrates well into adulthood.<sup>64</sup> We can read the passage in which Socrates and Hippothales talk about the paleastra as playful banter between an adult and teenager—as if Socrates is asking Hippothales questions they both know the answer to, which is in stark contrast to what happens when the discussion turns to philosophy and the answers to questions become harder to determine. Socrates is here not trying to deceive Hippothales and the others into thinking he doesn't know the place, but, having encountered the boys on his way to the Lyceum, he plays with them. This sort of verbal play connects with the first discussion of the dialogue in

which Socrates criticizes Hippothales' use of encomium in seducing Lysis and seeks to show Hippothales how to correctly acquire a paidikos.<sup>65</sup>

Planeaux's interpretation seems colored by his initial claim that the use of "εὐθὺ" means we need to be wary of Socrates' statements. With that outlook, normal conversational conventions become tinged with deception and not good-natured ribbing. I will argue in the next section that this is in fact a serious problem with the notion of unreliable narration in Plato, but first we must look at Socrates' identification of Lysis.

Planeaux finds the fact that Socrates tells us who Lysis is before he is introduced to Lysis as indicating that he knows who Lysis is beforehand and that he has been deceptive in order for Socrates to get close to Lysis. Entering the undressing room with Ctesippus, Socrates tells the reader, "among them was Lysis wearing a crown and surrounded by the younger and older boys he stood out by his appearance." Planeaux suggests that Socrates could not identify Lysis at this point because, according to Socrates, he does not know who Lysis is. There are two straightforward ways to explain Socrates' identifying Lysis in *Lysis* even though he had not met him yet. First, the dialogue is Socrates' report of this conversation not his telling the story as it happens. So, while he had not met Lysis yet, when he is giving us this report of the conversation he clearly has met Lysis. So, saying in a report given at a later date, "among them was Lysis" is not inconsistent with not knowing it was Lysis at the time. Second, while Socrates has not met Lysis at this point in the dialogue, Lysis has been described to him in some detail as being beautiful and Socrates is even told he will know Lysis by his beauty (204e). Thus,

entering the undressing room and seeing a particularly beautiful boy, it is reasonable for Socrates to assume that it is Lysis (that Socrates knows Lysis's family and Lysis might have a family resemblance to his father would give Socrates even more evidence for this assumption). So, we need not conclude that Socrates already knew who Lysis was even though he identifies him by name since there are two other alternatives: either Socrates is using Lysis's name in his re-telling of the story but he didn't know it was Lysis at the time until Lysis joined him and the others or Socrates correctly assumed the beautiful boy in the undressing room was Lysis.

Both of these alternatives are simpler and more straightforward than the thesis that the whole beginning of the dialogue is a ruse set up by Socrates so that he can get close to Lysis. Indeed, it makes Socrates a rather shifty character if we accept the unreliable narrator thesis for, not only is he deceptive about these things in the dialogue, but there is a great deal of planning he had to go through in order to meet Lysis in the paleastra. It entails that he waited until the Hermaea (since he would not have been allowed in the paleastra on other days), possibly arranged with Hippothales to "run into" him and the others at the Panops Spring, and he had to make sure to do this at the right time of day so that he could catch Lysis in the undressing room and not arrive too early when Lysis may have been engaged in rites or too late when Lysis would have gone home. If Socrates really wanted to arrange a meeting with Lysis surely there would have been easier ways to accomplish this since he knows the boy's family.

The better interpretation of this part of the dialogue is this: Socrates, on his way directly to the Lyceum, is waylaid by running into young boys on the day of the

Hermaea. Stopping to speak with the boys he engages in playful banter about where the boys are and what they do there and is invited into the paleastra and asked to take part in the discussions there. Since this invitation could only happen on this day, Socrates is unable to help himself and abandons his original plan and spends time with the boys.

## **V. Plato and Unreliable Narration**

I have shown that the thesis that the opening passage of *Lysis* contains clues that Socrates is an unreliable narrator is unreasonable and that there are simpler ways to interpret what Plato wrote. I would like to take the argument against unreliable narration in Plato further, though, than simply showing it does not work in *Lysis*. I will argue that the use of unreliable narration is inconsistent with the philosophic intention of Plato's writings. For brevity, in what follows I will use "true" and "false" where I more properly mean something like "true in the story" or "false in the story".

The use of unreliable narration requires that some of what the narrator of the text says is at least misleading and possibly a lie, where lying is defined as presenting as true that which is believed to be false. Thus, there is an important difference between having an unreliable narrator and a narrator who simply believes false things: it is the difference between asserting a proposition that is false but believed true and asserting a proposition that is believed to be false. An author using unreliable narration has the narrator state what is believed to be false, but not just so the unreliable narrator states false things, but states false things so that the author can

allow the audience in on the falsity at some point. When written in the first person, the narrator may or may not be aware of the audience's knowledge of the deception, but clearly the author is aware of letting the audience in on the narrator's shenanigans. So, the use of unreliable narration requires that the narrator misleads or lies to the audience and that the author uses this technique to call into question what the narrator tells the audience. In effect, it makes the text a giant puzzle and the reader is faced with determining what should be taken as truthful sayings of the narrator and what should be taken as deceptive sayings or lies by the narrator. Neither of these possibilities is well suited to philosophical texts.

Let us assume that we have an unreliable narrator who tells us only two things, A and B. Since we know he is unreliable, we can assume that at least one of these, A or B, is false or misleading. While other clues in the text might give reason for thinking A is the false or misleading statement, if it is a wholly first-person text, then we must remember that everything in the text is given to us by the narrator and he is known to be unreliable. Therefore, even though the reader might find textual clues to suggest A is false, knowing that the narrator is unreliable we might also conclude that B is what is false because the narrator, being unreliable, has made it seem as if A is false in order to deceive us even more. So, once we have reason to believe the narrator is unreliable, we have opened the way to any interpretation of the text because the narrator, being unreliable, may present information to us in any way they see fit to give us the impression that what is true is false or vice versa. We can see the tension thus:

1. The reader believes (A or B) and not (A and B).

2. The reader finds textual clue, C, which seems to support B over A.
3. So, the reader believes B is true and A is false.
4. But, since the narrator has told us A, B and C and we know the narrator is unreliable, that the likelihood of B and C is greater than the likelihood of A and C should not be very convincing reasons for accepting B and C over A.

Unreliable narration, then, leads to interpretive freedom.

If we believe that philosophic authors aim at clarification and truth, then unreliable narration as described by Booth is incompatible with philosophic texts. Recall that unreliable narration is more than having a narrator who lies or is deceptive, but that the narrator's norms differ from those of the author. Thus, the fact that Socrates sometimes goes along with mild deception (in the *Charmides* Socrates and Critias plot to bring Charmides into the discussion by telling him that Socrates can cure his headache) does not mean he is an unreliable narrator. The fact that throughout the Platonic corpus Socrates engages in discussions aimed at becoming more knowledgeable shows a consistency with what we can reasonably assume about Plato's intention from his whole corpus and what can be gleaned about the author from reports of others. In the end, the arguments will stand or fall on their own merits and the introduction of an unreliable narrator will not impact their evaluation or the conclusions we will derive from them.

If part of what makes a philosophical text philosophical is its concern with truth, then using a technique that is incompatible with that aim is counter-productive at best.<sup>66</sup> Proponents of unreliable narration in Plato might argue that the unreliable narration occurs, as Planeaux suggests about *Lysis*, in non-philosophical parts of the

dialogue. But, this leads to further problems because it commits one to the thesis that we can distinguish between non-philosophical passages and philosophical ones. As can be seen in chapter three, even parts of the dialogues that are not concerned with arguments have philosophical import. To hold onto the distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical parts of a Platonic dialogue is to make a mistake and again highlights the intellectual hoops one must jump through in order to maintain the thesis of unreliable narration.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The interpretation of Plato's dialogues can be difficult enough if we read them as straightforwardly as possible. The introduction of literary devices such as unreliable narration hinders our ability to understand what Plato wrote and makes it possible to argue any interpretation of Plato that may strike one's fancy. But, whether the dialogues contain arguments for deeply held philosophical theses or merely provides information for the reader to pursue philosophy on their own, we must hold to what Plato says. To give up on the most straightforward reading of a dialogue as possible is to give up on Plato, which in turn is to give up on the search for the truth.

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendix B analyzes this setting and Socrates reasons for being outside the city in more detail.

<sup>2</sup> Liddell, Scott and Jones supply two definitions for the Greek word at 206d, “ἀνεψιών”: “cousin” and “nephew”. Guthrie and Lombardo both opt for “nephew”, but Nails (2002) gives good prosopographic reasons for thinking the two are cousins and not uncle and nephew.

<sup>3</sup> Nichols (2006) stresses the political nature of the relationships discussed in the *Lysis* and argues that friendship in the *Lysis* is a model for political relationships between citizens.

<sup>4</sup> translated by Grube, revised by Reeve, in Cooper (1997), p. 1066 and 1073

<sup>5</sup> Neu (1971) discusses and rejects the idea that the *Republic* makes the individual subservient to the state because of this coincidence in virtues. Like Neu, I think a more accurate appraisal is that this coincidence means that the good for an individual just is the good of the state. Neither side submits to the other if the good is truly known.

<sup>6</sup> Other examples: It is hard to miss that the nature of piety is discussed right outside the law court where Socrates will be found guilty of impiety in *Euthyphro*. The *Phaedo* discusses the nature of the soul while Socrates is on his deathbed. *Crito* takes place in jail, a perfect location to discuss the nature of legal obligation.

<sup>7</sup> While many of his insights about the role of Hermes in the dialogue seem sound, Haden is overly ambitious in ferreting out connections to Hermes and the

---

*Odyssey*. It is true that the *Lysis* quotes the *Odyssey* and that it is the Hermaea, but that does not entail that Plato had in mind, or hoped his reader would have in mind, the fact that Odysseus's dog has the same name as the all-seeing guardian ("Panoptes"), whom Hermes kills in stealing Io or the connection of the Panops Spring to "Panoptes". (346) While it is easy to think that the main characteristics of Hermes may have led to Plato's choice of setting, these other things seem to point more to the overall role of Homer and mythology in Greek culture. Haden goes on to argue that the *Lysis* points out a range of relationships that we call "friendship" and that we need to know what kind of relationship we have in order to know what it should be. Plato hopes to point out that we need something like the Proton Philon to give us direction in life and ground all other relationships.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Simpson points out to me that the attack on poetry in *The Republic* seems to be in tension with the *The Republic* itself: poetry is attacked because it is based on imitation, but *The Republic* itself relies on imitation. Imitation does not appear as a theme in *Lysis*.

<sup>9</sup> Translated by G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve in Cooper (1997), p. 1211.

<sup>10</sup> Translated by A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff in Cooper (1997), p. 530.

<sup>11</sup> Translated by A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff in Cooper (1997), p. 530.

<sup>12</sup> Translated by A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff in Cooper (1997), p. 491-492.

<sup>13</sup> In fact, these categories do not seem to me mutually exclusive nor exhaustive.

It seems to me that sexual desire could rely on both essentialist and

---

constructionist criteria. It may well be that a natural tendency reinforces certain cultural constructs, for example. However, I use the distinction in this commentary for two reasons. First, it is how the debate has been framed traditionally and it seems instrumentally useful for what needs to be discussed here. Even if the truth lies somewhere between the extremes of essentialism and constructionism, these positions represent the ends of the spectrum. And, as I wish to discuss what seems to me to be the social conventions of sexual desire in relation to the dialogue, the distinction remains useful.

<sup>14</sup> Homosexual relationships between adult men was not unheard of, but there is some social stigma attached to being seen as the passive partner. The Greek conception of masculinity shows men as active.

<sup>15</sup> Jowett translates this as, “I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become filled with the love of her”. This translation lessens the sexual and erotic reading Monoson offers. Being filled with love of Athens is not the same as being her lover since one can be filled with love for something but be apart from it; being her lover requires intimate contact.

<sup>16</sup> The use of this metaphor in Pericles is not the only example of eros being used in Greece to further political ends. Plutarch describes the Sacred Band of Thebes in his life of Pelopidas and suggests that the group was made up of lovers in the belief that lovers would fight better, not wanting to let down their lover; Sparta also relied on organizational homosexuality. I chose to discuss Pericles as he bears the closest relation to Plato.

---

<sup>17</sup> Translated by Rosalind Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 642.

<sup>18</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 711.

<sup>19</sup> Gorgias 450 shows Socrates and Gorgias discussing the difference in crafts based primarily on manual skill (e.g. painting, sculpting, etc.) and those based on speeches (e.g. arithmetic, geometry, etc.). If seduction is a skill it must be categorized with the second kind of craft. Remember that the arguments of the *Phaedrus* tell us that successful seduction must be philosophical and not based on passion.

<sup>20</sup> If we assume that Lysis's father, his neighbors or the Great King is wise enough to know they are not knowledgeable and Lysis is, then this argument might succeed, but it would require that the adult knows they don't know and knows, or has good reason to believe, that Lysis does know. Thus, for the argument to be successful, there would need to be knowledge on both sides: Lysis would have to have the knowledge he claims to have; the adult would have to know they don't know and that Lysis might. The idea of knowing that you don't know has some resonance with Socrates's claims of ignorance and this argument can also be seen as embodying a serious claim about who should be seen as authoritative. Lysis, in his naïve way, does not see the humor in his being considered wise, but if we did have a wise man to listen to (Socrates, perhaps?), then his insight should trump the ideas of those that are unwise. So, the argument might be used to show Lysis's current state of not being wise, it also indicates the role wisdom should be used in practical decision making and indicates the role of wisdom in friendship.

---

<sup>21</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 719.

<sup>22</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 719.

<sup>23</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 679.

<sup>24</sup> As I've suggested, the *Menexenus* and *Euthydemus* are particularly relevant here; particularly the first given it is *Menexenus* we are discussing.

<sup>25</sup> Platonic scholars take different approaches to explaining just what form the Socratic elenchus takes, but, most broadly, it is the process of cross-examination employed by Socrates in the Socratic dialogues. The cross-examination starts with one of Socrates's interlocutors proposing a definition or explanation for a concept central to the dialogue's theme and ends with Socrates's getting the interlocutor to agree that his proposal would result in a contradiction. In the *Lysis*, all of the ideas start with Socrates and the boys simply assent to them before the demolition of the idea begins. We can think of the logic of the elenchus as follows. Let A be the definition under discussion and the set {B & C & D & . . .} be the propositions that Socrates and his interlocutor agree to after A is proposed. Socrates shows that  $A \& \{B \& C \& D \& \dots\} \Rightarrow A \& \text{not-A}$ . Once that conclusion is reached Socrates's interlocutor abandons A, but it is important to note that that is not the only logical option available: he could reject {B & C & D & . . .} or some subset of it that would stop the entailment. A more radical option would be to reject the entailment itself so that belief in all of the propositions is maintained but the form of reasoning is rejected. The arguments in the *Lysis* seem to take a different approach in that they do not end in

---

contradictions but rather showing that the solutions to the question “what makes men friends?” result in counter-intuitive or problematic results. Talisse (2002) argues that there is even a further use of the elenchus in that in following it Socrates is able to remove misconceptions about the nature of knowledge; it shows that what knowledge requires is reasoned argument, not private experience. Thus, knowledge is public and achieved through dialogue with others. This conception of knowledge resonates with the ideas of friendship: we give each other knowledge through our mutual activity.

<sup>26</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 666-667.

<sup>27</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 667.

<sup>28</sup> Blondell’s study focuses on Sophocles, but chapter two offers a general discussion of these important ideas in relation to Greek society. Blondell lends support to my claim that reciprocity is important for Plato’s writing in the *Lysis* by pointing out the widespread use of reciprocity in Greek popular thought: “Similarly friends have a presumptive claim on one’s benevolence. The justice of reciprocation thus imparts moral worth to both the lust for revenge and the natural desire to help a friend.” (31)

<sup>29</sup> Strictly speaking I should introduce another relation “is hated by”, but it seems clear in this case that hatred and enmity are linked and so to keep things simple, I have used the enmity relation in symbolizing (IV.6).

<sup>30</sup> Kerferd (1966) mentions this confusion as fact without supporting evidence, but it does seem consistent with how the principle is used here. It is certainly a thesis

---

worth exploring more fully elsewhere.

<sup>31</sup> An alternative formulation of this claim might be:  $\Box \forall x \forall y [((Gx \ \& \ Gy) \ \& \ S(x,y)) \supset [F(x,y) \ \& \ F(y,x)]]$ , however it seems that the point Plato wants to make here is that  $x$  and  $y$  being similar and their being good is not merely a case of conjunction, but that they are similar because of both being good.

<sup>32</sup> I'm laying aside the possibility that the instability is such so that while it is present in two things it behaves exactly the same in the two things; in such a case the two things could be similar in the way Plato intends here and even identical. While an interesting exercise in logic and metaphysics, inclusion here would bog down the analysis of the argument.

<sup>33</sup> I here allow for quantification over predicates, which is not a universally accepted notion (e.g. Quine does not allow for it). There are substantial issues raised in allowing it since, if you can quantify over predicates, then predicates must be the kind of thing that can be quantified over, which suggests that they exist rather than predicates merely being a way to describe the relations between the first-order objects. This can be seen as a problem if, as many contemporary philosophers do, you take the formalization of your best theory to be a guide to ontology. Doing this in Quine's way leaves you with an ontology of objects; quantifying over predicates adds those predicates to your ontology and could be seen as "bloating" the ontology more than is necessary. I acknowledge this problem, but think that it need not be addressed here. First, my formalization of the pertinent claims in the *Lysis* is for clarity more than substantive logical work.

---

Second, it is not clear that, given Plato's ontology of forms, it would be a mistake to quantify over predicates, or at least some predicates. Third, although Quine's approach to these matters is influential, it is not universally accepted. Some philosophers, such as Jody Azzouni, argue that quantification is not a guide to existential claims and that we can, and do in practice, distinguish between uses of the existential quantifier that do reveal existential commitments and those that don't.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Simpson suggested to me one possible concern with my use of philosophical dialogue here as a potential counter-example to the claim that *a* and *b* would have nothing to offer one another. Simpson's concern is that if *a* and *b* are wise already, then, since philosophical dialogue is for the sake of truth and not dialogue itself, then *a* and *b* would not need it from each other. There are possible rejoinders to this concern. First, we could remove dialogue as a counter-example and offer a more mundane example of how even those who are wise might find each other useful: they could hunt bigger game, better their odds of surviving an attack, or help each other in politics. Second, we could argue that while philosophical dialogue may be for the sake of truth even the wise require or desire justification for their knowledge of the truth and continued philosophical discussion helps ensure their claims of knowledge are true.

<sup>35</sup> By saying there is nothing logically problematic with an infinite regress I mean simply that the idea of an infinite progression is well understood. So, if there is a problem with infinite regresses it must be because of the type of thing that we are

---

considering as having an infinite progression.

<sup>36</sup> Nerlich (1960) says “there are regress arguments in three Platonic dialogues”; while the statement is consistent with their being more than three, Nerlich certainly gives the impression these are the only three. The *Lysis* argument is different enough from the others that it is not unreasonable to overlook it since the others clearly concern the role of the forms; still, the reliance on an infinite regress is present and so the arguments are clearly related. The *Parmenides* argument is usually referred to as “the third man argument”, but this is not what Plato calls it and is a later appellation given by Aristotle: “Further, of the more accurate arguments, some lead to Ideas of relations, of which we say there is no independent class, and others introduce the ‘third man’” (*Metaphysics* 990b15-17, Ross)

<sup>37</sup> Plato says “choice or necessity” but the argument shows it is a matter of necessity; if god chose not to have a unique form of bed, there would be none not more than one.

<sup>38</sup> The *Timaeus* principle can be generated by replacing the predicate B with a predicate U, where Ux stands for “x is the form of the universe.”

<sup>39</sup> Vlastos (1954) famously analyzes the *Parmenides* argument as moving from, in his words, “(A1) If a number of things, a, b, c, are all F, there must be a single form, F-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c as all F.” to “(A2) If a, b, c and F-ness are all F, there must be another Form, F<sub>1</sub>-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c and F-ness as all F.” He then claims that the move from (A1) to

---

(A2) requires: self-predication of forms (the form of F is itself F; e.g., largeness is itself large) and non-identity of forms and their characteristics (“if x is F, x cannot be identical with F-ness”). The problem of the infinite regress in this case is that we are supposed to understand, say, “x is F” by knowing the form F, but if we must know F<sub>1</sub> to know F and F<sub>2</sub> to know F<sub>1</sub> and so on *ad infinitum*, then we can never know “x is F” because we will never know the nature of F.

<sup>40</sup> It is reasonable to wonder why, when the discussion once again turns to talk of a father and a son, that the conversation does not return to the parent-child relationship that was addressed but dismissed earlier in the dialogue. Indeed, Plato returns to the notion of family again at the end of the dialogue in his talk of kinship. The text and arguments seem to always drive Lysis towards a conception of friendship based on his needs for something, but, both his parents and Socrates seem to be engaged with him out of a desire to give, not receive. See Chapter Three for a longer discussion of this issue.

<sup>41</sup> Pangle (2001) stresses the idea that love begins and ends in human neediness and that friendship is driven by this neediness.

<sup>42</sup> Jenks (2005) argues that Plato intends for us to understand this turn to kinship metaphorically so that friendship is a voluntarily adopted kind of kinship. It is not clear how taking this idea metaphorically gets us away from the problems that Socrates and the boys uncover. If friendship is supposed to be like kinship, then we are still left with the problem of needing to say how the relation of friendship is like kinship but unlike kinship enough to avoid the problem of collapsing to

---

similarity. So, while it seems correct that there is a metaphoric element to the suggestion (Plato is clearly aware we seem to be friends with those who are not literally our kin), that metaphoric reading does not bypass the problems that arise in this section of the dialogue.

<sup>43</sup> Gonzalez (1995) suggests that the dialogue ends in aporia not because the boys and Socrates fail to understand the nature of friendship but because the nature of friendship is rooted in aporia. Bossi (2000) offers a similar interpretation by arguing that the dialogue shows us what friendship is rather than explains it to us. While this technique of displaying what is to be understood and, in so doing, furthering the reader's engagement with the dialogue's topic, is perhaps particularly glaring in the *Lysis*, Plato uses this technique elsewhere as well; the *Crito* displays a clear act of legal obligation while presenting arguments about it. The aporia that the dialogues end in is part of the educative nature of the dialogues—were they to end in the pronouncement of the true answer, further discussion would be curtailed. But, since it is by becoming philosophers and engaging in philosophy that we come to the truth, the dialogues remain open-ended to support that mission.

<sup>44</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 678.

<sup>45</sup> Translated by Rosamond Kent Sprague in Cooper (1997), p. 662-663.

<sup>46</sup> In his study of Plato's theory of Forms, Dancy (2006) articulates three conditions for definition present in the Socratic dialogues: (SR) The Substitutivity Requirement: The definition of X can be substituted for X in sentences *salve*

---

*veritate*, (PR) The Paradigm Requirement: The definition of X must act as a paradigm such that instances of it can be determined by comparison with it, and (ER) The Explanatory Requirement: The definition of X explains the application of X. The analysis of friendship that we get in the *Lysis* does not follow this formula, which may be reason to disassociate it with the Socratic dialogues and is something that should be explained by those commentators that want to declare it is an early dialogue.

<sup>47</sup> A more complete discussion of the role that Plato uses of the father-son relationship is given in Chapter Three.

<sup>48</sup> I am not attributing to Plato any kind of enlightened view towards the place of women in society by pointing out this tension in his writings (ignoring women on the one hand and yet assigning great things to particular women). I only claim here that given his audience (and maybe his own views as well) women need not figure in a discussion of friendship. However, it is also possible, that just like Plato's use of the parent-child relationship, the lack of discussion about women and friendship is pointing to another aspect of friendship not discussed in the arguments.

<sup>49</sup> My thinking about criteria for friendship was influenced by Robert Nozick's "Love's Bonds".

<sup>50</sup> Reeve (2006) seems to not acknowledge this distinction at all in his "Plato on Eros and Friendship", which deals explicitly with eros and love, but not at all on the conditions of friendship. The *Lysis* is used to examine the early arguments

---

about encomium and acquiring a lover and the rest of the dialogue is ignored.

This approach to the *Lysis* seems similar to the way Vlastos (1969) treats it.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis sees friendship as the least natural kind of love as it is the least instinctive, organic, biological and necessary. Since he sees it as non-natural he conceives of friendship as standing above the animalistic needs of erotic love. This analysis seems implicitly to rely on an individualistic conception of the nature of man in which human society is seen as less natural than the individual being alone. But, if human social norms, including friendship, are not non-natural, then there is no reason to see friendship as less natural than erotic love. Indeed, if man's natural place is within a social setting, then the bonds of friendship are just as natural as erotic desire. Lewis's fourth love, the gift-love of God, which he describes as "Love Himself working in a man", allows man to "love what is not naturally lovable; lepers, criminals, enemies, morons, the sulky, the superior, and the sneering." (Lewis p. 128) The *Lysis* does not admit of such a love as it contrasts friendship with our attitude towards enemies. Friendship in the *Lysis* is for those that deserve it because of the qualities that make them good; insofar as the groups Lewis describes fail to be good and wise, they fail to be the kinds of things deserving of friendship. Even gift-love in *Lysis* is for those that deserve it, not for everyone.

<sup>52</sup> Translated by A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff in Cooper (1997), p. 531.

<sup>53</sup> Two kinds of relationships are completely absent from the dialogue: friendship between women and relationships between men and women. Friendship between

---

women may follow the same model as that of friendship between men or, perhaps, Plato had nothing to say about relationships he had no direct knowledge of. The absence of a discussion about relationships between men and women is more difficult to explain given that marriage plays such an important social role. Three possibilities to explain this absence from the dialogue: they follow the same standards as the dialogue portrays for male friendships, the absence, like the reoccurring mention of the parent/son relationship, or Plato thought of friendship as wholly distinct from friendship. The first possibility seems unlikely given the very different kind of relationship marriage is from non-sexual friendship between those that don't live together. The third possibility also seems unlikely given the shared activities of those that are married (a shared household and children). It is possible that, like the parent-child relationship, the lack of a discussion of marriage is intended to call to mind the aspect of friendship-as-gift as the result of a successful marriage will be children and the idea of friendship-as-gift is perhaps most clearly seen by how treat our children.

<sup>54</sup> The arguments of the *Lysis* concern the nature of friendship and desire, but the correct translation of the family of Greek words used in these discussions—*φίλος*, *φιλέιν*, and *φιλία*—is itself a matter of scholarly controversy. Konstan (1997), Whitlock Blundell (1989) and Adkins (1963) all offer different interpretations for these Greek words. Adkins argues that uses of *φίλος* have at their core the idea of "one's own" and a sense of possession. Whitlock Blundell argues that *φίλος* covers three distinct relationships: family, fellow citizens, and friends. Konstan

---

argues that “φίλος” is restricted to friends and that the other interpretations fail to distinguish the way in which Greek usage differentiates between “φίλος,” “φιλέιν” and “φιλία.” “Φιλέιν” and “φιλία,” although sharing a linguistic root with “φίλος,” do not share the same meaning. Both “φιλέιν” and “φιλία” are broader terms than the noun “φίλος.” Thus, “φιλέιν” is used in reference to friends and family and “φιλία” refers to a broad category of affectionate relationships, which includes, but is not limited to, friendship. Konstan's claim is that scholars like Blundell and Adkins have not taken sufficient care to differentiate the uses of the various words that have the φιλ— stem and that if we do this we can readily see the distinction being made in Greek between φίλος and the others. Konstan marshals evidence from many Greek authors—Plato, Lysias, Aristophanes and Xenophon among them—to show that these authors routinely distinguish between family, fellow citizens, and friends with φίλος being reserved for that last group. Konstan specifically refers to Meno 91c1-3, where Plato distinguishes between oikeion and philon, Lysias 6.23, 6.53, Xenophon 4.51 and Memorabilia 1.2.51-2.

Although this evidence does indicate the distinction that Konstan argues for, it is also true that the three groups—family, fellow-citizens, and friends—all play an important role in the lives of ancient Greek men. Whitlock Blundell's work also points out the important relationship in Greek popular morality between a φίλος and “ekhthros” (enemy). It is generally assumed that if two are φίλοι to

---

each other, then they share each others ekhtrhoi as well. Thus, the assumption is that you will help your friends and harm your (and your friends) enemies. The *Lysis* deals explicitly with relationships between family members and friends, but is more elliptical when dealing with relationships between citizens. This can be explained as Socrates is the only Athenian citizen who appears in the dialogue since all of his companions here are too young to be citizens. Since they are not citizens, the arguments proceed without direct reference to citizenship (Except for the reference within the discussion of Lysis's relationship with his parents where it is suggested the city will allow its best citizens to lead) but the relationship of ἔραστῆς to ἐραμένος is discussed and that relationship has a political dimension as it concerns citizens and future citizens. Thus, the dialogue does deal with these three social groups that scholars of Greek friendship have signaled out as important to Greek culture.

It is important to note that of these three relationships, only that of friendship involves voluntary or conscious decisions on the part of its participants. Citizenship and family relations are determined by objective social criteria, but friendship requires the voluntary acts of the friends for the relationship to exist. It is fitting in the *Lysis* that Socrates first questions Lysis about his relation to his parents before moving on to the more general case of friendship and it should be remembered that whatever conclusion is reached in that initial discussion may not carry over to the later discussions for Lysis's parents cannot stop being his parents nor can we be mistaken about their relation to him the way we may with friends

---

(it is possible to think that after investigating the nature of friendship we will have a better sense of who are friends are or are not, but the analysis won't change Lysis's relation to his parents).

I suggested above and will expand later on the idea of the ἐραστής—ἐραμένοϛ relation taking the place of a discussion of citizenship in the dialogue because of the characters present. There is an important distinction between that relation and the relation between citizens: the ἐραστής—ἐραμένοϛ relation is asymmetrical, but that between fellow citizens is symmetrical. Fellow citizens are socially equal, but the ἐραστής—ἐραμένοϛ relation always involves an imbalance of power. The importance of that distinction is examined in the commentary.

<sup>55</sup> See pages 8 and 9 of the commentary.

<sup>56</sup> Howland (1991), p. 200-202. Howland goes on to say, “both Dionysius and Diogenes give evidence that suggests Plato was working on the *Republic* and the *Laws* simultaneously” (p. 203-203), suggesting that the testimony of Dionysius and Diogenes are independent of one another, but he does not show this to be the case.

<sup>57</sup> Not necessarily: the first is about love and the second about being a friend.

This is consistent with the idea that his father loves him for another reason and that parental love is also consistent with his not being his father’s friend. I leave the relation as Vlastos interprets it in the text because I am interested in examining Vlastos’s argument.

---

<sup>58</sup> The closing line of the first appendix to IOLP makes it seem as if Vlastos relies on the idea that if the principle isn't explicitly in the dialogue, then Plato does not have it in mind. He states that if the mere use of εἶδωλον is evidence that Platonic metaphysics are present, then what has to be shown is that its use here has to be shown to have metaphysical import. But this seems inconsistent with his own analyses. Recall his claim that the idea that the good is what makes people happy is axiomatic in the Socratic dialogues although not explicit in the *Lysis*.

<sup>59</sup> This does not entail that the philosophical position of the character Socrates has to be the same as the position of Plato, but only that they share the goal of enacting philosophy to learn, if possible, the truth.

<sup>60</sup> Booth is clear that by "unreliable narrator" he is referring to the literary technique of the author in constructing a text that allows the narrator's intentions and moral norms to be distinct from the author's. He also suggests that this development is dependent on literary developments stemming from Shakespeare: "Ever since Shakespeare taught the modern world what the Greeks had overlooked in neglecting character change (compare *Macbeth* and *Lear* with *Oedipus*)" (157). If that is right, Planeaux's assessment is anachronistic as well as relying on a less rigorous definition of "unreliable narration." In what follows I abide by Planeaux's less stringent idea of an unreliable narrator so as to deal specifically with his argument.

<sup>61</sup> A similar thing happens with Socrates and Theaetetus at the beginning of

---

*Theaetetus* at 144b – 144d where Theaetetus is described to Socrates by Theodorus who has seemingly forgotten the boy and his father’s name. Socrates is immediately able to identify him. In the *Theaetetus* this distinction—between knowing the boy by description and knowing him by his name is pertinent to the theme of the dialogue, namely, the nature of knowledge and so the dramatic reasons for it are evident. The nature of knowledge is not under discussion in the *Lysis* but the nature of friendship and the kind of affection bound up with friendship is. By having the wise Socrates be able to identify the good and noble *Lysis* might simply indicate that the wise can judge those worthy of being friends and identify them.

<sup>62</sup> Miller (2004) reports that the gymnasia in Athens were responsible for the *ephebeia*, a two-year training for boys eighteen years old that consisted in training and active military service.

<sup>63</sup> Miller (2004) reports that a second-century B.C. inscription states, “No slave is to disrobe in the gymnasium, nor any freedman, nor their sons, nor cripples, nor homosexuals, nor those engaged in commercial craft, nor drunkards, nor madmen.” (Miller 189) The inscription and report of possible punishments is far enough removed from Plato’s time and location that we may wonder if they accurately represent Athenian custom, but the general prohibition against adults in the gymnasia and palaesta seems to have been true at Athens.

<sup>64</sup> The ages are not given the dialogue’s text, but are based on the prosopography given in Nails (2002).

---

<sup>65</sup> See chapter three.

<sup>66</sup> Booth mentions modern authors use deceptive narrators (159) and, at least in some cases, such as Camus's *The Fall* they may be put to philosophic ends. The difference here is that Plato is presenting philosophical arguments for consideration and throwing doubt on the narrator distracts from consideration of the arguments.

Bibliography

- Adams, Don. "A Socratic Theory of Friendship." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 35.3 (1995): 269-282.
- Adkins, Arthur W. H. "'Friendship' and 'Self-Sufficiency' in Homer and Aristotle." *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 13 (1963): 30-45.
- Annas, Julia. "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism." *Mind* 86 (1977): 532-554.
- Begemann, A. W. *Plato's Lysis*. Amsterdam: Buijtin and Schipperheijn, 1960.
- Benson, Hugh, ed. *A Companion to Plato*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Bolotin, David. *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Bordt, Michael. "The Unity of Plato's *Lysis*." Robinson and Brisson 157-171.
- Bossi, Beatriz. "Is the *Lysis* Really Aporetic?" Robinson and Brisson 172-179.
- Cooper, John M., ed. *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.
- Cornford, F.M. *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1985.
- Coventry, Lucinda. "Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Menexenus*." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 1-15.
- Dancy, R. M. "Platonic Definitions and Forms" Benson 70-84.
- Dover, K.J. *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

- Geier, Alfred. *Plato's Erotic Thought: The Tree of the Unknown*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002.
- Gonzalez, Francisco. "Plato's *Lysis*: an Enactment of Philosophical Kinship." *Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1995): 69-90.
- Gonzalez, Francisco. "Socrates on Loving One's Own: A Traditional Conception of ΦΙΛΙΑ Radically Transformed." *Classical Philology* 95 (2000): 379-398.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. *A History of Ancient Greek Philosophy*. Vol. 4. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Hackforth, R. *Plato's Phaedo*. Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1955.
- Haden, James. "Friendship in Plato's *Lysis*." *Review of Metaphysics* 37.2 (1983): 327-356.
- Halperin, David M. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Hamilton, Edith and Cairns, Huntington, eds. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Howland, Jacob. "Re-Reading Plato: The Problem of Platonic Chronology." *Phronesis* 45.3 (1991): 189-214.
- Jenks, Rod. "Varieties of ΦΙΛΙΑ in Plato's *Lysis*." *Ancient Philosophy* 25.1 (2005): 65-80.
- Jowett, B. *Thucydides with Introduction, Marginal Analysis, Notes, and Indices*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881.
- Kahn, Charles. *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

- Konstan, David. *Friendship in the Classical World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Lewis, C.S. *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt, 1960.
- Liddell, H.G., Scott, R., and Jones, H. J. *Greek-English Lexicon*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Matthews, Gareth B. "Socratic Ignorance" Benson 103-118.
- McCabe, Mary Margaret. "Form and the Platonic Dialogues." Benson 39-54.
- Miller, Stephen G. *Ancient Greek Athletics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Monoson, S. Sara. "Citizen as Erastes: Erotic Imagery and the Idea of Reciprocity in the Periclean Funeral Oration." *Political Theory* 22.2 (1994): 253-276.
- Nails, Debra. *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2002.
- Neu, Jerome. "Plato's Analogy of State and Individual: *The Republic* and the Organic Theory of the State." *Philosophy* 46 (1971): 238-254.
- Nichols, Mary. "Friendship and Community in Plato's *Lysis*." *The Review of Politics* 68 (2006): 1-19.
- Nightingale, Andrea Wilson. "The Folly of Praise: Plato's Critique of Encomiastic Discourse in the *Lysis* and *Symposium*." *Classical Quarterly* 43.1 (1993): 112-130.
- Nozick, Robert. *The Examined Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.
- Pangle, Lorraine Smith. "Friendship and Human Neediness in Plato's *Lysis*." *Ancient Philosophy* 21.2 (2001): 305-323.

- Penner, Terrence and Rowe, Christopher. *Plato's Lysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Planeaux, Christopher. "Socrates, an Unreliable Narrator? The Dramatic Setting of the *Lysis*." *Classical Philology* 96 (2001): 60-68.
- Plato. *Platonis Opera*. Ed. I. Burnet. Vol. 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905.
- Race, William. *Plato's Lysis*. Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1983.
- Rappe, Sara. "Father of the Dogs? Tracking the Cynics in Plato's Euthydemus." *Classical Philology* 95.3 (2000): 282-303.
- Reeve, C.D.C., ed. *Plato on Love*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006.
- Reeve, C.D.C. "Plato on Eros and Friendship" Benson 294-307.
- Robinson, Thomas M. and Brisson, Luc, eds. *Plato: Euthydemus, Lysis, Charmides Proceedings of the V Symposium Platonicum Selected Papers*. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2000.
- Robinson, Richard. *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Rowe, Christopher. "The *Lysis* and *Symposium*: *aporia* and *euporia*?" Robinson and Brisson 204-216.
- Rowe, Christopher. "Interpreting Plato" Benson 13-24.
- Rudebusch, George. "True Love is Required: The Argument of *Lysis* 221d-222a." *Ancient Philosophy* 24.1 (2004): 67-80.
- Shorey, Paul. "The Alleged Fallacy in Plato's *Lysis* 220 E." *Classical Philology* 25 (1930): 380-383.
- Shorey, Paul. *What Plato Said*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933.

Siebach, James L. and Wrathall, Mark. "Socratic Elenchus in Plato's *Lysis* – More than just Consistency Testing." Robinson and Brisson 194-203.

Talisse, Robert. "Misunderstanding Socrates." *Arion* 9.3 (2002): 111 – 121.

Vlastos, Gregory. "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*." *The Philosophical Review* 63.3 (1954): 319 – 349.

Vlastos, Gregory. "The Individual as an Object of Love in Plato." *Platonic Studies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. 3-42.

Whitlock Blundell, M. *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study In Sophocles and Greek Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Young, Charles M. "The Socratic *Elenchus*" Benson 55-69.