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**Chapter 10**  
**Socrates on Love**  
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**Introduction: Socrates as Lover**

In the famous Catalogue Aria of *Don Giovanni*, Leporello recounts how his master seduced 2,065 ladies in France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, and Spain; reading Plato's Socratic dialogues, one gets the sense that, while he may have had few actual conquests, at least in terms of overall susceptibility to beauty, Socrates was not far behind.<sup>1</sup> In the *Charmides*, Socrates describes himself as a poor judge of youthful beauty because, like a broken yardstick, he finds almost all young men appealing (154b). In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades accuses Socrates of being 'crazy about beautiful boys; he constantly follows them around in a perpetual daze' (216d).<sup>2</sup> Though Socrates is famous for professing ignorance, there is one area where he trumpets his expertise: in the *Symposium*, he declares that the only thing he understands is *ta erōtika* (matters of love, 177d); in the *Lysis*, he describes himself as mean and useless in all else, but possessed of the god-given skill to recognize lovers and beloveds (204b-c).

Perhaps the most noteworthy of Socrates' infatuations was with Alcibiades: in the *Gorgias*, Socrates calls himself the dual lover of philosophy and of Alcibiades (481d). In the *Protagoras*, teased for hunting after the ripe Alcibiades, Socrates defends himself, alluding to Homer's observation that young men are at their most seductive when their beards are in first bloom (309a-b). However, Alcibiades was not the only youth to catch Socrates' eye: in the opening of the *Charmides*, Socrates famously describes himself as aflame with passion when he catches a glimpse beneath the boy's cloak.<sup>4</sup> This description is paralleled in Xenophon's *Symposium*, where Socrates

describes the effect of rubbing his naked shoulder against Critobulos' as the bite of a wild beast, which leaves a sting in his heart (4.27-8). This depiction of Socrates is not confined to Plato and Xenophon; Dover cites a remark by Aristoxenos, that Socrates had strong heterosexual appetites, which he indulged, though without injustice (f. 55; Dover 1978:153). Kahn alludes to a fragment from Phaedo's *Zephyrus*, in which the physiognomist concludes on the basis of Socrates' bulging eyes that he is a womanizer; Socrates acknowledges this as his native weakness, which he has mastered through rational training (1996:11-12).

If we look more closely at these passages, something strange emerges. As the fragments from Phaedo and Aristoxenos already suggest, though Socrates may have had unusually strong sensual appetites, he seems to have had them firmly under control. In the *Symposium*, after mockingly comparing Socrates to the debauched Silenus, Alcibiades reveals that the boy-crazy exterior is just a veneer (216d-e). Alcibiades goes on to recount the humiliating story of his failed seduction of Socrates. In a striking inversion of pederastic convention,<sup>5</sup> Alcibiades becomes so infatuated with Socrates' wisdom and virtue that he is transformed into the lover, seeking to seduce Socrates, in order to trade physical for spiritual benefits. To this, Socrates replies:

If I really have in me the power to make you a better man, then you can see in me a beauty that is really beyond description and makes your own remarkable good looks pale in comparison...You seem to me to want more than your proper share: you offer me the merest appearance of beauty, and in return you want the thing itself, 'gold in exchange for bronze'. (218d-e)

This is echoed in Aeschines' *Alcibiades*, where Socrates rebukes Alcibiades for his vanity, and Alcibiades, reduced to tears, begs Socrates for help in becoming virtuous (cited in Kahn 1996:19-23). Socrates declares that he had hoped that through keeping company with Alcibiades, *dia to eran* (through loving him), he might improve him. Kahn speculates:

Perhaps [Aeschines] is saying in his simpler way...what Plato indicates more explicitly in the *Alcibiades* speech: that what looked to the world like

Socrates' flirtatious interest in handsome young men was in fact his way of focusing upon them the magnetic power of his own personality and thus drawing them to him 'through the power of love', instilling in them a desire to imitate in their own lives the philosophical pursuit of *aretē* which they saw in his. (22-3)

Supposing that Kahn is correct, that Socrates' flirtatious exterior is actually a means of seducing promising youths to philosophy, then we are left with a puzzle regarding Socrates' motivation. In classical Athens, pederastic relations typically had a transactional nature: older male citizens offered their beloveds moral and physical training in exchange for sexual favours. Yet in taking on the cast of lover in order to draw boys to philosophy, Socrates' philosophical seduction appears unmotivated. The evidence does not suggest that Socrates was hoping to exchange philosophical for sexual favours.<sup>6</sup> And, while Socrates typically flatters his interlocutors, claiming that he hopes to gain wisdom from them, in the case of the very young and inexperienced—Lysis, Menexenus and Charmides come to mind—it seems unlikely that he could have believed that they had much to teach him. Perhaps in engaging philosophically with these boys, Socrates is acting out of disinterested beneficence. But what prompts this? Why, as Socrates puts it, trade gold for bronze?

This worry becomes acute if we consider the theory of love and motivation that Vlastos and others locate in the *Lysis*. In his seminal paper, 'The Individual as Object of Love in Plato', Vlastos argues that Socrates' theory of love in the *Lysis* is a failure, since it is incapable of accommodating disinterested concern for the beloved. According to Vlastos, Socrates argues that 'if A loves B, he does so because of some benefit *he* needs from B and for the sake of just that benefit' (8). We are to love others only for the sake of our own possession of happiness and never for their own sakes. This leads us to be attracted to others who are beautiful and useful solely insofar as they are such, and to potentially abandon them should someone more beautiful or useful

come along. As a consequence, ‘Plato is scarcely aware of kindness, tenderness, compassion, concern for the freedom, respect for the integrity of the beloved, as essential ingredients in the highest type of interpersonal love’ (30).

We can see why the *Lysis* lends itself to precisely this worry. In his opening elenchus with Lysis, Socrates concludes that we are not going to be loved by anyone insofar as we are useless (210c). In his subsequent discussion, Socrates rules out the possibility that good could love good on the grounds that the good are self-sufficient; he who is self-sufficient needs nothing and therefore loves nothing (215a-b). However, at the same time as the *Lysis* advances an egoistic analysis of love, its dramatic frame problematizes this very theory. The dialogue begins with Socrates demonstrating to Hippothales how to seduce a haughty boy, and he succeeds in eliciting Lysis’ and Menexenus’ friendship: the boy is described as turning to Socrates *paidikōs kai philikōs* (in a playful and friendly manner, 211a); Socrates addresses Menexenus as *ō phile hetaire* (dear friend, 213b); and the dialogue concludes with Socrates describing himself, Lysis, and Menexenus as friends (223b). Socrates’ method of seduction is to demonstrate to Lysis that he is ignorant and therefore needy; by humbling the boy, Socrates makes him vulnerable to his advances. But this leads us to question Socrates’ motives. On the one hand, if Lysis is knowledgeable, then, in convincing him that he is ignorant, Socrates advances his own interests, but also emerges as a disturbingly manipulative character. On the other hand, if, as is more plausible, Lysis is ignorant, then Socrates does him a service in revealing to him his need for knowledge. But if Lysis is ignorant then, according to Socrates’ own theory, he has nothing to offer Socrates, and we are left to wonder what Socrates’ motives are in seeking friendship with the boy and in benefiting him via the elenchus.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I focus on what has come to be called the Vlastos problem, the question of whether the theory of love that Socrates advances in the *Lysis* can allow for love of other persons, and whether it can allow for a form of such love that is not problematically egoistic. In the first part of this chapter, I concentrate on the dialogue itself. I begin by offering a close examination of Socrates' initial elenchus with Lysis, leading to the question of whether Lysis' parents love him. I then turn to Socrates' positive account of the *philos* (lover, friend),<sup>8</sup> agreeing with those interpreters who take Socrates to endorse the proposal that the neither-good-nor-bad (henceforth NGNB) is *philos* to the good.<sup>9</sup> In the second part of this chapter, I address critical responses to Socrates' theory of love in the *Lysis*. I divide these into four groups: i) those that deny that the *Lysis* seeks to offer an account of the conscious motivations of the lover; ii) those that maintain that it allows for non-egoistic love between persons; iii) those that concede that it treats all love as egoistic, but that attempt to reconcile this with contemporary intuitions regarding love as an other-regarding state; and iv) those that, like Vlastos, reject Socrates' theory as implausibly and repellently egoistic. I argue against the first group that the *Lysis* clearly seeks to offer an account of the lover's motives. I contend against the second group that the *Lysis* does contain an egoistic theory of love, and against the third, that this theory cannot be reconciled easily with contemporary intuitions. I conclude by suggesting, against the last group, that, while Socrates' theory may strike us as repellent, it is not without explanatory power.

### **1. Do Lysis' Parents Love Him?**

The *Lysis* opens with Socrates questioning Lysis in order to demonstrate to Hippothales how to humble a boy, making him receptive to one's advances. Socrates begins by asking Lysis whether his parents love him, and eliciting the admission that they do love him and therefore want him to be as happy as possible. Socrates then proposes that happiness is being free to do whatever

one pleases. However, Lysis' parents do not let him do as he pleases in most areas: they trust their charioteer, not Lysis, with their horses, their muleteer with their mules, and will not let him anywhere near his mother's loom. On the other hand, in areas where Lysis does have knowledge, such as reading, writing, and playing the lyre, his parents give him free rein. Socrates extrapolates that if Lysis possesses the relevant knowledge, his neighbours will allow him to manage their estates and the Athenians their affairs. Even the Great King will trust Lysis rather than his own son to treat his son's eyes if Lysis has medical expertise. If Lysis becomes wise, everyone will be *philos* to him, because he will be useful and good; if he remains ignorant, then Lysis will be no one's *philos*, and no one will love him, not even his parents. Socrates concludes by observing that Lysis is in need of mental training; the implication is painfully obvious: Lysis lacks knowledge, and so is not loved, even by his parents.

This conclusion has, nonetheless, been resisted by most interpreters, who find it so morally repellent and psychologically implausible that they conclude that Socrates cannot be serious. Price, for example, argues that, just as we are not to believe that the Great King would entrust Lysis with his possessions, so we should not take seriously the proposal that Lysis' parents do not love him (2004:3); Robinson, similarly, suggests that the passage is an exaggerated homily, which needs to be taken with a grain of salt (1986:69 n. 15).<sup>11</sup> Vlastos is the notable exception to this trend. Vlastos observes that Socrates' conclusion at 210c-d, that no one will love Lysis insofar as Lysis is useless, does not necessarily imply that Lysis must benefit his parents in order to be loved by them; it is possible that Socrates means that they wish him to be wise in order that he may benefit himself (1981a:7-8). However, Vlastos argues that at 213e and 215b-c Socrates advances a purely egoistic model of love, which makes no room for wishing Lysis well for his own sake. In that

case, the conclusion stands, that Lysis' parents only love him insofar as he is useful to them; since he is not yet wise, they cannot love him very much.<sup>12</sup>

Before turning to arguments suggesting that Lysis' parents do love him after all, it is worth emphasizing that interpretive charity does not demand that we interpret the *Lysis* such that Socrates does not advance a utilitarian model of parental love. Plato is a great philosopher, but as the *Republic* demonstrates, he has highly unconventional views regarding interpersonal and familial relations. While these views might be unattractive to us, they do not mire him in the sort of conceptual or logical confusion that, as sympathetic interpreters, we should avoid attributing to him.

Nonetheless, it seems most likely to me that Socrates does hold that Lysis' parents love him. The reasons for this emerge if we look more closely at his elenchus with Lysis. First, consider the unfavourable comparison of Lysis to his parents' muleteer. If Socrates is in fact endorsing a biconditional claim at 210d, that one is loved if and only if one has knowledge, then it would emerge that Lysis' parents love their slaves more than Lysis, given that the slaves have greater expertise. Given Athenian attitudes towards slaves, it seems unlikely that Socrates actually thinks that Lysis' parents love their slaves more than Lysis; he thus cannot be serious when he concludes, 'It seems, then, that [Lysis'] parents think more even of a slave than their own son' (208b). Turn next to Socrates' observation that Lysis' parents do not let him rule his own self (208c). What could their motive be? They do not let him do as he wishes with his mother's loom for fear that he may damage it; by analogy, they do not let him govern himself for fear that he may harm himself. This makes sense only if they value him highly. This, in turn, should cause us to recognize that in the case of the horses and mules, the most plausible reason why they prevent Lysis from having his way with the animals is not that they fear he will damage the animals, but, rather, that they fear

that the animals will damage him. Finally, when Socrates observes that Lysis' parents let him do as he wishes when it comes to reading and playing the lyre, we have reason to question whether his expertise in these areas can really be the basis of their love of him; if this were so, they would have even more reason to love a scribe or musician.

Later in the dialogue, Socrates refers twice to cases of parental love that are in apparent tension with his initial exchange with Lysis. At 212e-3a, Socrates observes that newborn infants are dearest of all things to their parents. If Lysis is useless, how much more so a crying infant. And at 219d-20a, Socrates describes a father who values his son more highly than all his possessions; this father's supreme regard for his son causes him to value other things derivatively—for example, he would value a cup if it contained an antidote to some hemlock his son had drunk. This passage calls to mind the example of the Great King and suggests that if Lysis' medical knowledge makes the Great King value him, this is only because he values his son even more, despite his son's medical ignorance.<sup>13</sup>

Where does this leave us? Do Lysis' parents love him or not? In assessing Socrates' initial *elenchus* with Lysis, we are left with the following interpretive options:

- i) Lysis' parents do not love him.
- ii) Lysis' parents do love him, but their love is not grounded in utility.
- iii) Lysis' parents love him with a love grounded in utility; Lysis is useful to his parents in some way as yet to be determined.
- iv) Socrates is in a state of *aporia* regarding the nature of Lysis' parents' love for him.

I have raised considerations that cast doubt on the first option. In order to decide between the remaining three, we must first determine what, if any, positive account of love Socrates offers.



## 2. Socrates' Positive Proposal

As Santas observes, the *Lysis* is, formally at least, an aporetic dialogue: Socrates entertains, then attacks a number of hypotheses concerning who is the *philos*, and the best we can do as interpreters is to speak, speculatively, of the favoured hypothesis (1988:81). Before considering what this may turn out to be, it will be helpful to offer an overview of the remainder of the dialogue. After revealing to Lysis that his ignorance renders him unworthy of love, Socrates turns his attention to Menexenus, asking him the question that remains the focus for the remainder of the dialogue—who is the *philos*? Is it the one loving, the one loved, or both? Menexenus initially opts for both, so long as one of them loves the other. Socrates replies that if this is sufficient for both to be *philo*i (friends), then, absurdly, it will turn out that one can be *philos* to someone who hates him. Menexenus therefore proposes that both are *philo*i, but only if they love one another. Socrates retorts that this precludes the possibility of there being horse-lovers, quail-lovers and even philosophers, people who love objects that cannot possibly reciprocate their affection. Menexenus' third proposal is that what is loved is *philos* to that which loves; however, since the beloved can hate the one loving, this returns us to the absurdities of his first proposal. Finally, Menexenus suggests that a lover is a friend to the beloved; again, this leads to the possibility that one might be a *philos* to an enemy.

Having reached *aporia* with Menexenus, Socrates returns to questioning Lysis. Appealing to the poets, Socrates suggests that like is friend to like. But if this is correct, then bad will be friend to bad; this is impossible, since the bad do one another injustice. Perhaps, then, only the good are friend to the good. Socrates rejects this for two, related reasons. First, insofar as the good are alike, they cannot benefit one another, and so cannot be friends. Second, the good are, by definition, self-sufficient; he who is self-sufficient lacks nothing and therefore loves nothing.

Socrates next considers the opposite possibility, that unlikes are friends. This, however, fails for the familiar reason that a friend will then be friend to an enemy.

There is one possibility they have overlooked: that that which is neither good nor bad is a friend to the good. Just as a sick man is friend of a doctor on account of sickness and for the sake of health, so, more generally, the NGNB is a friend of the good on account of the presence of the bad and for the sake of the good. Socrates takes issue with this account for two reasons. First, according to this proposal, all friendships arise from some cause and exist for the sake of some end. If this end, in turn, is the friend of something else, then this would lead to an infinite regress; Socrates therefore posits a terminus for this telic chain, a *prōton philon* (first friend, henceforth PP) for the sake of which all other friends are friends, but that is not, itself, the friend of anything further. In that case, all the dependent friends turn out to be false friends; only the PP is truly a friend. Second, this account assumes that all friendship occurs on account of the presence of some bad. However, Socrates maintains that there would be friendship even if there were no bad. In that case, there must be some other cause of friendship. Socrates ends the dialogue by proposing that desire is this cause. Since we all desire what we lack, i.e., what has been taken from us, the object of friendship is revealed to be the *oikeion*.<sup>17</sup> Socrates concludes by observing that they may have something useful to say about friendship if there is a difference between being *oikeion* and being alike. However, the two boys miss this warning: when asked whether the good is *oikeion* to everyone, or, whether, rather, good is *oikeion* to good, bad to bad and NGNB to NGNB, they opt for the latter; this mires them, again, in the incoherence of good being friend to good etc. Since they have eliminated all possible candidates for the *philos*, the dialogue ends in *aporia*.

Most interpreters assume that Socrates endorses some version of the thesis that the NGNB is friend to the good. Before turning to such interpretations, I will first consider a few alternate

proposals. There are very few interpreters who locate any other positive analysis of friendship in the *Lysis*. One exception is Hoerber. In 'Plato's *Lysis*', Hoerber argues that according to the *Lysis*, the highest form of friendship is mutual friendship between the good.<sup>18</sup> The difficulty with Hoerber's argument is that he can only adduce the most tenuous textual support. According to Hoerber, Plato's ostensible reason for rejecting the reciprocal analysis of friendship is that it cannot account for usages such as *quail-lover* and *philosopher*, where the friendship is non-mutual.<sup>19</sup> However, Hoerber maintains that Plato rejects Menexenus' proposal that the lover is the *philos* because this would allow for contexts where friendship is non-mutual; Plato is thus indicating that friendship is necessarily mutual, and we can therefore disregard his argument against the reciprocal hypothesis (21-2). Against Hoerber, Plato's issue with the proposal that the lover is the *philos* is not that this might lead to non-mutual friendship, but, more problematically, that it might lead to friendship with an enemy. Furthermore, Hoerber's argument that we should disregard Socrates' argument opposing reciprocal friendship cuts both ways; perhaps we can deploy the argument opposing reciprocal friendship as evidence for disregarding Socrates' objections to one-way friendship. Hoerber adds that, in listing the views that have been refuted at the end of the dialogue, Socrates ignores reciprocal friendship. Against Hoerber, the very last substantive philosophical point Socrates makes in the dialogue is that good cannot be friend to good (222d).

A more plausible alternative to Hoerber is the proposal is that, far from advancing any positive account of friendship, the *Lysis* is genuinely aporetic. Two prominent proponents of this view are Robinson and MacKenzie. According to Robinson (1986), the aporetic conclusion of the dialogue stems from Plato's ignoring an ambiguity in the sense of *philos*: one sense of the term applies to those engaged in a reciprocal relationship between humans, while another refers to what makes some object valuable. Plato's error is to analyze human friendship in terms of this second

sense of *philos*, to assume that people are valuable in the same way as objects; as a result, he is unable to explain the reciprocal aspect of friendship. While we can see why the NGNB should be friend to the good, it is left unclear why the good should reciprocate this affection. Robinson's argument assumes that human friendship is necessarily a mutual relation and that Plato took it to be such, but neither claim is obvious.<sup>20</sup> Robinson appeals to passages from Xenophon and Aristotle to establish that the Greeks took friendship to be necessarily reciprocal (67-8); however, Aristotle's emphasis on reciprocity at, e.g., *EN* 1155b-6a, can be seen as a rebuttal of Plato's allowing for non-reciprocal cases of friendship at 212d-e. In fact, in the *Laws*, Plato distinguishes two kinds of *philia*, between equals and unequals, and specifies that the latter is rarely reciprocal (837a-b): reciprocity does not appear to be a requirement on *philia* for Plato. To turn to the *Lysis*, Plato deliberately sets the dialogue in an erotic context, and depicts Hippothales' *erōs* for Lysis as one-sided. Why, then, is it out of the question that Plato should allow for cases of *philia* that are one-sided as well, particularly since he emphasizes non-reciprocal cases of *erōs* at 212b-c, and at 221b claims that *erōs* entails *philia*?

In her ingenious paper, 'Impasse and Explanation: from the *Lysis* to the *Phaedo*', MacKenzie proposes that the dialogue contains 'a complex structure of thesis and counterthesis, which end without resolution and with no hint of a saving clause' (31). In particular, the proposal that the NGNB is friend of the good is undermined by the argument that there would be friendship even if there were no bad; the thesis that all friendship is for the sake of some PP is attacked by the arguments that the good is loved for the sake of the bad and that desire is the ultimate cause of friendship; the claim that desire is what explains friendship is countered by the suggestion that friendship is explained by some feature in the beloved, which renders it *oikeion*; and, finally, the thesis that all friendship is directed at the *oikeion* is rejected because this amounts to the previously-

rejected proposal that friendship is felt by like for like. Against MacKenzie, not all of her countertheses need be construed as such, and it is not clear that the dialogue ends with ‘no hint of a saving clause’. Socrates’ argument that friendship would persist in the absence of the bad does nothing to undermine his proposal that the NGNB is *philos* to the good, only the additional clause, that it is *philos* on account of the bad. The claim that all friendship originates in desire does not contradict the thesis that it is all directed towards the PP. Similarly, the proposals that friendship is due to desire and that it is directed towards the *oikeion* are not clearly incompatible. Finally, the collapse of the proposal that *philia* is felt for the *oikeion* into the previously-rejected hypothesis that like is friend to like is due to an argumentative error on the part of Lysis and Menexenus, an error of which Socrates clearly warns them at 222b. While the dialogue may formally end in *aporia*, if anything, Plato implies at 222b that Socrates is far from stumped.

Most interpreters take Socrates to endorse some version of what I shall call the NGNB thesis, the thesis that the NGNB is *philos* to the good.<sup>21</sup> There is, I believe, substantial evidence that Socrates subscribes to the NGNB thesis. First, consider the manner in which it is introduced.<sup>22</sup> The first phase of the investigation into what is the *philos* centres on Menexenus’ replies to the alternatives Socrates poses to him, and the second examines answers given by the poets. But the third and final phase of the dialogue, in which the NGNB thesis is introduced, begins in a striking manner. It is *Socrates* who notes that they have overlooked the possibility that NGNB is friend to the good. He then announces his intention to wax prophetic (*apomanteuomenos*) and asks Lysis to listen to his mantic sayings (*ha de legōn manteuomai*). That Plato should place the NGNB thesis in the mouth of Socrates, and draw attention to it by comparing it to an oracular utterance demands explanation; the most plausible is that Plato is signalling that this is the hypothesis that Socrates treats most seriously.

According to the NGNB thesis, friendship aims at the good; the example of the sick body suggests that it is directed towards one's own good. This conception of friendship as grounded in utility is repeatedly endorsed earlier in the dialogue. In his elenchus with Lysis, Socrates concludes that we are loved if and only if we are wise and hence useful to others (210c-d). In rejecting the proposal that good is friend to good, Socrates produces two arguments, both of which rely on the assumption that friendship aims at benefitting oneself: the argument that likes cannot be friends because, being alike, they cannot benefit one another; and the argument that the good cannot be friends, because, being self-sufficient, they can be of no use to one another.

Finally, at the conclusion of the dialogue, Socrates tells his friend, 'Wanting to review the argument, I said, "It seems to me, Lysis and Menexenus, that if there is some difference between belonging and being like, then we might have something to say about what a friend is"' (222b). This suggests that, so long as we do not commit Lysis' and Menexenus' error of identifying the *oikeion* with the *homoion* (like), on Socrates' own telling, we will have a plausible account of friendship. Socrates goes on to list all the accounts of friendship that have been rejected; as Tessitore notes, the suggestion that the NGNB is friend to the good is conspicuously absent from this list (1990:128).

Apart from evidence internal to the *Lysis*, there are suggestive parallels of the NGNB thesis to claims that Plato appears to endorse in other dialogues. Kahn (1996:266-7), Rowe (2000:205-11) and Versenyi (1975:194) all emphasize parallels to the *Symposium*. In the *Symposium*, Plato makes the following claims, all of which echo statements made in the *Lysis*. i) Love is directed at some object (*Symposium* 199d; cf. *Lysis* 221c). ii) This object is something the lover lacks (*Symposium* 200a-b; cf. *Lysis* 221d-e). iii) This object is the beautiful or the good (*Symposium* 201a-c; cf. *Lysis* 216d). iv) Something can be neither good nor bad (*Symposium* 201e-2b; cf. *Lysis*

217e). v) That which loves is neither good nor bad (*Symposium* 204a-b; cf. *Lysis* 216d). vi) There must be a terminus to desire, which is not desired for the sake of anything else; this terminus is the good (*Symposium* 204d-5a; cf. *Lysis* 219c-20b). Conjoined, these claims give us the view that that which is neither good nor bad loves the good that it lacks, a good that is not desired for the sake of anything further. Though less striking, there are also parallels to the *Gorgias*, where Plato draws a distinction between the good, the bad and the NGNB (467e-8a), and maintains that people pursue the NGNB for the sake of the good (468a-b).<sup>23</sup> As Rowe notes, on their own, these parallels perhaps do not offer decisive evidence for what, if any, positive proposals Socrates advances in the *Lysis*, but when conjoined with evidence internal to the dialogue, they strongly suggest that the NGNB thesis is Socrates' own (2000:210-11).

### **3. Interpretive Problems for the Positive Proposal**

Suppose we follow the majority of interpreters in taking the NGNB thesis to be Socrates' favoured proposal. This still leaves us with a number of interpretive questions. Does Socrates hold that the NGNB loves the good on account of the bad? What is the PP? Can there be more than one PP? And, finally, in what sense, if any, is the dialogue aporetic?

#### **3.1 The Role of the Bad**

When Socrates first introduces the NGNB thesis, his proposal is that the NGNB is friend of the good *on account of the presence of the bad*. Socrates goes on to reject this last clause for two reasons. First, Socrates argues that if we identify the bad with the enemy, then we arrive at the paradoxical result that, whereas all other friends are loved for the sake of a friend, the good is loved for the sake of an enemy. As many scholars note, this argument is baffling: in it, Socrates slides from saying, unproblematically, that the good is loved on account of (*dia*) the bad, to advancing the questionable claim that the good is loved for the sake of (*heneka*) the bad.

There have been several attempts to salvage Socrates' argument. MacKenzie proposes that Socrates is driven to this position because, as the end of a chain of consequential goods, the good cannot be loved for the sake of some further good; in that case, the only possibility is that it is loved for the sake of the bad. In advancing this paradoxical result, Socrates is implying that if we posit the PP as what is lovable in itself, we fail to explain its value (1988:43-4). Though this proposal is intriguing, it is somewhat far-fetched. To object that the good is loved for the sake of the bad would be a highly indirect way of indicating the explanatory vacuity of positing the PP; furthermore, this opens the question of why Socrates has no qualms about assigning the good the role of first principle in the *Republic*. Penner and Rowe have suggested that when Socrates claims that the good is loved for the sake of the bad, what he really means is that it is loved for the sake of *getting rid of* the bad (2005:134). The difficulty with this proposal is that it does not lend itself to the opposition between the PP and all the other friends that Socrates alludes to at 220d-e, since all of the dependent friends are also loved for the sake of getting rid of the bad. While it is dissatisfying to attribute such an elementary error to Socrates, in the absence of a better explanation, it is perhaps best to side with interpreters such as Santas, who accuse Socrates of confusing the *dia* and *heneka* relations (1988:86).

Socrates' second reason for rejecting the role of the bad is his insistence that we would love the good even if there were no bad. Socrates imagines a world in which the bad did not exist; in such a world, we would still experience desires such as hunger. Hunger is sometimes beneficial, sometimes harmful; if the bad were abolished, bad hunger would disappear with it, but beneficial hunger would remain. Desire entails love; thus, if desire can occur in the absence of the bad, the same follows for *philia*. This argument is taken more seriously by interpreters; Santas concludes, on its basis, that *philia* is not reliant on the presence of the bad (1988:86).<sup>24</sup> However, it is just as



unsound as its predecessor. Just because hunger is beneficial, it does not follow that we can feel it in the absence of the bad. Even if hunger is, typically, the beneficial awareness of the body's lack of food, it is still the awareness of a bad state—lacking food. More generally, given Socrates' analysis of love and desire as grounded in lack, if we grant that lack is a bad state, then it is hard to see how these could ever occur in the absence of the bad.<sup>25</sup> Socrates appears quite sincere in rejecting the role of the bad in his account: the objection is of his own devising; is unrefuted; and is introduced in a striking manner when, at 218c-d, he shouts out that his arguments are imposters. It thus seems best to follow Versenyi in concluding that Socrates' rejection of the role of the bad is an argumentative error, which he would have done well to avoid (1975:196).

### 3.2 The First Friend

What is the first friend? Plato clearly gives us a preliminary answer—the good; however, it is unclear whether he has any more substantive account to offer. Some scholars propose that the PP is the form of the good.<sup>26</sup> They appeal to parallels between the status of the PP as the only thing that is truly a friend and the role of the form of the good in the *Republic* as the first principle. They take Plato's discussion of *parousia* (participation) at 217c-18b to offer further confirmation that the theory of forms is operative in the dialogue. However, as MacKenzie notes, the *parousia* relation Socrates introduces in the *Lysis* is quite different from that which is part of the theory of forms (1988:32-3).<sup>27</sup> Far from saying that only forms fully self-predicate, in the *Lysis*, Socrates allows that particulars can partake of whiteness either fully or apparently.

More persuasively, interpreters have suggested that the PP is happiness, virtue and/or wisdom. All of these proposals are plausible in light of evidence external to the *Lysis*; however, they are completely lacking in direct textual support internal to the dialogue. The suggestion that it is happiness, for example, advanced by Irwin (1977:52), Vlastos (1981a:10-11), Wolfsdorf

(2007:253-6) and others,<sup>28</sup> while attractive, has no support from within the *Lysis*—at most, we might take Socrates’ claim that Lysis and Menexenus are happy since they have friends (212a) to imply that friendship is desired for the sake of happiness. Roth (1995:17-18) has argued that the PP is virtue.<sup>29</sup> According to Roth, at 218a-b, Socrates states that wisdom is to ignorance and the soul as medicine is to disease and the body. The PP stands in relation to the soul as health stands in relation to the body; we can conclude, therefore, that the PP is virtue. *Contra* Roth, Plato does not state at 218a-b that wisdom is to the soul as health is to the body; in this passage, Socrates only claims that the non-terminally ignorant desire wisdom. Furthermore, at 219c, Socrates suggests that we value health for the sake of something else; if virtue is indeed analogous to health, then it, too, is valued for the sake of some further good and is not the PP.

Penner and Rowe argue at length for identifying the PP with wisdom, offering two passages as evidence for their position (2005:143-53, 273-5).<sup>30</sup> First, at 218a-b, Plato gives philosophers as an example of those who love the good on account of the presence of the bad. It is true that this passage implies that wisdom is *a good*, but it does not establish that wisdom is *the good*, i.e., the PP. The passage occurs before Plato introduces the PP; as Penner and Rowe concede (274-5), Plato also refers to the desire for health, but we are not to conclude on this basis that health is the PP. Second, at the conclusion of the dialogue, Plato implicitly identifies the PP with the *oikeion*; Penner and Rowe treat this as a deliberate allusion to the opening of the dialogue, where Socrates concludes that wisdom makes all things *hēmetera* (our own). Against Penner and Rowe, in the conclusion of the dialogue, the *philon* is not identified with that which *makes* things *oikeia*, but with the *oikeion, simpliciter*. By contrast, in the opening discussion, wisdom is what *makes* things useful and *hēmetera*. If wisdom is what makes things useful, then it appears that it is a means to the PP, rather than the PP itself. Penner and Rowe concede this objection, but insist that wisdom

can still be identified with the PP, since it is always a means to the PP (275-6). However, nowhere in the dialogue does Plato draw a distinction between means that sometimes and means that always lead to the PP. In sum, then, Socrates does not appear to offer any positive account of the PP in the *Lysis*, beyond identifying it with the good.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.3 Multiple First Friends?

The question of what the PP is lends itself to a related concern, whether there can be multiple PP's. This will be important later in this chapter, when we turn to the question of whether people can function as PP's, and so be loved for their own sakes. Again, the text gives us no clear answer. Many interpreters, such as Annas (1977:538)<sup>32</sup> and Irwin (1977:51-2), accuse Socrates of committing the error of concluding, on the basis of the fact that there cannot be an infinite chain of dependent friends, that there can be only one PP. However, Plato nowhere states that there can be only one PP; the best evidence for their criticism is the fact that Plato always refers to the PP in the singular. Those who hold that there can be multiple PP's can accommodate this fact. Even if Plato refers to the PP in the singular and identifies it with the good, the good may have many constituents, each of which is a PP.<sup>33</sup>

MacKenzie has argued that when Plato describes a father as valuing a cup full of healing wine for the sake of his son, whom he values above all else, Plato is not merely providing an analogy, but is actually giving an example of the relation of a dependent *philon* to the PP (1988:35). If the father can have two sons, presumably he can have two PP's; anything that one legitimately values for its own sake will turn out to be a PP.<sup>34</sup> Against this proposal, Penner and Rowe argue that the son is an analogue to, and not an example of, the PP (2005:141-2). They emphasize that Plato only refers to the father as valuing his son, and not to the son being a *philos* to the father. However, as MacKenzie observes, Plato seems to hold that there is a close relation between

valuing something and viewing that thing as a *philos*.<sup>35</sup> More persuasively, Penner and Rowe note that at 220a, Socrates asks, ‘Isn’t the same account true of the friend?’ If the son were truly a PP to his father, then this phrasing would be odd; it would be more natural to say, ‘Isn’t the same account true of all friends?’ In defence of MacKenzie, it is implausible that the father should value his son above all else, but that his son should fail to be a PP for the father; if the son is a dependent friend, loved for the sake of the father’s happiness, then the father would not, in fact, value his son above all else.

### 3.4 Aporia

As my discussion of the PP has suggested, even if the *Lysis* contains a core positive view, Socrates leaves much unresolved. This enables us to offer a tentative answer to our fourth question: in what sense, if any, is the dialogue aporetic? I argued earlier that the dialogue contains a positive proposal, the NGNB thesis. Nonetheless, there are still strong indications that it is, in some way, aporetic.<sup>36</sup> Socrates begins by claiming that he is so far from possessing a friend that he does not know how people become friends (212a), and concludes by noting that, while he takes himself, Lysis and Menexenus to be friends, he still does not know what a friend is (223b). It would therefore be preferable to come up with some deeper explanation of the aporetic conclusion of the dialogue than the boys’ error. Plato has them err for a reason, and to attribute this to an attachment to the formal structure of the aporetic dialogue is unsatisfying. The most persuasive explanation is that the dialogue is aporetic because Socrates has not yet discovered what the PP is.<sup>37</sup> Even if it is the good, Socrates does not tell us what the good is. Socrates maintains that dependent goods are imposters because they pretend to be valuable for their own sakes, while they are actually only valuable for the sake of the PP (219d-220b). If we do not know what the PP is, then we do not know what the dependent goods are valuable for; in that case, we will not know

why they are valuable, and they will remain phantom goods. However, if this is the true source of Socrates' *aporia*, then we are left to wonder why Plato does not have the dialogue founder on these grounds, rather than on the conflation of the *oikeion* with the *homoion*.

#### 4. The Vlastos Objection

As I mentioned in the opening of this chapter, Socrates' theory of love has been subject to an influential line of attack by Vlastos (1981a); subsequent critical work on the dialogue is, in large part, a response to Vlastos.<sup>38</sup> Vlastos's overall critique of the Socratic theory is that it is problematically egoistic: we are to love others only insofar as they contribute to our own good, and not for their own sakes. Further difficulties emerge when Vlastos turns to Plato's theory of love in the *Symposium*. On this theory, we love others only insofar as they instantiate admirable qualities, such as beauty and goodness, qualities that are only perfectly exemplified by forms. While I follow Vlastos in not finding the theory of forms in the *Lysis*, if we assume that in the *Lysis*, people are to be loved for their possession of useful qualities, then many of the objections Vlastos raises against the Platonic theory in the *Symposium* apply to the Socratic theory of the *Lysis* as well. According to Vlastos, if love is solely responsive to valuable qualities in the beloved, then we fail to love him for his true self, for 'the uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality' (31). Furthermore, we fail to do justice to his subjectivity; we treat him as we might an object—to love persons as 'objectifications of excellence is to fail to make the thought of them as *subjects* central to what is felt for them in love' (32). Finally, should a person with more valuable qualities come along, we would be rationally obliged to trade up.

Before I turn, in the next section, to discussing various responses to Vlastos's objection, I will spend the remainder of this section attempting to get clear on what, exactly, the objection amounts to. There is a tendency to run together a number of distinct objections to utility-based

love: that it is egoistical, that it is not directed at the beloved's true self, that it is potentially transient, that it does not involve a desire to benefit the beloved for his own sake, etc. Carefully exploring and distinguishing these will help us to get a better sense of what, exactly, the charges are against Socrates, whether these charges are legitimate, and whether he can meet them.<sup>39</sup>

The broadest charge critics raise against Socrates is that of *egoism*.<sup>40</sup> Consider two lovers—call them Romeo and Juliet. According to this objection, on the Socratic theory, Romeo loves Juliet only insofar as Juliet contributes to Romeo's own good. Penner and Rowe offer a helpful refinement: the charge of egoism can be distinguished from that of *selfishness* (2005:289-90).<sup>41</sup> Socrates' theory is selfish if, in addition to being egoistic, it claims that the good at which love aims is necessarily a state of the lover, such as pleasure; in that case, the good of Juliet can only ever play an instrumental, but not a constitutive, role in Romeo's good. Thus, a theory could be egoistic but not selfish, if it allowed that the wellbeing of Juliet is a constituent of Romeo's good, independently of the contribution her wellbeing makes to his psychological state. What, exactly, is the problem with egoism? The worry might be that Romeo would not love Juliet if she did not contribute to his own good. Call this the charge of egoism proper. Alternately, the problem might be that Romeo does not love Juliet for her own sake; call this worry *instrumentalism*.<sup>42</sup> Though this might appear identical to the first concern, in fact they are distinct. For example, it is possible that Romeo might not love Juliet if she did not contribute to his good, but that the love generated by her contribution to his good causes him to love her for her own sake as well as his own, with the proviso that, should she cease to contribute to his good, his other-directed concern would vanish. Conversely, it is possible that Romeo might love Juliet whether or not she contributes to his good, but that his love does not involve valuing her for her own sake; self-destructive love often takes precisely this form.

The instrumentalism objection contains a core ambiguity: it is not obvious what, exactly, it means to love the beloved for his own sake. Vlastos is inconsistent on this issue. In the opening of his paper, he suggests that to love the beloved for his own sake is to wish for his good independently of its contribution to one's own good (4-6). However, Vlastos goes on to speak of the philosopher as loving the forms for their own sakes (34), and it is unclear how he could possibly hope to benefit them. Relatedly, Vlastos objects that in loving the beloved as an instantiation of good qualities, we fail to value him for his own sake (31-4). This might suggest that to love the beloved for his own sake is to value him for those qualities that constitute his true essence. These two issues are frequently linked: often the reason we fail to wish for another's good for his own sake is because we fail to love him for those qualities that really matter, as opposed to the qualities that merely make him useful or pleasant to us. Nonetheless, the two worries are distinct. Let us call the concern that Socratic love does not involve wishing the beloved well for his own sake *instrumentalism*; I will refer to the second concern, that Socratic love fails to respond to the beloved's true self, *objectification*.

For Vlastos, part of what makes egoism worrisome is two potential consequences. The first is *interchangeability*: insofar as Romeo loves Juliet for certain qualities she exemplifies, he has no more reason to love her than someone else who exemplifies these qualities equally, and he ought, rationally, to abandon her should a more attractive woman come along. As Kolodny observes, this is distinct from a second, related concern, *transience* (2003:140-1). On transience, Romeo ought to cease loving Juliet should she cease to possess the qualities that made her initially lovable. Two additional concerns are *impersonalism* and *non-reciprocity*. According to Vlastos, in the *Lysis*, Socrates claims that whatever we love for the sake of the PP is not truly lovable. On the assumption that the PP is happiness or some other impersonal object, then Socrates' theory

cannot accommodate other persons as objects of love. Relatedly, Robinson, among others, raises the concern that if we love something impersonal, or another person who is perfectly good, then Socrates' theory of love cannot do justice to the fact that love is typically a reciprocal relation (1986:79). In the first case, reciprocity is a conceptual impossibility—happiness, wisdom and virtue cannot love you back; in the second case, it would be unmotivated—a perfectly good person needs nothing and, given egoism, can love nothing.

#### **4.1 Methodology**

Before turning to critical responses to Vlastos's challenge, it will be helpful to emphasize certain methodological principles. Vlastos's attack on Socrates assumes that a correct theory of love will reveal it to be a reciprocal, other-regarding relation between two persons, on which each desires the other's good for his own sake; call this the *other-regarding theory of love*. It is unclear what, exactly, the status of this theory is. As a descriptive claim, it appears false: most interpersonal love falls short of the other-regarding ideal, and some cases of love are completely selfish. As a normative claim, the other-regarding theory needs defence; however, this is typically not provided, and the theory is taken to be obviously true. Thus, our first interpretive constraint in assessing Socrates' theory of love is to avoid baldly assuming that either the normative or descriptive versions of the other-regarding theory is correct. Our second constraint is not to force Socrates to conform to the other-regarding theory on the grounds that it is normatively or descriptively correct. Even if the other-regarding theory is correct, this approach risks being grossly anachronistic and doing violence to Socrates' actual claims. The Greeks had quite different approaches to love—sexual and familial—than we do, and even if they did not, Socrates appears to have had views radically at odds with his community's. We should not let according with contemporary intuitions—let alone a contemporary philosopher's construal of contemporary



intuitions—constrain our interpretation of Plato, and we should be open to the possibility that he has a position that may strike us as odd or even repellent.

#### **4.2 Critical Assessment of Vlastos' Position**

As I mentioned earlier, Vlastos's critique has served as the foundation for virtually all subsequent discussion of Socrates' theory of love. Some interpreters reject his critique on interpretive grounds. Of these, one group argue that Vlastos's attack mistakes the purpose of Socrates' theory: Socrates is not attempting to analyze the lover's motivations, and therefore cannot be accused of offering an egoistic theory of love. The second group argue that Socrates' theory is not necessarily egoistic; if persons can serve as the PP, then they can be loved for their own sakes. In contrast to these two approaches, other interpreters accept Vlastos's reading of Socrates' theory as egoistic. However, of these, one group maintains that, though the theory is egoistic, it is not at odds with contemporary intuitions about love. The second follow Vlastos in rejecting Socrates' theory as unacceptably egoistic.

##### **4.2.1. Socrates Offers a Theory of Value, Not Love**

The most prominent proponent of this approach is Glidden (1981). According to Glidden, the charge of egoism Vlastos raises against Socrates is misdirected. In the *Lysis*, Socrates is not offering an account of the lover's subjective motivation; instead, he is advancing a general theory of value. As evidence for his position, Glidden notes that at 214b and 215e, Socrates emphasizes the universal scope of his theory: he is not merely offering an account of interpersonal relations, but of what feature in anything, sentient or non-sentient, renders it *philos*. Glidden also argues that Socrates' claim, that anyone will turn himself over to Lysis if Lysis has knowledge (210a-b) would be absurd if it concerned conscious intentions; Socrates is discussing what is in peoples' interests, not what actually interests them. Insofar as Socrates offers a theory of desire, and not

just of value, he does not examine desire as a conscious state of the agent, but as a subconscious psychological force; on Glidden's reading, Socrates is a forerunner of psychoanalytic theory.

Against Glidden, even if Socrates is offering a theory that applies to impersonal objects, he is also proposing one that applies to persons. There is no reason to suppose that, as this theory applies to persons, it does not concern their conscious motivations: one key difference between persons and other animals is that persons are capable of deliberating about the good. The framing of the dialogue draws attention to the conscious motives that drive lovers and beloveds: Socrates is attempting to convince Lysis that he needs knowledge, so that he will become *philos* to Hippothales; on Glidden's theory, Lysis would need no convincing. In Socrates' initial elenchus with Lysis, he proposes that Lysis' parents *think more of* (*hēgountai peri pleionos*) a slave than their own son because they entrust their slave, and not Lysis, with their livestock (208b): he is reading Lysis' parents' conscious attitude towards Lysis off their behaviour. At 209c-d, Socrates states that Lysis' neighbours will entrust themselves and their goods to Lysis if they believe (*hēgēsētai*) that he has knowledge. Belief is a conscious state, and Glidden's proposal, that Socrates' claim is so preposterous that it must be ironic, is dismissive of the textual evidence. In rejecting the possibility of love between the good, Socrates states that it is a requirement on love that the lover think highly of (*peri pollou poioumenoi*) his beloved (215b-c); this claim clearly concerns the lover's assessment of the beloved's value, an assessment that serves as the motivation for love. Finally, in distinguishing the NGNB from the bad, Socrates says that the ignorant do not love wisdom because they do not believe they are lacking (218a-b). If Socrates is not concerned with the conscious intentions of lovers, then there should be no difference between the NGNB and the bad, since both are equally lacking; the gap between them lies in the fact that the NGNB *believes* that he is lacking. At any rate, even if Glidden is correct, and Socrates is not concerned

with lovers' conscious motives, the theory would still be egoistic, since it claims that love aims solely at the good of the lover. Often the most egoistic are those who are unaware that they use others, but who are solely motivated by a (subconscious) desire for their own gain.

#### 4.2.2. Socrates' Theory of Love is Non-Egoistic

Numerous interpreters find the egoistic analysis of love so counter-intuitive that they offer alternate interpretations of the *Lysis*, on which Socrates' theory is non-egoistic. One approach is to maintain that Socrates does in fact allow that love, or at least the best form of love, is felt by the good for the good. I have already discussed Hoerber's attempt to defend such a view. One of its earliest proponents is Von Arnim, who distinguishes *philia* from *erōs*, and argues that *philia* is not occasioned by lack. *Philia* in its highest form is felt by the good for the good for their own sakes.<sup>43</sup> More recently, Kahn argues that Socrates is not serious in advancing a utility-based model of love and that he does, in fact, allow that love can occur between the good (1996:282-4). Why should the good feel love? Rudebusch proposes that the good love others because this enables them to act beneficently on their prudential wisdom and thereby achieve happiness (2009:193-4). Bordt suggests that the good love the form of the good and therefore desire to realise it in themselves and others, an aim that is furthered through friendship (2000:170). Against these proposals, Socrates states quite clearly, on numerous occasions, that the good cannot love the good (215a-b, 222d). Furthermore, there is absolutely no evidence that Socrates gives up on the view that love is occasioned by lack: it is present from his initial elenchus with Lysis, when he proposes that Lysis will only be loved insofar as he is useful (210d), through to the conclusion of the dialogue, when he argues that the cause of love is desire occasioned by need (221d-e).

Another approach is to propose that love of the PP is, by its very nature, non-egoistic. Annas argues that Socrates' account of love in the *Lysis* only appears egoistic insofar as it

seemingly maintains that all non-I-desires—desires whose propositional content does not make reference to ‘I’—depend on I-desires (1977:537-8). However, Socrates rejects this, since it would land him in an infinite regress of *teloi* (ends). He therefore introduces the PP, which is not loved for the sake of anything further. Where all other desires make reference to the lover, love of the PP does not derive from an I-desire.<sup>44</sup> Against Annas, it is unclear why an infinite regress of *teloi* can only be avoided if the terminal object of desire makes no reference to the lover; why can the PP not be, say, the lover’s happiness? Socrates’ position will only be non-egoistic if the PP is not the lover’s own good, but there is nothing to suggest that this is the case. Annas maintains that love of the PP is not grounded in lack; however, after introducing the PP, Socrates proposes that love is caused by desire for what the agent lacks (221d-e).

A final approach is to maintain that a beloved person can serve as the PP. If a beloved person is the PP, then we can avoid the objection that I raised against Annas, that the PP is the lover’s own good. On this proposal, love might involve appreciating the worth of another person independently of his contribution to one’s own wellbeing and desiring his good for its own sake. There is little to suggest such a model of love in the dialogue, with the exception of Socrates’ reference to the father who values his son above all else (219d-220a). If, as MacKenzie maintains, the son is an example of, and not merely an analogue to, the PP, then this would be a case of a person being valued for his own sake (1988:35). However, it is difficult to reconcile this proposal with Socrates’ need-based model of love, especially if we parse love of persons along the lines of Kantian respect for their rational natures. On the need-based model, we only love others insofar as we are lacking and they are useful to us; this does not lend itself easily to feeling respect for the rational nature of the beloved.

Even if we concede that Socrates allows for other-regarding love in the *Lysis*, it also appears that he allows for egoistic love, and this is sufficient to generate Vlastos's objection.<sup>45</sup> There is much in the text to suggest that the egoistic model is at work. The analogy of love to sickness (217a-b) suggests a need-based model, on which love aims at fulfilling a lack in the agent; this is confirmed at the conclusion of the dialogue, when love is said to aim at what we lack (221d-e). Socrates argues that good cannot love good because the good need nothing and thus love nothing (215a-b). But if love is, in fact, respect for the inherent value of another person, then it is hard to see why the good cannot feel love. Finally, if we turn outside Plato, Xenophon provides further support that Socrates was thought to have advocated an egoistic theory of love. According to Xenophon, Socrates gave a lecture in which he maintained that friends are the most useful of all possessions, more useful than even a horse or an ox (*Memorabilia* 2.4-5). A good friend must therefore be cultivated like fruit on a tree; conversely, you should make yourself worth as much as possible to your friends, so that they will not betray you.

#### **4.2.3. Socrates' Theory of Love is Egoistic but not Selfish**

Given that the text strongly suggests that an egoistic theory of love is at work, some interpreters seek to demonstrate that this is at least partially compatible with the other-regarding model. Thus, Penner and Rowe propose that a theory of love can be egoistic without being selfish if it holds that all love is motivated by concern for one's own happiness, but retains an expansive conception of happiness, on which the good of the beloved is closely linked to that of the lover.

There are two ways in which one could defend an egoistic but unselfish theory of love. The first would be to maintain that, while the lover's happiness is the PP, the beloved is somehow part of the lover's happiness. Lesses has argued, against Irwin (1977:85), that Socrates' model of valuation does not rule out constituent means (1996:38-40). If a beloved person can serve as such

a constituent means, then Socrates' theory can allow for valuing persons for their own sakes, while still advancing an egoistic analysis of love.<sup>46</sup> Against this, it is unclear what it would mean for a *person* to be a constituent of one's happiness: logically, only states of affairs can play this role. Perhaps, then, it is the beloved's wellbeing, and not the beloved himself, that is a constituent of the lover's happiness. However, it is difficult to reconcile this with the need-based analysis of love. These difficulties can be bypassed if we posit, instead, that it is being in a loving relationship that serves as a constituent of the lover's good. This proposal is easy to align with the need-based analysis. Humans are characteristically lonely creatures, who need loving relationships with others in order to feel complete; forming such a relationship would thus satisfy a genuine need in the lover. Such a relationship could, in turn, give rise to genuine, other-regarding concern for the wellbeing of the beloved.<sup>47</sup>

This proposal faces several difficulties. First, it possesses many of the features that give rise to the Vlastosian objection: it is guilty of selfishness, instrumentalism, objectification, and replaceability. If what the lover loves is being in a relationship, then it seems that his love is directed at his own good, and that he is treating the beloved as a mere means to that good. If asked why he loves the beloved, the lover would have to reply because he is lonely, or because he wishes to be in a relationship. But surely the beloved would be troubled to learn that he is merely a means to keeping loneliness at bay; he might feel that his lover does not really love *him*, that any suitable companion would do the trick. Second, it is doubtful that Socrates would allow that loving relationships ought to function as constituents of the PP. Though Socrates does not specify in the *Lysis* what the PP is, if we look to other dialogues, he typically maintains that we ought to aim at happiness, where this is equivalent to or strongly dependent on virtue. Relationships with others are valuable insofar as they are conducive to virtue—particularly via joint philosophical enquiry—

but are never presented as constituents of happiness in themselves; I suspect that Socrates would insist that to pursue such relationships for their own sakes and independently of their contribution to virtue is irrational and even morally irresponsible.

Penner and Rowe have therefore offered an alternate account of how love might be egoistic yet unselfish (2005:280-91). On their model, the PP is happiness, where this is closely linked to wisdom. However, they maintain that such a model of love can avoid selfishness if the beloved person is treated as a high-level means to the lover's happiness. The beloved is a high-level means if he is 'rather a major premise in all calculations of [one's] good' (270). Even if the beloved is merely a means, this is not problematic, since Penner and Rowe contend that there are no conceivable circumstances in which the lover could secure his own good in conflict with that of his beloved (288).

Against Penner and Rowe, so long as the good of the beloved is valued as a means to some state of the lover, the model of love is selfish. Suppose that some parent thought that his happiness consisted in securing the admiration of his peers, and concluded that the only way to accomplish this was to promote the flourishing of his children. This parent's concern for the wellbeing of his children would be objectionably selfish, since he would value it only for the sake of his own good. Penner and Rowe might object that what makes this example unattractive is not that the good of the children is a mere means, but that the end in question is base. Perhaps if the end were something more admirable—say, wisdom—the love would no longer be objectionable. However, it seems that whatever the end, so long as it is a state of the lover, the beloved has grounds for complaint. Surely my beloved might be hurt if he learned that my primary reason for caring for him was that he is a mathematical genius with the ability to advance my understanding of advanced algebra.

Second, once the beloved is a means to some other end, distinct from and independent of the good of the beloved, then the good of the lover and that of his beloved can always conflict. Suppose that, as Penner and Rowe maintain, the PP is wisdom. There are surely many possible circumstances in which the beloved might fail to be an optimal means to wisdom; in fact, according to Plato, the beloved will only succeed in being an efficient means to wisdom if he is a philosophical discussion-partner, and a very good one at that! This would render parental love, and many cases of friendship and romantic love, inexplicable, and even dispensable. Penner and Rowe might reply that my understanding of wisdom is too narrow: there are important life-lessons to be gained from, say, raising a child. But even if there is something to be learned, it is not clear that one's pursuit of wisdom would not be better served by abandoning the child for the library, or at least a philosophical discussion-group. Perhaps one who would abandon his child so callously would reveal himself to be dangerously lacking in moral wisdom. Granting that, if wisdom is indeed the PP, then he is rationally obliged to pursue whatever means will most reliably and efficiently secure him wisdom, and it is at least conceivable that this may not be child-rearing. One difficulty raised by these sorts of possibilities is transience and replaceability: should the beloved cease to serve the pursuit of wisdom, or should a more efficient means be discovered, the lover ought, rationally, to abandon his beloved. Another concern lies, not in the expendability of the beloved, but in the motivation of the lover. So long as the lover's motivation is centred on his own psychological state—be it wisdom, virtue, or mere pleasure—then his motivation is revealed to be not merely egoistic, but also selfish. And this is precisely what reveals the Socratic theory of love to be deeply at odds with the other-regarding model.<sup>48</sup>

#### **4.2.4. Socrates' Model of Love is Objectionably Egoistic**



This is not to say that Penner and Rowe's treatment of Socratic love is incorrect on interpretive grounds. What Penner and Rowe miss is that the theory that emerges is selfish, and therefore sharply at odds with the other-regarding ideal.<sup>49</sup> I am therefore in agreement with interpreters such as Guthrie (1975:143-4) and Irwin (1977:99-100) who follow Vlastos in maintaining that Socratic love is utilitarian and egoistic. Nonetheless, interpreters who side with Vlastos in criticizing the Socratic theory typically do not do justice to its explanatory strengths, nor do they recognize the weaknesses of the other-regarding model.

These strengths can be clarified by contrasting Socrates' theory with two of the most influential recent philosophical treatments of love. The first is advanced by Frankfurt in 'On Caring'. According to Frankfurt, love is disinterested concern for the wellbeing of the beloved. Being in such a disinterested relationship is one way in which we make our lives meaningful. Love is not a response to value, but, rather, a creator of value; it is not directed at any valuable qualities of the beloved, but, rather, at his concreteness. One considerable strength of Frankfurt's analysis is that it is not subject to transience and replaceability: if love is not a response to value, then there is no worry that the beloved may cease to be valuable to the lover, nor that he will be abandoned for someone with more valuable qualities. This, however, reveals a worry with Frankfurt's model. If love is not a response to value, then it seems irrational. Furthermore, if what is loved is the beloved's concreteness, rather than any of his qualities, then it seems that the beloved is not loved at all; Frankfurt secures the permanence of love at the expense of bypassing the person as object of love. Finally, if the beloved has value to the lover in virtue of serving as the means for the lover to participate in an other-regarding relationship then, as I suggested earlier, the beloved has grounds to complain that he is being used in order to satisfy the lover's desire to be in such a relationship, even if the relationship in question is other-regarding.

The second theory is advanced by Velleman in 'Love as a Moral Emotion'. According to Velleman, love is a response to value; the value in question is not the beloved's beauty or intellect, but his Kantian rational nature. While all persons merit respect, love involves a heightened vulnerability in response to the arresting awareness of the value of the beloved's rational nature. One attractive feature of Velleman's model is that, like Frankfurt's, it avoids the problems of transience and replaceability. The lover has no cause to abandon the beloved or trade up, since his love is a response to a value that all persons have simply in virtue of being persons, a value that, according to Velleman, prohibits comparison. However, just as Frankfurt avoids transience by bypassing the person, so Velleman focuses on a feature of persons that gives us no more reason to love one person than another.<sup>50</sup>

This examination of Frankfurt and Velleman has brought to light a difficulty that confronts any attempt to explain love: the demands that we place on an account of love are in conflict. In assessing theories of love, we expect them to render love motivated, discriminating, and non-transient. However, if love is responsive to qualities that are particular to the beloved, then it is transient; if not, then it is either unmotivated or indiscriminating. Socrates' theory thus fails in the first regard, Frankfurt's in the second and Velleman's in the third. We can now also see that Socrates' theory has a significant strength: it offers a powerful account of motivation. It is intuitively plausible that, other things being equal, everyone desires his own happiness, and desires it as a final good; the desire for happiness, as Plato notes in the *Symposium*, does not give rise to the further question, 'What's the point of wanting happiness?' (204e-5a). If love is a species of the desire for happiness, then we can see why it has such a hold on us.<sup>51</sup> And if the beloved is a means to happiness, then it is clear why he should be lovable.<sup>52</sup>

This, in turn, suggests that some of the supposed strengths of the other-regarding model of love may be merely apparent. While Socrates' theory may be guilty of most of the charges Vlastos directs against it, we have reason to question the cogency of some of these charges. Consider transience. Transience is necessarily a problem for any quality-based theory of love, so long as the qualities in question are not, as on Velleman's theory, possessed by everyone.<sup>53</sup> If one is loved for his qualities, then there is always a risk that these qualities will change or that a better exemplar will come along. In order to avoid transience, then, we must abandon the quality-based approach.<sup>54</sup> But in giving up the quality-based approach, we give up a great deal: love becomes either indiscriminate or irrational. Furthermore, to be loved independently of one's qualities seems dehumanizing. Nor is it obvious that transience is necessarily problematic. If the beloved ceases to promote one's happiness, then perhaps one should not continue to love him. We may think we want to be loved no matter what but, in the end, this is absurd. Perhaps it is commitment, rather than love, that demands permanence.

Next, turn to objectification. This charge, as raised by Vlastos, is incoherent. As Kosman has persuasively argued, to love someone for his valuable qualities is not to objectify him, to bypass his true self (1976:57). What else could his true self consist in? To love him warts and all, for his bad breath and occasional cruelty, as well as his admirable qualities, seems both fetishistic and irrational. The alternative Frankfurt poses, on which we love the concreteness of the beloved, is even more guilty of objectification than the Socratic approach: after all, persons, like objects, can be bearers of qualities, but it is the sorts of qualities persons bear—intelligence, wit, kindness—that make them potentially special.

Finally, let us examine egoism. The charge of egoism claims that it is problematic to love the beloved for the sake of one's own good; instead, the beloved ought to be loved for his own

sake. However, it is unclear what it even means to love someone for his own sake. Perhaps the thought is that his good should be valued independently of its relation to one's own. But this raises a further question: what could motivate such love? Price observes that if one requires that love aim solely at the good of the beloved, and not that of the lover, then 'the thought expresses a moral obscurantism' and invents 'values in a vacuum created by the expulsion of motivation' (2004:13).<sup>55</sup> Philosopher's fantasies aside, it seems that many people do think of their beloveds primarily in relation to their own happiness, and that there is nothing so bad about this. I suspect that what people worry about when they worry about egoism and transience is not that their lover only loves them for the sake of his own happiness and will abandon them should they cease to contribute to it, but that they will cease to make such a contribution. This would spell the end of love, or at least any form of love that falls short of self-destructive obsession or cold dutifulness.<sup>56</sup>

## **5. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that interpreters are correct to attribute the NGNB thesis to Socrates. This model of love is of a piece with Socrates' egoism: love is a species of the desire for one's own good, the desire that motivates all intentional action. This apparent egoism has sparked considerable debate among interpreters, since it conflicts with the other-regarding model of love, on which love is a reciprocal relation between two individuals, each of whom desires the good of the other for his own sake. In the second part of this chapter, I turned to critical responses to Socrates' egoistic model of love, dividing interpreters into four groups: those who absolve Socrates' model of love of egoism, claiming that it does not seek to account for the lover's conscious motivations; those who maintain that it is innocent of the charge of egoism because it allows for disinterested concern for the beloved; those who concede that it is egoistic but maintain that it is not problematically selfish; and those who, like Vlastos, reject it as unacceptably egoistic.

I then argued that Socrates' model of love is indeed egoistic and therefore sharply at odds with the other-regarding ideal. However, I also proposed that Socrates' theory possesses a core strength that the other-regarding model lacks: it renders love rational and motivated.

This leaves us with two questions, questions with which I opened this chapter. First, why does Socrates befriend ignorant youths such as Lysis and Menexenus, who do not appear to be useful to Socrates in any way? Second, if Lysis' parents do love him, what can motivate their love, given his uselessness?

To begin with the second of these questions, earlier, I argued that it is unlikely that Socrates sincerely believes that Lysis' parents do not love him, but I left open three other interpretive options: their love is not grounded in utility; he is useful to them in some way as yet to be determined; and Socrates is genuinely puzzled by their love. The first option, that their love is not grounded in utility, fits best with the proposal that I discussed earlier, that they love him as a PP; this is supported by the example of the father who values his son above all else. However, it is unclear what it would even mean for a person to be the PP; the PP seems to be the *lover's* good, and a person cannot be a constituent of that. Perhaps, then, it is best to opt for the second proposal, that Lysis is, after all, useful to his parents in some way.<sup>57</sup> One possibility is that what Lysis' parents value is their relationship with Lysis; Lysis is a means for them to participate in a loving parent-child relationship. Alternately, if we turn to the *Symposium*, Socrates, in fact, explains the use children have to their parents: they enable them to achieve a mortal form of immortality (207a-8b). Neither proposal paints a particularly attractive picture of parental love, since according to both, Lysis is merely a means. However, both are at least descriptively plausible: many people do have children because they want the experience of being a parent or because they feel that they will somehow live on through their children; the second proposal has the further advantage of

actually being advanced by Socrates (albeit in a later dialogue). Even if Socrates allows that Lysis' parents do love him because he is useful to them, he might still maintain that their love is grounded in a mistaken conception of their own good. What they should value is wisdom and virtue, and they should only value Lysis insofar as he contributes to these ends; perhaps when Socrates concludes that Lysis' parents do not love him very much, what he means is that they ought not to.

Let us now turn to the question of Socrates. Why does he befriend beautiful boys and lovingly introduce them to philosophy? Again, we can attribute utilitarian and non-utilitarian motives to him. On the one hand, he may act out of disinterested beneficence; however, this would be completely at odds with his professed egoism. The text suggests that the NGNB thesis is Socrates' preferred analysis of love, and it rules out selfless love. Furthermore, in advancing the NGNB thesis, Socrates treats the love of wisdom as a paradigmatic desire of the NGNB for the good (218a-b); this suggests that Socrates should be viewed as the NGNB *par excellence*. This, however, makes the motivational problem acute: if Socrates subscribes to the NGNB-thesis and is, himself, NGNB, then he has no reason to befriend Lysis and Menexenus, who, at best, are on their way to becoming NGNB under Socrates' tutelage.<sup>58</sup> My answer to this quandary is aporetic: I believe that Plato was genuinely puzzled by the tension between Socrates' professed egoism and his selfless engagement with others, and sought to highlight this tension in framing the *Lysis* in terms of Socrates' philosophical seduction of Lysis and Menexenus.<sup>59</sup>

This tension is one to which Plato returns in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. In these dialogues, Plato offers a fully-developed theory of the way in which a loving relationship with a beautiful boy can serve as a conduit to philosophy: the beautiful boy powerfully awakens the lover's desire for beauty and causes him to recollect the forms. This fits neatly with the general analysis of love Socrates offers in the *Lysis*: the lover loves the boy because the boy enables the

lover to achieve happiness, i.e., philosophical understanding. It is worth emphasizing that the theory of love at work in these later dialogues remains self-centred; in the *Symposium*, for example, Plato refers to beautiful boys as steps to be trodden on the path to enlightenment (211c).<sup>60</sup> Some interpreters argue that the theory of love in the *Lysis* is deficient, corrected by the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*.<sup>61</sup> This is not at all my proposal. What Plato explains in these later dialogues is why loving a beautiful boy should serve as a means to philosophy, but the general analysis of love remains the same. The *Lysis* merits our philosophical attention because it offers Plato's closest analysis of love as a species of the egoistic desire for one's own good. This is a theory that is jarring and perhaps even repellent. Nonetheless, it may be at least partially descriptively correct; furthermore, it offers the prospect that love should be subject to rational assessment and eventually directed to whatever is genuinely good. In studying Socrates' theory of love, we come to see the limitations of its rival, the other-regarding model; we also come to recognize that perhaps no theory of love can do justice to all of our intuitions, and that love, like beauty, remains slippery (216c-d).

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I discuss the views on love advanced by the character, Socrates, who appears in Plato's dialogues, particularly those assigned to Plato's early period. Though I occasionally appeal to non-Platonic sources, such as Xenophon, to corroborate my interpretation, I do not make any claims as to whether the views of the character, Socrates, were shared by the historical Socrates. I focus on Plato's *Lysis*, since this dialogue offers the most sustained discussion of love among the early dialogues. I thus subscribe to the commonly-held assumption that the *Lysis* precedes the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* and belongs to Plato's early period. For defence of this assumption, see Brandwood (2000:112, though at 115, Brandwood offers some considerations which suggest that the *Lysis* and *Symposium* belong to the same group), Guthrie (1975:134-5), Kraut (1992:4-5) (Guthrie and Kraut identify the dialogue as early-middle, but take it to precede the *Symposium*), Levin (1971:236-7), Robin (1964:44-6) and Robinson (1986:63); for a summary of contrary views, see Robin (44-6) and Guthrie (134-5). No recent interpreters contest the authenticity of the *Lysis*; for a summary of the nineteenth-century debate concerning its authenticity, see Robin (44 n. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Xenophon *Symposium* 8.2.

<sup>4</sup> See also *Men.* 76a-c and *Phdr.* 227c-d for further depictions of Socrates' flirtatiousness.

<sup>5</sup> Plato's dialogues suggest that pederastic relationships were prevalent in Socrates' circle. Such relationships were characteristically asymmetrical: the man was in love with the boy, while the boy, at most, felt affection for the man; the man ideally served as a mentor to the boy, imparting philosophical, political or athletic skills, while the boy offered the man sexual favours in return. For further discussion of this important topic, see Dover's classic (1978), as well as Halperin's more recent (1990).

<sup>6</sup> Though Lucian takes a sceptical view of Alcibiades' depiction of Socrates' chastity (*Philosophies for Sale* 15, cited in Dover [1978:156]).

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<sup>7</sup> Vlastos notes this tension, but explains it by positing that ‘a man can be better than his theory’ (1981a:9 n. 21).

<sup>8</sup> The translation of *philos* and its cognates, *philein*, *philoumenos* and *philia*, is notoriously difficult. The term, *philein*, has a wider sense than either *to love* or *to be the friend of*; at its broadest, it means to value, and it can be directed at both personal and impersonal objects. (It should be noted that in Attic Greek, *philein* is often used in opposition to *eran*, to denote non-sexual or familial love. In the *Lysis*, however, Plato is concerned to treat *philein* as a catch-all for all forms of valuation, including sexual ones; he therefore claims at 221b that *eran* entails *philein*.) Thus, interpersonal relationships count as one species of *philia*, and both lovers and friends turn out to *philein* their objects, since both are attracted to or value their objects. I attempt to capture this ambiguity by alternating between translating *philia* as *love* and as *friendship* as the context demands; similarly, I translate *philos* as both *lover* and *friend*. Since there are no suitable English expressions related to *friend*, I solely translate *philoumenos* as *beloved*, and *philein* as *to love*. For a very helpful discussion of the senses of these terms, see Robinson (1986:65-8), though I do not agree with Robinson’s claim that *philia* between humans is necessarily a reciprocal relationship (see my comments below).

One frequent response to the *Lysis* is to suppose that Socrates erroneously applies his general analysis of valuing relationships to interpersonal relationships. This may be correct. However, as I argue below, Socrates’ reasons for doing so are deeply rooted in his moral psychology. For Socrates, all valuing relationships are grounded in the agent’s desire for his own good; whether one loves wine or another human, this love is aimed at the good of the agent.

<sup>9</sup> Strictly speaking, the *Lysis* is concerned with the question of who is the *philos*, and not what is *philia*. However, in his attempt to identify the *philos*, Socrates commits himself to a broader theory of *philia*, of the nature of the relation that makes one count as a *philos*. Sedley (1989) notably argues that the *Lysis* is not concerned with defining *philia*; for a contrary view, see, e.g., Adams (1992:16 n. 7) and Bordt (1998:157).

<sup>11</sup> See also Bordt (2000:160-1), though Bordt’s rejection of the utilitarian analysis of friendship is at odds with his concession that utility is a necessary condition for friendship (162); and Penner and Rowe (2005:233-4). Penner and Rowe suggest, plausibly, that the absurd conclusion, that Lysis’ parents do not love him, is a *reductio* of the childish conception of happiness as doing whatever one thinks one wants.

<sup>12</sup> Rider (2011) argues that Socrates’ aim in reaching this counterintuitive conclusion is protreptic, to spur Lysis (and the audience) to engage in further philosophical investigation. This suggestion is plausible; however, it does not resolve the issue of whether Socrates himself endorses the conclusion (as Rider notes at n. 36).

<sup>13</sup> The significance of these passages is noted by Penner and Rowe (2005:33) and Price (2004:3).

<sup>17</sup> I do not translate *oikeion*, since no English word captures its sense; its core meaning is what pertains to one’s household, but it can mean what is proper to or akin to oneself.

<sup>18</sup> Bordt (2000) advances a similar interpretation, on which *philia* is only felt between the good on account of their love of the Good. Like Hoerber, Bordt’s proposal lacks direct textual support; Bordt is forced to appeal to significantly later dialogues, and to ignore Plato’s claim in the *Lysis* that the good are self-sufficient (164-6).

<sup>19</sup> Adams (1992:9) proposes that this passage is, in fact, compatible with Socrates’ taking reciprocity to be a requirement on friendship: quails and horses can be friends to us because we can benefit them. Adams adds, ‘This theory also makes sense of the fact that Socrates never mentions the possibility of being a friend to an inanimate object’ (9). This is puzzling since, in the passage under consideration, Socrates goes on to refer to those who are friends of wine, exercise, and wisdom.

<sup>20</sup> Note that if Robinson were to claim, instead, that Plato mistakenly thought that *philia* between humans need not be reciprocal, then the dialogue would yield a false conclusion, but would not be aporetic.

<sup>21</sup> See Gonzalez (1995:82-3), Rudebusch (2009:191), Santas (1988:84-5), Versenyi (1975:188) and Wolfsdorf (2007:248-50). Robin (1964:39-40) concurs that according to the *Lysis*, the NGNB is the *philos*, but is agnostic as to the object of *philia*. Rowe argues that Plato endorses the NGNB proposal, though he raises doubts concerning whether the *philon* is necessarily *oikeion* (2000:211-13); these doubts are not shared by Penner and Rowe (2005:174-5).

<sup>22</sup> See Penner and Rowe (2005:243-4).

<sup>23</sup> See Robinson (1986:75)

<sup>24</sup> See also Bolotin (1989:178-9), Gadamer (1980:17-18), Guthrie (1975:148) and Robin (1964:39).

<sup>25</sup> See Bolotin (1989:225).

<sup>26</sup> Glaser, cited in Glidden (1981:39 n. 4), and, more recently, Bordt (2000) and Levin (1971:247-8).

<sup>27</sup> See also Glidden (1981: 43 n. 37) and Vlastos (1981a:35-7) for further arguments that the *Lysis* does not make reference to the theory of forms.

<sup>28</sup> See Versenyi (1975:195).

<sup>29</sup> See also Bolotin (1989:193) and Guthrie (1975:145).



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- <sup>30</sup> See also Tessitore (1990:128).
- <sup>31</sup> See Rowe (2000:210, 214-15). While it is important to emphasize that Socrates does not offer a positive account of the good in the *Lysis*, the evidence in other dialogues that he takes happiness to constitute one's good is very strong; in what follows, I therefore occasionally appeal to the proposal that the PP is happiness.
- <sup>32</sup> Annas qualifies this claim at 538.
- <sup>33</sup> Irwin concedes this (1977:53); see also Lesses (1996:n. 6) and Versenyi (1975:194).
- <sup>34</sup> See Versenyi (1975:192-3).
- <sup>35</sup> See, e.g., 215a, 215b-c, 215d.
- <sup>36</sup> See Mackenzie (1988:15).
- <sup>37</sup> See Bordt (2000:171), Gonzalez (1995:81), MacKenzie (1988:36-7), Penner and Rowe (2005:187-8), Rowe (2000:215) and Tessitore (1990:124-5).
- <sup>38</sup> See also Irwin (1977:85, 99-100), who argues persuasively that Socrates' egoistic theory of love in the *Lysis* stems from his commitment to LG, the principle that if x and y are goods and x contributes to y, then x is not good in itself. According to Irwin, in the *Lysis*, Socrates suggests that we only love others for the sake of our own happiness; LG therefore entails that we can never love them for their own sakes.
- <sup>39</sup> See also Kosman's (1976:54-6) and Kolodny's (2003:139-42) helpful discussions.
- <sup>40</sup> See Irwin (1977:99-100).
- <sup>41</sup> See also Irwin (1977:54), though Irwin refers to *selfishness* as *egoism*.
- <sup>42</sup> An alternate version of instrumentalism might claim that it is not sufficient for Romeo to love Juliet for her own sake; he must also never treat her as a means. In its raw form, this is implausible: surely it is acceptable that he should, say, value Juliet as a dance partner, so long as he primarily loves her for her own sake. Perhaps this version of instrumentalism should be modified such that Romeo must never treat Juliet merely as a means, or that his love must never be conditional on her serving as a means to some other end.
- <sup>43</sup> See Bolotin's summary of Von Arnim (1989:201-25).
- <sup>44</sup> See also Gadamer (1980:17-18).
- <sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Adams (1992:3, 6-7).
- <sup>46</sup> Note that Lesses does not argue that persons can serve as constituent means.
- <sup>47</sup> This model of love bears some resemblance to what Frankfurt (1999) proposes, which I discuss in the following section.
- <sup>48</sup> Roth claims that it is not egoistic to prioritize one's own virtue over friendship where these conflict (1995:18-19); against him, while this may be righteous, it still seems egoistic.
- <sup>49</sup> Penner and Rowe acknowledge that the egoistic theory of love they attribute to Socrates is somewhat at odds with the other-regarding ideal: for example, it does not demand that the beloved's good be valued independently of its contribution to that of the lover. Nonetheless, they minimize the degree to which the theory is selfish, to which it may prescribe that the lover pursue his own good even when it runs contrary to the good of the beloved or the commitments implicit in the love-relationship.
- <sup>50</sup> Velleman attempts to circumvent this by proposing that love is prompted by the beloved's empirical persona as this reveals his rational nature (1999:370-2). This is unsatisfactory: if what we really love is the rational nature *as revealed* by the empirical persona, then we do have to worry about replaceability, since it is conceivable that someone else's empirical persona could reveal his rational nature in a more loveable form; on the other hand, if what is loved is simply the rational nature, then it is hard to see why the empirical persona should be what prompts love.
- <sup>51</sup> As I note above, Socrates does not explicitly identify the PP with happiness in the *Lysis*; however, the evidence from other dialogues for this identification is quite strong. At any rate, even if we can only identify the PP with one's own good, my claim that Socrates has a powerful account of motivation will still hold.
- <sup>52</sup> Note that the beloved will only be loved as a means; strictly speaking, then, he will not be truly lovable (219d). However, at the conclusion of the dialogue, Plato deploys a looser vocabulary, on which persons can still be called lovable (221e-2a, 222a, 223b), even though they are not the PP.
- <sup>53</sup> One might avoid replaceability if the list of qualities which one values in the beloved were so extensive and unusual that no other person could possibly replicate these. However, as Velleman notes, such love would cease to be rational (1999:368-70); furthermore, such love could not accommodate changes in the beloved and would therefore be particularly susceptible to transience.
- <sup>54</sup> Kolodny has suggested a third alternative: we can love others for their relational qualities—e.g., for their being one's child or wife (2003). Kolodny's theory strikes me as the most persuasive among recent proposals; it offers a particularly powerful account of familial love. I take it that Socrates would reject Kolodny's theory on the grounds that unless relational qualities are conducive to one's own good, the love is irrational. Cf. *Symposium* 205e-6a.
- <sup>55</sup> See also Penner and Rowe (2005:280-2).

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<sup>56</sup> Our intuitions about love appear strikingly inconsistent in this area. On the one hand, were I to learn that I no longer make any contribution to my lover's happiness, I would conclude that he no longer loves me; in this case, I would be assuming that love is egoistic. On the other hand, were my lover to tell me that he only loves me insofar as I contribute to his happiness, I might object that he is using me and does not really love me; in this case, I would be supposing that love is necessarily non-egoistic. Some of these inconsistencies depend on the conception of happiness at work: is it being in a giving relationship with the beloved or, say, using him for sexual or even intellectual purposes? Others derive from the perspective assumed in the thought-experiment: do I imagine myself to be the lover or the beloved; the beloved being wooed or the beloved being scorned?

<sup>57</sup> One concern about this strategy is that, as Rider notes, Socrates appears to argue at 210d for the claim that Lysis is ignorant and hence useless (2011:55 n. 30). Perhaps this can be resolved along the lines I sketch out below, that, while Lysis' parents ought only to love him insofar as he is wise, in fact they love him because they take him to be useful in other dimensions.

<sup>58</sup> A further tension is that if Socrates is really NGNB, then it seems that he should be lacking in wisdom and so be ignorant of the NGNB thesis; perhaps this can be resolved by insisting that Socrates' ignorance lies solely in his lacking a full account of the good.

<sup>59</sup> A possibility I do not pursue is that Socrates' sole motive for engaging philosophically with others is that he was ordered to do so by the gods. See Rudebusch (2009:197).

<sup>60</sup> See my (2010) and my (forthcoming).

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., Guthrie (1975:143), Levin (1971:246), Robin (1964:40), Santas (1988:88). For a contrary view, see Gonzalez (1995:88-9), Penner and Rowe (2005:298-9) and Versenyi (1975:185-6).