

## CHAPTER I

### PLATO AND POETRY

What is the Lysis? The question is unremarkable; the possible answers, legion. One of the tasks of this paper is to offer an answer to this question. For most philosophers, an acceptable answer would include reference to authorship, placement within an elaborate chronological web of other works, heavy attention to the relationship between the Lysis and certain other works within that web, as well as analysis of its main arguments and contentions.

On this perfectly conventional scaffolding the Lysis becomes a Platonic dialogue; composed in either his early or transitional period; the first-born of three Platonic dialogues dealing with friendship, Phaedrus and Symposium being its siblings; exploring the question "Who is/are friend(s)?" in three main speeches.

Although I agree with these descriptions so far as they go, I wonder at the ease with which we manipulate the term "Platonic dialogue." What is "a Platonic dialogue"? The contention of this paper is that such writings are poems. "Poem" is not among the terms philosophers reach for first in describing the Lysis, but it is upon no lesser a mortal than Aristotle that I base this claim.

Aristotle might have spoken today as he did in Greece when he complained, "[I]t is the way of people to tack on 'poet' to the name of a metre, and talk of elegiac-poets and epic-poets, thinking that they call them poets not by reason of the imitative nature of their

work, but indiscriminately by reason of the metre they write in. Even if a theory of medicine or physical philosophy be put forth in a metrical form, it is usual to describe the writer in this way...." (Poetics,1447b13-18)

It is still "usual"; if Aristotle is correct, still mistaken. For it is not by the mere presence of words in rhyme or pleasing metre that one crafts a poem. Rather, when "viewed as a whole", the distinguishing feature of poetry is the marriage of an imitation of human beings to "rhythm, language, and harmony" either jointly, severally, or jointly and severally. (Poetics, 1447a15, 22) A poem is an indivisible duality. Together, the means of expression and the subject matter create a poem. The subject must imitate a possible sphere of human concern.

To drive home his point that it is not simply the presence of a metrical manipulation of words that make a poem, Aristotle allows certain forms of dance and lyre playing to qualify as poems. Though lacking language, these possess, or may possess, rhythm and/or harmony, which, if conjoined with imitations of human actions, maintain and preserve them as poems. (Poetics 1448a10)

One of the poetic forms that Aristotle specifically mentions is "a Socratic conversation." (Poetics,1447b110) Such a poem "imitates by language alone, without harmony, in prose" (Poetics,1447a28) and derives its status as a poem from the fact that it imitates human beings in conversation; this is akin to tragic renderings of men, "their actions, what they do and suffer." (Poetics,1447a27) By extension of Aristotle's criterion, Plato's dialogues are poems. Their imitation is one of men together; men remembering; men conversing; and men remembering conversing.

Why poems and why dialogues? Platonist Gregory Vlastos attributes the rise of this "new genre, the *Sokratikoi logoi*, which had suddenly become a fashion, almost a craze" to the historical Socrates' "refusal to write." (Vlastos, Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher. Cornell University P. NY. 1991. P. 52) Others preceded Plato in creating the genre, and there are allegations that Plato plagiarized "from dialogues by Aristippus, Antisthenes, and Bryson." (Vlastos, Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher. Cornell University P. NY. 1991, p. 52)

I am not as confident as Vlastos that we can trace the origin of a "craze" of this kind so easily to Socrates' refusal to write. There are perhaps many explanations. I would like to explore the possibility that the genesis of the genre lay in mourning; in the existential fact that Athenians mourned the loss of the gadfly, much as "he" predicted it would (C.f., Apology); that with the death of Socrates, poets found themselves awash with memories, longing to fill that very void the chance encounter Socrates often nourished. Could this have furnished the impetus to create poems that imitated, not only him, but others' being with him, day in and day out? After all, who but one unafraid of being a laughingstock would have dared imitate Elvis before he died? Today there is an industry of these imitators whose efforts create the semblance of his performances. These succeed down to the screaming and fainting women, who may not have been born when "Heartbreak Hotel" hit the charts. These imitations attempt to capture the milieu the living man generated and inspired in those he touched.

Socrates died in 399 BC. Although we have no evidence to support the following contention, it is the standard belief: "Plato himself pretty certainly began writing, and presumably circulating, his dialogues in the 390s; that leaves very little time" for the force

of a new convention alone to dictate the form Plato chose. (Stokes, Plato's Socratic Conversations, Johns Hopkins: Baltimore. 1986. P. 27) It may have been partly an impulse to correct those other poets that Plato selected the dialogue; his may have been the attempt to render a more life-like portrayal of the encounter with Socrates. But why should one memorialize such encounters if not to teach, to try to convey or impress the significance of philosophical encountering on those who would never have the opportunity to meet Socrates?

The remembered-Socrates-with-others, the group's demeanor and experiences, served as the template from which the poets worked. The poets need not have had any idea that Socrates refused to write, nor need they have cared. The death of Socrates worked a loss of their own future possibilities. It may be this void the poets, like the Elvis-imitators, are trying to fill with their poems.

"Plato: poet: Lysis: poem." Such a title for a dissertation is almost altogether foreign to the philosophic tradition. Nevertheless, I intend to employ this thesis to examine the Lysis. Such a decision is not arbitrary; to show that it is not requires defense. My defense is of two kinds. First, I shall show that the traditional views of Plato's works generate its own set of quirky problems. Then, I shall use the views of Aristotle to defend and advance my contention.

One of the premier spokesmen for the traditional view of Plato, Gregory Vlastos, accepts Plato as artist, but qualifies that acceptance. He asserts that "the artist in Plato could not have displaced the philosopher. We must assume that philosophical inquiry was the *primum mobile* in the composition of those earlier dialogues no less than of any he was to write thereafter, and that throughout the first phase of his writing Plato remains

convinced of the substantial truth of Socrates' teaching and of the soundness of his method."

(Vlastos, Socrates, 52-3)

The Lysis is generally acknowledged, by Vlastos and others, to belong in the early or transitional period of Plato's authorship, and thus falls within the rubric of Vlastos' remarks. [Author's note: I will not address Vlastos' faith in Plato's discipleship to Socrates. The mythology reports that when Plato read the Lysis to Socrates that Socrates exclaimed, "What lies you are telling about me!" Historical evidence of discipleship other than the dialogues is lost in the misty past. ] Vlastos attributes a divided consciousness to Plato with his talk of "displacement" and "*primum mobile*." There is a traditional practice that such a view sanctions. "Lip service to Plato as literary artist has all too often been combined with interpretation of the dialogues as essentially logical works. One need only examine most of the major interpretive books and articles about Plato to see that logical forms are dissected out of the dialogues and discussed, while large portions of them are brushed aside as inconsequential ornamentation." (Haden, James. "Friendship in Plato's Lysis". Review of Metaphysics. Vol. 37, 327-356, 1983. P., 337)

But if the Lysis is a poem, then it is in virtue of its imitation that its principal point and effectiveness lie. A reader who thinks herself urged to extract and "dissect the logical forms" may obliterate her chances to understand and appreciate the significance of the imitation and the "logic" of its effectiveness. This seems to be true of the Lysis.

For example, each of the three major exchanges of the dialogue is aporetic. That much is obvious to philosophers of all stripes. But the "failure" to find a suitable definition of friendship cannot and does not prevent the conversers from becoming

friends. The point seems to be that what we strive to say, clearly and logically, may fail; but what we do, in the very act of striving-to-say, may generate successes we did not anticipate, but always value.

Scholars approve an exegesis like the one I am undertaking to a limited degree. They make "brief comments about [their] use of the literary aspects of the dialogue" taking the question to be "what extent the dramatic features of a dialogue are relevant to an interpretation of its philosophic content. For the early Socratic dialogues -- which use indirect communication and appear to end in utter perplexity -- a literary analysis is essential." (Teloh, Henry. The Development of Plato's Metaphysics. Penn State Pub. University Park, PA. 1981.p, 17)

I, on the other hand, make long comments about the literary aspects of the dialogue and take the philosophical question to be whether there is anything relevant or essential left over once that has been accomplished. I think that the Lysis is presenting two dramatic recipes for making friends, rather than serving as an excuse for presenting three logical treatises that conveniently sport artistic embellishments. One of my philosophic tasks is to draw off these recipes from the imitation; that done, one of the conclusions we are at liberty to draw is: making friends is not a matter of nailing definitions or the right logic. The imitation thesis recontextualizes the three main speeches. One could not reach that conclusion by dissecting the speeches.

When Plato injects Socrates into those early dialogues, he is crafting imitations of "the philosopher" in much the same way that Shakespeare is an artist crafting imitations of star-crossed lovers or mad princes. Irrelevant is the issue of whether Plato believes in "the substantial truth of Socrates' teaching" that altogether eludes the

conversers of the Lysis. Rather than presenting a doctrine, Plato's Lysis presents the philosopher involved with various people, deciding to take various actions for interesting reasons, keeping his balance in a sea of shifting problems; in the Lysis the philosopher confesses that he is one who "longs passionately for friends." (211c3-5) If we look at the dialogue even briefly from this focal confession of Socrates, then the Lysis and the larger corpus intimate that being alone, doing what one does when one is all alone, for example, reading or writing, is not the primary activity of the philosopher.

Socrates is ebullient, garrulous, and egalitarian in his willingness to confront and engage people. If we take Plato's imitations to heart, everyone from award-winning rhapsodes to slave-boys fell within the arc of his interest and concern. If philosophy teaches one how to live, the imitation of a philosopher, Socrates, is an image of and exhortation to openness with others.

I admit that I can't "prove" that Plato had a unified consciousness when he wrote. I can't say for certain that he didn't keep the philosophic-inquiry safe and separate from the artistic considerations. But this is not pertinent to Vlastos' contention. For even were I to concede that Plato was a philosopher through and through, were I basing that conclusion on his long teaching career, or upon on his association with and impact upon Aristotle, my concession would not capture the subtle suggestion of origins and prioriticity cocooned within Vlastos' injunction to keep the philosopher separate from the poet.

Vlastos is suggesting that because the psyche of Plato was cleanly divided between the rational philosophic inquiry and its artistic flourishes, and because the former

furnished the fuel of his enterprise, we can read for the "philosophic inquiry" part that corresponds to the "philosopher" part of Plato's psyche.

The view sanctions long practice within the philosophic community, which is not in the main artistic. By a folk psychology that protects the interests of the philosophic tradition, we deftly portray the artist-Plato as handmaiden to the philosophic-inquirer-Plato. This raises an imaginative picture: Plato-philosopher, who is conducting a series of serious "philosophical inquiries", just happens to have other talents housed in the artist-Plato. The latter seizes upon the dialogue form and other poetic devices to dress up the other's inquiries. We all concede that the two streams of Plato's consciousness come together to create little gems by this method, but let us not for a moment mistake the window dressing for the window. On any close question of whether the point made is philosophic or poetic, important or frill, Vlastos makes it too easy to find out: we ask the philosophers.

If we envision a process to accompany the split-psychology, we arrive at the following image. In preparation to his writing the Lysis, Plato said to himself, "I want to philosophically inquire into the question: 'What is a friend?' Here are the current opinions worth considering. Here are the logical problems with those contentions. I shall write all of these down." He does. Enter the artist-Plato, who says something like: "Boring. Now, let's add settings, characters, and stir." Voila: Lysis.

This picture is objectionable for two reasons. First, it is self-serving for those of us who prefer the dissection of logical forms to interpretation of imagery, settings, voice, and nuance. Because it is a linear, mechanical image, we can reverse it like a home-movie. If the setting, characters, and asides are a last-minute garnish, colorful secondary



items to generate interest, adept scholars can surgically and precisely strip them away. Such surgeons may be no better than drunk barbers, but that does not alter the idea that this is the process we should employ in order to reach "the philosophy." This justifies lazy reading on our parts: read the parts that Socrates speaks. Moreover, it sounds too much like the image a non-poet has of the creative processes of poets. After all, such is how an uncreative person would have to do it. There is a Freudian term for attributing to Plato the process our own lack of talent would dictate: projection.

In his book, Plato's Progress, Gilbert Ryle sifts the historical evidence and concludes that the early dialogues, eristic dialogues, "may have been, to start with, a dramatized documentary, compiled out of a run of fresh Moot-memoranda, supplemented by the memories of the composer and of his fellow-participants. In the Lysis the dramatic stretches are so uncunningly tacked on to the interrogation stretches that in reading the latter we might well be reading the raw verbatim records of actual Moot-rounds." Ryle concludes that many of these "argument-combinations had existed before the dramatic story had been composed that was to incorporate them." Ryle allows that Plato "would have carefully sifted, polished, compressed, expanded and arranged these already extant argument-combinations to suit his dramatic needs." But his contention is that the content derived from actual historical debates. (Ryle, Gilbert. Plato's Progress. Cambridge University Press. London. 1966., P., 202, 203) Such a conclusion leaves us utterly without a philosopher, and replaces the philosopher with a stenographer-poet. Ryle agrees. "Plato did not write the eristic dialogues because he was a philosopher; he became a philosopher because he could no longer participate in ...Moots, or any longer be

their dramatic chronicler." (Ryle, Gilbert. Plato's Progress. Cambridge University Press. London. 1966. P. 209)

On this view, let us grant, the *elenchus* of Menexenus (211d6-213d) is a mere transcript of a debate; the point of including it has to be the poetic before-and-after. If Plato didn't compose it, if like "found art" he simply used it, the poetic efforts surrounding its use take on heightened rather than diminished significance. That Ryle sees these dramatic incidents as "uncunningly tacked on" when, under his own theory, it is actually the *elenchus* that Plato "tacked on", shows how far apart we are in our understanding of what it is that Plato was crafting.

For imagine that I want to write a play about getting drunk; to create the tensions among the personages I lift, wholesale, debates from the Congressional Record concerning the Volstead Act; but all the while in the course of the play the participants get drunker and drunker. If Ryle later discovers my use of these transcripts, he is put to an election. These debates were the point of my endeavors, or they were not. If they were not, all we have left as the *primum mobile* is the imitation in which they occur. Shouldn't we then head straight for that in order to test the question whether it was something other than these plagiarized speeches I was driving at? If the debates were the point, after all, my play should fare poorly as an imitation. Analogously, the imitation of the Lysis should fare poorly as it relates to making friends. But the Lysis does not fare poorly as an imitation. It succeeds wildly.

If Plato dropped the *elenchus* of Menexenus, the conversation with Lysis, the three proposals into the dialogue like vertical intruders on stage from the skies of previous live debates he may have intended to highlight their artistic value. Such would

be the case in my play concerning drunkenness. If there is no "philosophical content" in the speeches of the earlier dialogues as Ryle suggests, then the imitation is all that we have, and the philosophical content is drawn off the imitation, just as it is from "Hamlet."

I am not relying solely on Ryle's thesis however. Even if Plato has written the *elenchus* himself, he could well have done so in service to the artistic imitation. If we find the speeches serve unvoiced, dramatically enacted contentions, we will have shown that carving them off the dialogue short changes Plato.

My positive defense for treating Plato as a poet relies on Aristotle. Aristotle muses that "[i]mitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation." Viewing imitations is "to be learning something [which] is the greatest of pleasures not only to *the philosopher* but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it: the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is *at the same time learning*- gathering up the meaning of things...." (Poetics, 1449b5-18, my emphasis)

Aristotle implicitly rejects Vlastos' schema of a "primum mobile" that might lead to a mistaken "displacement" and demotion of the philosopher. "At the same time" the pleasure of seeing an imitation occurs, learning occurs. A poet creates a work that, in the very apprehension of it, the philosopher "gather[s] up the meaning of things". The linear model, "add characters and stir", suffers a jolt if the delight and the learning are inseparable. Of course, the members of an audience have varying capacities for both pleasure and learning from the work, but there is no separation of imitation from content

just as there is no separation of dancer and dance. Aristotle says that one of the delighted-learners doing this "gathering up" of meanings is "the philosopher."

In the suggestion that each and every person from the child to the philosopher learns, according to his capacity, to "gather up the meaning of things" from poetry, there is a reversal of Vlastos' scheme. With their undivided talent poets generate works that are grist for the mill of the philosopher. They, not the philosophers, are prior. The inquiry of the philosopher takes place upon the apprehended meanings generated by, through, and from the imitations.

The philosophic tradition is in the business of skimming off the fat and extracting "the philosophy" of the dialogues. "We have to assume that Plato was indeed one of the world's foremost thinkers, and hence that there is indeed real philosophy somewhere in the dialogues." ( Haden, James. "Friendship in Plato's Lysis". Review of Metaphysics. Vol. 37, 327-356, 1983. P. 329) Looking for the philosophy "in" the poem sounds like looking for a needle "in" a haystack. It is in there somewhere. Aristotle did not regard the matter this way. Exposure to poetic imitations fuels the activity of the philosopher. It would be a rare philosopher indeed who could fuel the artistic impulse in a poet. Socrates was doubtless one of these rare birds for Plato.

Despite resistance to the traditional mechanical view from hermeneuticists who insist that the images and myths and details of the dialogue often point the way to the philosophy and hence must be considered and their objections that "we cannot understand the parts unless we have some grasp of the whole and vice versa."

(Haden, James. "Friendship in Plato's Lysis". Review of Metaphysics. Vol. 37, 327-356, 1983. P. 336) Vlastos' view is the dominant view; the inquiry comes first and the frills

dressing it up, second; we only need to peel off the clothing to behold "what Plato thought" in its birthday suit.

Traditionalists often recur to intertextual justification for their dismissal of the artistry of Plato's work. They draw from all those nasty things that "Plato says" about poets in The Republic and elsewhere. But that begs the very question of whether Plato ever once seriously considered possible the separation of his philosophy from his poems, and even if he did consider it, what he would make of those who attempt it. Would he say, for example, "Well, done?"

Martha Nussbaum uses the intratextual device to claim that Plato "lacks respect for actual poets." [Author's note: Note the assumption that Plato is not an 'actual' poet.] He will perform part of their job himself: what he does not do...is to commend their actual works as sources of insight. The *Phaedrus* does indeed incorporate poetic elements: but it keeps a close watch on them, never allowing them to get very far from the philosophical explanations. Poems, it argues, cannot be sources of insight if they do not engage in dialectic, answering questions about themselves." (Nussbaum, Martha. Fragility of Goodness, 391)

But if Plato is an "actual poet" and if there is no "part" of the job, but only the job of crafting imitations of a particular variety, then it is not accurate or useful to draw these conclusions. The most one can say is that Plato crafted imitations of what he took to be the philosopher's endeavor, and liking them far better than those of other poets, indirectly applauded his readers for their good taste in choosing his poems over others'. It would not be the first time one poet denigrated another. "The same is true with craftsmen; for each likes his own product more than it would like him if it acquired a soul. Perhaps this

is true of poets most of all, since they dearly like their own poems, and are fond of them as though they were their children." (EN, 1167b34-1168a3)

Plato's primary concern may have been to preserve an imitation of Socratic dialectic for the sheer reading pleasure it affords. It would be no less a poem for the dialectic within it. If one would imitate the philosopher, one would have to show his love of speech, its rich ambiguity, and the puzzles and pitfalls attending his search to say well all that he and we have in mind. Plato may have thought that dialectic itself has to be saturated with the poetic imagination; that with these wings the allegedly pristine "philosophic inquiry" takes its flight. His steady devotion to the dialogue form at least symbolically suggests that art is his *primum mobile*, and that "philosophic inquiry" is dragged along by its nose by chattering muses. Anyone who can write a dialogue, or a poem, or a novel can write a treatise or a grocery list. Plato did not simply write dialogues. He seems to have avoided writing essays. This suggests an unwavering allegiance to poetry that all the intratextual denunciations of poets cannot disparage.

It may be the case that Plato tried to write clean logical rigorous treatises and failed. But that would announce that the poetic turn was ineradicable and constant. If he is a poet, despite his valiant efforts to write clean arguments without the garnishes, then Vlastos' contention suffers. The "displacement" of the poet, not the philosopher, is what seems to be impossible.

This is not to suggest that every Platonic dialogue is as successful in its imitative and suggestive qualities as is the Lysis. The Laws, for example, seems more like an essay and has little to recommend it as an imitation. The thesis I am recommending is conservative: we need to explore the Platonic corpus for their imitative characteristics in

the hope of shedding light upon the principal character, a philosopher, and the philosopher's activity. It is not only a philosophy, but the activity of philosophy that such imitations suggest. The indirect communication of the imitation possesses a structure and logic that may enrich our appreciation of the philosophy.

The announcement of a "primum mobile" is more reasonably said of Aristotle. Aristotle wrote both poetry and prose. His 75 poem-dialogues are lost to us, but nobody denies that he wrote them. No one would wince if we made the Vlastos-turn upon Aristotle because we have a quantity of his non-poetic work testifying to the *primum mobile* here. But with Plato, we do not. We have a few letters (13), all debated as to authenticity, and the dialogues (35), many of which are under scrutiny for their authenticity; that is all we have. [Author's note: The Lysis has been attacked as spurious, but almost all scholars see a remarkable resemblance between its issues and the issues addressed in book VII of the Eudemian Ethics and VIII and IX of the Nicomachean Ethics. If Aristotle is using Lysis, it seems to be evidence that it is not spurious. (Cf., A.E. Taylor, Mind of Plato, U. of Mich. Press: Ann Arbor. 1960. p.20-23)]

For the above reasons, I am wary of Vlastos' split-screen view of Plato. I resist the temptation to read and understand Lysis in these mechanical terms. Lysis has not escaped the exegesis that this view of Plato inspires. My attempt will be one that tries to rescue it from such a view. The poetical "feature in Plato scholars have underestimated, although they have not entirely overlooked it. However, one feature of the poetic in Plato which has received hardly any attention is character portrayal. This neglect is surprising, since Aristotle does make indirect reference to it in the Poetics." (Hoerber, R. G. "Character Portrayal in Plato's Lysis". Classical Journal. Vol. 41. 1945-46, 271-3) Like

Hoerber, I believe character portrayal is "linked closely with the philosophical tenets and conclusion of the dialogue." (Hoerber, R. G., "Character Portrayal in Plato's Lysis", Classical Journal, Vol. 41, 1945-46, P. 271) I do not underestimate the "poetical features" of the Lysis. Nor do I overestimate them. One cannot be charged either way if one takes the Lysis to be a poem. There are no "features" that escape the poetical, for the Lysis is an imitation, wholly, through and through, an imitation. "Despite Plato's only too famous lover's quarrel with 'the poets,' the influence of Greek literature is manifest throughout all of Plato's writing. The earliest dialogues reveal a precocious mastery of poetic diction and dramatic techniques....By the time he writes the Laws, he is willing to speak explicitly of his writing as a 'kind of poetry' (VII, 811c 10) and 'the truest tragedy' (VII, 817b 5-6)...." (Cohen, Maurice H., "The *Aporias* in Plato's Early Dialogues", Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 23, 163-174, Apr.-June, 1962, P.164)

For purposes of this paper, we need only admit that the Platonic dialogues, whatever else they may be for us, are surely poems for Aristotle. Plato, whoever else he may be for us, is, for Aristotle, their poet. Plato crafted imitations of human activities in words. He earned the designation "imitator."

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What kind of imitation is the Lysis? Of the possible answers, mine links Plato to Aristotle in an interesting new way. We know that Aristotle is concerned with friendship. But he does not, "except incidentally, have anything to say about how friendships are formed in the first place. In some sense... the desire for pleasure or profit, or the interest



in moral excellence... bring together those who then become friends. But clearly enough, in the actual course of events the first meeting may well be quite accidental and subsequent stages...quite unmotivated by any explicit form of these interests." (Cooper, John. "Aristotle on Friendship". Amelie O. Rorty, ed. Essays on Aristotle's Ethics. Univ. Cal. Berkeley. 1980. P. 316) Plato's dialogues, and in particular the Lysis, fill up the silence of Aristotle on the contingencies and conditions attending first meetings and blossoming friendships. In such imitations we discover many concrete details that flesh out the formulaics in the Aristotelian treatises. The imitations work an exhortation, provide the stage directions, for turning the accidents of one's daily life into the varieties of friendship explored by Aristotle.

Aristotle is aware that poems have this hortatory character. We are the most imitative creatures in the world. We learn to imitate or avoid what we perceive as possible to us. (Poetics, 1448b5-10) "The objects the imitator represents are actions, with agents who are necessarily either good men or bad- the diversities of human character being nearly always derivative from this primary distinction, since the line between virtue and vice is one dividing the whole of mankind. It follows, therefore, that the agents represented must be either above our own level of goodness, or beneath it, *or just such as we are*;...these differences [determine] separate arts by representing objects with this point of difference...and they are also possible in the nameless art that uses language, prose or verse without harmony, as its means." (Poetics,1448a2-12; my emphasis) By imitating personages "just such as we are", poems disclose our nearest possibilities to us.

There are only three separate arts open to poets and poetic imitation. One is for the imitation of persons better than ourselves; another, for imitating those worse than

ourselves; and, finally, a third for imitating those who are "just such as we are."

According to Aristotle there are but these three avenues of poetic imitation, three possible channels into which pour the creative effort.

Aristotle devotes much of his Poetics to detailing the difference between two of these three streams in his analysis of Tragedy and Comedy. These genres were both the more recognizable and popular art forms; the new forms, such as the "Socratic Conversation" were likely not as widely available to students, and the decision to treat the principal forms is pedagogically sound. He tells us that Tragedy and Comedy derive their characteristic difference from a gap between the level of goodness of the audience, on the one hand, and the poet's personages on the other. In tragedy the personages are better than "the men of the present day" (Poetics,1448a20) whereas in comedy, worse. Thus the character of the personages drives the form of the genre.

Aristotle provides no name for the separate art of imitating our own, present day level of goodness, but he does specifically allow that crafting imitations mindful of these distinctions and differences are open to poets who engage the "nameless art that uses language...as its means." I supply it here: the Socratic conversation.

It is interesting that Aristotle roots the creation of the type of poem in the mood and disposition of the poet. He remarks that "the graver among [the poets] would represent noble actions and those of noble personages; the meaner sort the actions of the ignoble." He thus lodges in the poets themselves an explanation for the fact that poetry "soon broke up into two kinds according to the differences of character in the individual poets." (Poetics, 1448b2) If Aristotle is correct in his description of the psychology attending the poet, we can plausibly infer that Plato's temperament was neither grave, nor

mean enough, to support crafting tragedies or comedies. He was a man in the middle zone crafting imitations resting somewhere between tragedy and comedy.

When we study the Platonic corpus, we find neither "the tone of dignity" associated with the imitation of the noble personages of tragedy, nor the "ridiculous" buffoonery associated with comedy.

(Poetics, 448b22, 35) They do not praise images of war, portray a combat with gods, or record the collapse of cursed houses. The characters are not legendary figures like Homeric warriors claiming kinship to kings or gods; rather, they are people leading the Athenian life. They may be former generals (Laches), or dying soldiers (Theaetetus), or rhapsodes (Ion). The speech of each of them is conversationally "the plain, unvarnished speech that we might hear in daily life, speech that we are not accustomed to find in any sort of [then] written text." ( Nussbaum, Martha. The Fragility of Goodness. Univ. of Cambridge Press. NY. 2986. P.129)

The intertextual topics discussed by the personages in Plato's dialogues are often serious; but the dramatic frames for the conversations display a convincing realism that invites us to recall similar conversations we have had on similar subjects and to imagine the possibility that we might have just this very kind of conversation tomorrow or next week. What, after all, is more usual and common to human beings than conversation? There are moments of gravity and moments of hilarity within the several dialogues. But these moments sustain neither the action nor tone of the dialogue, and hence none rises to the tragic nor falls into the comic.

Therefore, by the process of elimination, the corpus of dialogues, jointly and severally, belong to the third and nameless "separate art"; that which imitates neither

those far better, nor worse than, the men of the then-present day, and to the extent that the men of the now-present-day are like them, ourselves.

[Author's note: One of the issues I shall try to avoid in the paper is the "woman question". I do not think that Plato gave much thought to women except as they might hamper or enhance the social arrangements of men and men negotiating those social arrangements. The dialogues seem gender specific to me. He writes them for men, about men, and writes to issues concerning men. That he never gives a thought to women may be too strong a statement, but surely he did not give them the kind of attention current scholarship does. For purposes of this paper, however, I shall be writing as if Plato uses "man" generically. Ditto for Aristotle. ]

There is intratextual support for my contention that Plato is imitating men whose goodness roughly matches those of the then-present day. Plato fixes his poems, especially the earlier ones, upon the daily activities, comings and goings, of Socrates. The various personages of the dialogues happen to run into Plato's Socrates in a variety of settings we would count normal and even mundane. Socratic Conversations unfold against the background of city life and its festivals (The Republic), or in recollections of Socrates by his friends (The Theaetetus), or over dinner with intimates (The Symposium). Socrates runs into Euthyphro on the courthouse steps on the way to receive his indictment. He has just finished a conversation with Theaetetus, promising to return to pick up where they left off. Trials and convictions (The Apology) are a daily part of Athenian city life, and what is more likely than a visit from a friend when one is in jail? And should that friend propose escape, would it not spark discussion? (Crito) Even the final morning of one's life may play itself out among others, and the conversation

among those taking their leave of the one who is soon to die imitates both one who meets his death confidently and cheerfully as well as the effect such leave-taking has on those who were present to witness it, and who lived to remember and talk further of it.

(Phaedo) In Lysis the conversation unfolds in a new palaestra, or wrestling school, where sacrifices to Hermes have been taking place. Boys of Athens wrestled frequently.

Aristotle tells us, "[T]he poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between the historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse- you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars...And if he should come to take a subject from actual history, he is none the less a poet for that; since some historic occurrences may very well be in the probable and possible order of things; and it is in that aspect of them that he is their poet." (Poetics,1451a36-1451b8)

In reading a Platonic dialogue we encounter imitation-relationships and discover individual personages engaging topics of conversation in a particular way that is both open and possible for us men of the present day. It is also the suggestion of the dialogues that like its personages we are capable of enjoying the tenderness, humor, intensity, and passion of *their relationships* as displayed by the imitation-as-possibility.

For example, a single encounter often goes awry, as when Euthyphro finally runs away leaving Socrates' pleading for him to return. (Euthyphro 15e-16) Borrowing

Wittgenstein's "duck-rabbit" picture, we readers are apt to recognize ourselves in both characters here. We vacillate between being vexed as Euthyphro and as steadfast as Socrates. The virtue of dramatic form is its capacity to create multiple viewpoints within the sympathetic reader. The essay or treatise is unable to accomplish this feat. The dramatic conclusion of Euthyphro commends to us a kind of courage in such encounters, acknowledging that its bud can be broken off. It imitates a contingency attending friendship that Aristotle (almost) recognizes in his remarks concerning friendship. The reader feels challenged to be more like Socrates, but he knows his being like Euthyphro is a possibility, too.

That we can see ourselves in both Euthyphro and Socrates keeps the issue of courage-in-friendship alive. Thus, Plato supplies us one tiny sample of the contingency attending friendship that Aristotle's declarations of it, however accurate, fail to capture. "The difference between the two thinkers is that Aristotle is quite explicit in stating in words the results of supplementing the vision of the Ideal with 'what we see,' *oromen*. Plato through his drama makes us actually see it. ...Aristotle is the logician of the Life of Reason, Plato is the dramatist of that life." (Randall, John Herman, Jr., Plato: Dramatist of the Life of Reason, Columbia Univ. P. NY. 1970, 260) Aristotle provides us the categories and taxonomies. Plato teases out their particulars. [Author's note: This is a great irony given the abyss that lies between their metaphysics. Aristotle insists that the particular is the only reality while Plato searches for transcendent eternities. But when it comes to their writing, Aristotle draws up abstractions, while Plato furnishes the details.]

Nichomachean Ethics describes the anatomy of three kinds of friendship: utility, pleasure and rare friendships. [Author's note: I have intentionally selected "rare

friendship" as the operative descriptor of the third kind of friendship. Generally philosophers use other terms to distinguish it from utility or pleasure friendship. But "primary friendship", or "first friendship" or "virtue friendship" do not capture the most important existential fact that concerned Aristotle, whereas "rare" does. If these friendships were "rare" in Aristotle's estimation, and if the Lysis is nevertheless presenting a possibility concerning its acquisition, then a pressing question is whether they are still rare or something worse: extinct. I think an argument can be made that these friendships are extinct today; that they depended on the kind of leisure supported by slaves and women. That would mean that the poem no longer conveys something "possible" for us. But that is another problem and beyond the scope of this paper. At least at the time of writing the Lysis, such friendships were possible to the men-of-the-then-present-day, however "rare" they were.] We read Aristotle on the rare friendship and long for it. What if its recipe is before us in the Lysis and is very much other than we expect? If Aristotle's rare friendship is to be more than a sterile abstraction upon which we speculate endlessly, then any dramatic clues as to its shape and conduct will help us imagine its dimensions, comprehend its possibility, imitate its fabric in our own lives. (The children are not candidates for the rare friendship. The only candidate for it is Socrates. I shall elaborate this more fully in chapter V) An enactment of its conditions and beginnings may serve as a template from which to work to bring it about in our lives. A picture is worth a thousand....

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In their devotion to the mundane setting, the Platonic dialogues suggest ordinary opportunities for ordinary people whose levels of goodness are much like our own. Plato is attempting to imitate agents who are neither vastly more noble, nor ridiculously worse, than the men of the present day: reading of them unfolds our own "possibilities" to us. Among those possibilities is the creation of those relationships. It is these relationships we readers are prompted to learn to imitate; through the imitation we might hope to begin to "gather up the meaning" of our possibilities.

Viewing imitations of men of the present day engaged in conversation has the interesting psychological effect of closing the distance between the events of the poem and ourselves. As we read or listen to a performance of such a poem, we become participants at the edge, or limit, or boundary of the imitation. For as "listeners", we are actually participating with or "in" the imitation. We are not imitation-listeners- there may be several of those- but rather real-listeners to imitations.

There is another dissertation in the problem of whether words, e.g., "desire", "lover", "friends", when put in the mouth of an imitation-man, retain their ontological integrity. I simply concur with Marianne Moore that poets and writers create "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." I do not understand the idea of imaginary or imitation words. Is it one I thought I heard, but didn't? Is it one I heard, but no one else did? Is Hamlet's soliloquy an "imitation" of another speech?

I contend that Socrates is a fictional protagonist, the principal *dramatis persona* of the Platonic poems, but every word we read is a real word. With J. L. Austin, I am inclined to think that "imitation" is very akin to "unreal" or "apparent". These terms "wear the pants" as Austin says. We simply have no use, in the Wittgensteinian sense, for



the language game "imitation word." (Cf., Aryeh Kosman, "Acting: Drama as the Mimesis of Action". ed. Amelie O. Rorty. Essays on Aristotle's Poetics. Princeton Univ. P. 1992. P. 51-57.)

These Platonic imitation-conversations, then, have the very strange character of comprising (real) words, sentences, and contentions. They house genuine disputes without invalidating the works as "imitation conversations." We can grant that it is men-in-conversation Plato is imitating without being forced to conclude that the words and contentions we apprehend are imitations.

These imitation-conversations engage us in a participatory as well as a preparatory way for further conversations along the same lines. The pleasure fostered by the poem spurs us to do likewise; further, they shape our anticipation of the way such a future conversation might or will or ought go, should it arise on that, or an altogether different, subject.

There are two dangers attending our participation and exposure to imitations. One danger is that imitations may come to serve as a substitute for the real thing. The second danger resides in the passivity of the "onlooker" point of view.

Social commentators lament that movies, soap operas, television serials, novels, and all manner of imitations that Aristotle would count as poetry have reduced the time people sit and talk together. We are glued to the tube. The pleasure and the gathering up of meaning must be enormous if we take the number of hours per week Joe Average spends in front of his television. People believe that their soap opera star is going to shoot the President. They notify the Secret Service to guard the White House. They may see the star and accost him on the street. They fall in love with Erica on "All My

Children" and stalk her. Elvis shoots his television when Joe Theismann fumbles on the one yard line. So it goes. The ontological line between "imitation" and "reality" is blurred because the ontological line between imitation and reality is blurred. So much for the problem of letting the imitation serve as our reality.

As to the seduction of the "onlooker" point of view, I think it resides in the very passivity of reading a dialogue. Enjoying the imitation of a conversation is not the same activity as participating in conversation. As we read from the sidelines, we preserve our psychic distance. Rather than imagining the conversers from their own standpoints, we make unexamined elections as to who is villain and who is hero, judging the conversation from that point of view. Because we are not participating in any actual speaking, we impatiently look for results or solutions to stated problems, forgetful of previous givens such as motives or settings that contextualize and inform the efforts of those within the conversation. Lysis admonishes us to be wary of passive reading when, in parting, Socrates warns his two young friends of how the onlooker will perceive them.

I speak more about the onlooker's forgetfulness below in connection with the dramatic memory of Menexenus. But as a brief example: it is easy for readers to forget that Socrates was on his way somewhere when he fell in with Hippothales and his cronies. The question is whether it makes sense for Socrates to have forgotten this dramatic fact about himself. The tone and statements to Lysis at 211a-b1 suggest that Socrates is readying to leave. Lysis fairly beseeches him to stay. If the reader forgets that he had somewhere else to go, his remaining seems inevitable. That Socrates has twice to decide "to the Lyceum or not" is important to the problem of making of friends. The onlooker misses the import of his decision if she assumes that Socrates was simply

planted there for the afternoon. That is how those who are looking on that day probably saw it. They didn't know Socrates had anywhere else to be. But he tells *us* he did, twice, and we cannot afford to forget what he himself did not forget.

In some ways my reading endorses those who insist "we should take what is said in a dialogue in the context of the situation in which it is presented, especially the interlocutor's state of mind, and should regard each dialogue itself as framed by a context in which Plato is trying to teach something to us, the readers." (Nicholas P. White, "Observations and Questions about Hans-Georg Gadamer's Interpretation of Plato." ed., Charles L. Griswold, Jr., Platonic Writings: Platonic Readings. Routledge Press. NY. 1988. p., 247) But I would reserve the term "teach" for Aristotle. Plato is "showing" us something. "What?" is the question.

Plato's Socratic conversations circle issues of universal reach and significance to human beings. Crime and punishment, justice, death, love, friendship, knowledge, education of the young, courage, beauty, art and persuasion are just some of the headlines we peruse in the corpus. The conversations are certainly "about" these topics; but viewed as whole the imitations exhort us to conduct this type of conversation, practice this type of being-together, concern ourselves with these issues and to try to talk about them in particular peculiar, puzzling, philosophic ways. Because the imitation involves specific personages, and the conversation depends on them, our being attentive to each character and his situation is critical if we would understand what Socrates is doing in conversing, not simply what he is saying. Socrates pays close attention to those with whom he deals in the Lysis. This attentiveness to one's conversational partner is one of the unsaid and unspoken principles of this imitation.

The Platonic imitation has much to offer as to what counts as doing philosophy. It informs and expands our appreciation of such conversations; it apprises us of contexts hospitable to it and the opportunities we have for it. In the pleasure of learning from the imitation, we gather up multiple meanings. But it is in the practice of conversations that attempt to gather up these meanings that we find that life for ourselves. Because we are unlikely to seek out conversations with people we find disgusting, vapid, boorish, or inane, the choice of conversation partners is not to be taken lightly. I shall argue below that on one level, anyway, participation in such conversations with appropriate partners is emblematic of the rare friendship encountered in the contemplative life Aristotle describes in Book X of Nichomachean Ethics. Our learning to conduct conversations that contemplate the eternal verities clears a space for living the contemplative life.

Aristotle tells us the "contemplative life" is the supreme blessing (EN 1178b9-22). He is endorsing by this term "the activity of reason, which is contemplative", leisurely, unwearied and thus unlike the virtues attending our activities requiring "trouble" like politics and war. (EN 1177b5-20) I sense an immediacy in this section of his lecture. He is nearing the end of his remarks. He reminds us of other animals as being bereft of the happiness of study. When we look back at the difference between animals and man, we find our possession of two kinds of "reason" at the bottom of the difference. One kind of reason has it fully, and the other "by listening to reason as to a father." These two streams form the activities and virtues of thought and character. (EN 1103a-8) But how does the "virtue of thought" arise? It "grows mostly by teaching, and hence needs experience and time." (EN 1103a15) Aristotle and his students have been together taking the time, leisurely and unhurried, acquiring experience, and through teaching, growing virtues of

thought, i.e., the seed corn of the contemplative life. But such an activity is communal, through and through. These remarks, then, are bathing congratulatory praise upon their endeavors. The "contemplative life" supervened their very "activities."

The only trouble with Aristotle's identification of the life of contemplation with the doing of philosophy as he and his students have been doing is that Nichomachean Ethics is a series of lecture notes. We have no idea how Aristotle and his students conducted their conversations. Would a student, even a well-bred Greek boy, sit still for a reading of the Nichomachean Ethics? Aristotle taught. But how? Enter Plato. Plato shows us in his imitations glimpses of living contemplatively in action. Such living is not accomplished by sitting alone on a rock staring at the heavens. There is no "teaching" to grow the virtues of thought there. The primary imitation we have of a teacher and philosopher is the dramatic Socrates. With the other characters of the dialogue, being as they are like men "of the present day", the philosopher invites our participation in the contemplative life. We are spurred to an identification with them; the topics they engage, and the manner in which they are engaged, are the subjects contemplated; these are subjects open and possible to us. But we must actively seek such conversations and teachers. Remaining on the edge of a dialogue as a reader or evaluating the speeches as an onlooker will not complete the promise of bringing the "possibility" imitated into actuality.

In sum, Plato is a poet crafting imitations in language alone, of present day people; these imitations, while nameless, fall somewhere between tragedy and comedy, and thus acquire the status of a "separate art." They fill the requirements of the third avenue available to poets on the Aristotelian schema, and they present certain of our

possibilities to us. The primary possibility that the dialogues imitate is the activity of the contemplative life; the primary relationship imitated is one we call "friendship". It is through friendships of a particular kind that we arrive at the contemplative life.

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Most scholars believe that Aristotle was intimate with Lysis and that he used several of its issues for his own elaboration of friendship in Nichomachean Ethics. This is interesting for two reasons relevant to the foregoing arguments and to my topic.

First, if Aristotle is indeed using Lysis to generate and shape comments in his treatise, that very activity instantiates his claims in the Poetics concerning the philosopher's task as emerging from the poet's creation. He says that philosophers gather the meanings of things from imitative works. Once gathered, the study and didactic enterprise of the philosopher would follow his classing and cataloguing, arranging and commenting. Second, it makes Lysis the most pertinent dialogue for purposes of exploring the question of whether, and to what extent, Plato and Aristotle have cooperative views of friendship. Aristotle calls the virtue, the activity, of friendship "loving." (This is not to be confused with the feeling by the same name.) I hope to show that Plato's Lysis imitates the virtuous activity of making friends by one who is lovable, Socrates. Because there are three kinds of friendship, I will point out the budding relationships among the characters. Plato actually furnishes two surprising recipes of

"loving" in Socrates in the Lysis, both of which we can read with Aristotle's remarks on the virtue of loving in mind.

My position eschews setting Aristotle beside Plato for purposes of exposing their disagreements, conflicts, and tensions. For purposes of this paper, it is impossible to endorse such a schemata for the very simple reason that Aristotle is not offering a view of friendship either "inconsistent" or "consistent" with Lysis, any more than an essay on the baseball strike could be inconsistent with "Casey at the Bat." If I treat Plato as having written a poem, and use Aristotle's descriptive taxonomy developed in part from his use of Lysis as a point of departure, they simply cannot be "inconsistent." For that to be the case, we would already have to have had access to the Platonic philosophy pure and simple. But we do not. We have only the whole poem. What I intend is to use the taxonomy to explore the initial conditions attending the making of friends as that image occurs in the Lysis.

The Lysis enacts decisions and problems immediately relevant to making friends that the Aristotelian treatment ignores and has to ignore because of its didactic form. "The two styles are kept apart, although they call upon and honor one another." (Nussbaum, Martha. The Fragility of Goodness, Cambridge Univ. P. Cambridge. 1986. p. 392). But there is more than stylistic difference. Plato's Lysis gives us an enactment of budding friendship from multiple views of the insiders; Aristotle approaches friendship from a focal distance we might call an onlooker's view. In this business of friendship, both views are important; both "honor each other." They do not "contradict" one another. Gilbert Ryle's "category mistake" leaps to mind here. Part of the experiment this paper conducts is to see how the two styles and efforts to assay friendship co-operate.

This is not to say that philosophers cannot or should not lay the works of two men side by side; examine them line by line for disagreements and contradictions; list their differences; take sides; cheer the one and boo the other. It is to say, cheerfully, that the task of this paper lies elsewhere. I hope to accomplish an exegesis of the Lysis that is faithful to the text; one that both Plato and Aristotle would applaud as relevant to friendship using their texts as partners while preserving the strengths of the separate forms of those texts.

I am not too far from other scholars on this point. Martha Nussbaum notes that "philosophical books are to philosophizing as tennis manuals are to tennis. (We could make the point with other examples: think of child-rearing handbooks, sex manuals, instruction books in navigation.) They can't do it; and they are no substitute for the live activity, although they might, in some circumstances, be more or less useful records of some points, when used by people who already have an experiential sense of what the activity is." (Nussbaum, Martha. Fragility of Goodness, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1986. p. 125) If this is the case, then the books concerning friendship in Nichomachean Ethics are best read beside Plato's dialogues considered as imitations of them. Such readings may well help us bridge the gap.

Nussbaum understands that the Platonic effort embraces "a kind of theater" to "awaken and enliven the soul, arousing it to rational activity rather than lulling it into drugged passivity."

(Nussbaum, Martha. Fragility of Goodness, Cambridge University Press.

Cambridge.1986. p.126,127) But Nussbaum makes the Vlastos- turn by insisting the dialogues "show us...why and when we ourselves should care about ethical reflection...



show us directly why we should go on doing the *hard work* required to do what we are doing, *reading this dialogue...* [they] urge us as readers to assess our own individual relationship to the dialogues' issues and arguments."

(Nussbaum, Martha. Fragility of Goodness, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.1986. p.127, my emphasis)

I agree that poetic works engage us. But she over-values the solitude attending their reading at the expense of their dramatic exhortation to establish relationships in imitation of those portrayed in the dialogues. She says, "...the dialogue engages our wits. It demands that we be intellectually active. Its dry and abstract tone positively discourages the arousal of emotions and feelings. If it persuades us of anything, it does so purely by appeal to our powers of reasoning. Dramatic elements are used to engage us initially: once we are engaged, it is intellect that this work claims." (Nussbaum, Martha. Fragility of Goodness, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1986. p.131) Despite her sop to the difference between playing tennis and reading about tennis, she condones isolating the intellect, alone in its labyrinth, and counts that as Plato's primary literary demand. She would sanction a continued passivity that I think Plato's imitations lobby against.

In her way Nussbaum treats "rational activity" as an only-child talking to herself; emotion and feelings are shut out of doors; the dramatic setting and details may ripple with communal ties, but for her, the interest they generate is like a small staircase; once mounted we enter a room where there is a lone armchair. The reader sits. His intellectual reflection begins. Such an image praises the loner-philosopher as he continues his very "hard work of...reading."

Reading and studying dialogues is inherently hard, silent and solitary. But Plato does not generally imitate anyone in a dialogue doing anything remotely like reading. [Author's note: Arguably, the dramatic framing of the Theaetetus is an exception. There, Terpsion and Euclides rest together at the home of Euclides while a servant of Euclides reads to both of them the notes that Euclides made years earlier of his conversations with Socrates shortly before the latter's execution. The memorandum read to them memorializes a meeting remembered by Socrates and recalled over several visits with Euclides between Socrates and the then-young Theaetetus, who is dying of dysentery contracted at the camp of Corinth in the dramatic present. Seeing his suffering recalled Socrates' predictions of him to mind. (Theaetetus 142-143d)] On the last day of his life we do not find Socrates reading. We find him writing poetry. (Cf., Phaedo) One of the abiding images of the dialogues is that the context of intellectual activity, of engaging the wits, occurs in the surround of active, face-to-face encounters we know as "conversing". Images of solitary musing, poring over texts, writing, and checking sources are rare. I would say from my experience that the "hard work of reading [a] dialogue" is nothing compared to the hard and risky work of meeting our fellows with the energy, curiosity, good grace and civility as the dramatic Socrates does. It is the latter that Plato is recommending to the reader-scholar.

Is it Plato's point to "urge us" to "assess our own individual relationships to the dialogues"? But we do not have "individual relationships" with dialogues. If Plato had meant to urge us to do that, he would have imitated Socrates-the-loner, reading and musing over texts, all by himself. Such interpretations of the intentions of a dialogue drain the dramatic force from it and cast aside as superfluous the imitation of

relationships and friendships enacted within them. By such readings, we remain onlookers. One doesn't make, keep, sustain friendships on a Vlastos/Nussbaum model. Suppress the emotion and feeling that we might engage the wits. But what is friendship if emotion and feeling be not fully and deeply engaged?

Unfortunately, traditional philosophic scholarship concerning Lysis takes the Vlastos turn. It examines the primary speeches in the dialogue and publishes its conclusions regarding them. The speeches are plucked from the dialogue like pearls from an oyster, their logic analyzed, their *aporia* assessed. But are we to understand the oyster by plucking its pearls? Is that the "hard work" the dialogue commends to us? I doubt it, for the very reason that it is so easy to do:

Each of the several Primary Speeches of Lysis sally forth with an explanation of who are friends. After examination, Socrates and the two boys, Lysis and Menexenus, reject each one as inadequate to answer the question "Who are friends?"

The first speech examines the poets' explanation, current in ancient Athens, that friends are friends on the basis of likeness or similarity to one another. (213d8-215c6) Our current equivalent is "Birds of a feather flock together." Finding the poet's solution inadequate, Socrates shifts to a second explanation of friendship credited by an intermediary to Hesiod: opposites attract. (215c7-216c) Failing to find it any more instructive than the first, Socrates moves once again to a commonplace, attempting to formulate an explanation of friendship on the basis of the "old proverb, the beautiful is the friendly." (216c-218d2) On consideration, however, Socrates dismisses it as shot through with "false reasoning" (218d2). The attempt at explaining friendship as a "for the sake of" matter, or instrumentalist account, he dismisses "all that, which we previously said about being friendly" as "mere idle talk, put together after the fashion of a lengthy poem." (218d6-221d8) The last attempt to describe the ground of friendship plays on the ambiguity of "want", desire, or privation, the upshot of which Socrates exclaims, "I no longer know what I am to say." (222e6) The dismissal above proves that Plato is not an instrumentalist. The ambiguity and tediousness of the various speeches, however, belie a truth discovered in reading the Lysis: "Even Plato can nod." (Guthrie, as quoted in Haden, 330)

This is a sample, an imitation, of a beginning that might be made, and probably has, in a dissertation on Lysis. It took no more than twenty minutes to write; the personal-friendship difference such treatises make is minimal. Charity requires me to acknowledge others who sense the futility of such treatises. They admit that "behind the technical debate[s] there is...the practical human question of how what Plato says applies

to life. What does Plato say it is to be a friend, and what perspective does this give us on our lives? " (Haden, James. "Friendship in Plato's *Lysis*". Review of Metaphysics. Vol. 37, 327-356, 1983. P. 332) But it is this very placement of the "human question" safely *behind* the technical debates that may defer it indefinitely. Practical wisdom may never make its entrance on this stage. There is a temptation to keep the debates in the forefront because the human question cannot be answered by dissections accomplished in technical debates. The "human question" is so much harder. If we compare the work of academic jousting across journals to the time, the energy, rewards and risks of making new friends, I think we can agree that it is both safer and less demanding to keep the technical debates in the fore.

The scholarly focus on the various dialogic speeches is remarkable for three reasons, each of which bears on one or more of the contentions above. First, there is no revising the dialogue. The speeches, the *aporiae*, the failure in the Lysis that day among the conversers to be able to say who are friends is inalterable. The conversation occurred in just the way that Plato wrote it. When we observers, eavesdropping on this imitation-conversation, seize our pens and publish whole dissertations on Lysis, we prove the rule Aristotle announces in the Poetics. We are the most imitative creatures in the world. We take up the speeches where they were left off, peruse them, search the same questions Socrates posed to Lysis and Menexenus. We announce ways around the failures, analyze ambiguities, and detail where the conversation or logic went awry. We may do it "in the hope that they will be useful for a number of reasons. First, from a pedagogic standpoint, ...they demonstrate in some detail that the aporetic early dialogues...still provide an excellent opportunity for students to practice logical analysis upon extended discussions

of important subjects....Second, historians of philosophy may be encouraged to treat more sensibly the history of logic." (Cohen, Maurice H. "The Aporias In Plato's Early Dialogues". Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 23, 163-174, Apr.-June 1962, p. 173-174) But we do not do that in conversations seeking friendship as our end.

The second reason that our focus on the speeches is remarkable is that it fulfills a prediction Socrates makes in the closing moments of the dialogue. Our very focus on the speeches puts us on a par with the dramatic onlookers the afternoon Socrates, Lysis, and Menexenus have their conversation. Socrates parts company with Lysis and Menexenus that day with a warning. "Our hearers here will carry away the report that though we conceive ourselves to be friends with each other...we have not as yet been able to discover what we mean by a friend." (223 a13) The kind, not to mention the quantity, of scholarship on Lysis confirms Socrates' prediction. As "hearers here" we have certainly "carried away" the predicted report; we have backpacked it into journals, books, articles, monographs, and dissertations.

What follows is more of the same. I present my reading of the Lysis in outline form. In Chapter III I conduct a brief sampling typical of the scholarship attending the Lysis. I create this record for two reasons: first, to show how the "onlooker's view" operates; second, to illustrate the distance between my own reading and the other scholarly efforts. In Chapters IV and V I examine the recipes for making friends enacted by Socrates using Aristotle's theory of friendship and the Golden Mean. I hope my reading is more faithful to the whole dialogue than these others. While it does not avoid the onlooker view, and cannot avoid it, I hope the focal distance of my reading gathers up meanings others have neglected in pursuit of other treasures.

## CHAPTER II

### **INTERPRETATION OF THE LYSIS**

The following outlines of the Lysis are no substitute for the poem, but they will be handy for the rest of the paper. In any outline generated against a literary work, there are two admissions to voice. First, these outlines are not part of the imitation at all. They enable me to highlight issues of concern to my reading of the Lysis. They pay closer attention to asides, character, and issues of point of view than an outline determined to address the logic of the speeches. Second, the outline is part of the "proof" I am offering for contentions I make about the Lysis. Those who disagree with these contentions will find the outline itself extremely problematic. Traditionalists will outline this dialogue very differently.

#### **Introduction**

##### **The Frame**

Socrates is the only speaker in the Lysis. He is speaking in the dramatic present to an unseen person; recollecting for him an afternoon he spent in the dramatic past. This auditor is hearing what no onlooker to the events remembered could have known. It is a tell-all for Socrates. Why? We need a frame for this dialogue if we would understand it. The unseen auditor is the key to the frame.

In Chapter IV of this work I shall argue that the discourse occurring in the dramatic present is of a type Aristotle recognizes as occurring between rare friends, or

potentially rare friends; in addition, I shall show that Aristotle will count a remembrance of the type Socrates undertakes here as a variety of contemplative activity often overlooked by the scholarship on Book X of Nichomachean Ethics. That Plato crafts the dialogue as an oral remembrance is important to our appreciation of the imitative character of the Lysis.

H. P. Grice convinced me in his "Logic and Conversation" that there are unwritten rules governing interpersonal discourse. Among those rules are don't give more information than is asked for and make what you say relevant. "Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction." (Grice, H. P. Studies in the Way of Words, "Logic and Conversation", Harvard U. P. Cambridge. 1989. p. 26-27)

Analogizing to the imitation from Grice's remarks, we find Plato's title of the work is part of the work: Lysis. In the opening lines we discover the suggestion that Socrates is giving information to his auditor for a reason. Both of these elements deserve our attention.

"I was making a dash straight from the Academy to the Lyceum, by the road that skirts the outside of the walls and had reached the little gate where is the source of the Panops, when I fell in with Hippothales, the son of Hieronymus, Ctesippus the Paeonian, and some more young men." (203)(my translation)

Grice tells us the "rough general principle which [successful conversers]...observe [is]: Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it

occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle." (Ibid.)

Looking again, then, at the opening lines of the Lysis and keeping in mind that it is not to us that Socrates is speaking, but to an auditor, what can we discover? Well, at first hearing it sounds like an excuse. Could the auditor have been waiting for Socrates' arrival at the Lyceum? Could he have said, upon the occasion of meeting him in the dramatic present, "Hey, twit, I waited an hour for you. Where were you?" I discarded that as an inappropriate frame for the reason that Socrates' lengthy reply would violate the Gricean stricture to be relevant. For example, how could Menexenus' departure in obedience to a call from the wrestling master to help attend to the religious rites at 207d2 be relevant to making an excuse?

I imagined even less promising frames as well; for example, "What did you do yesterday?" But that question sanctions, "Oh, not much," as well as an opening like, "I ran into Hippothales, ..." It does not sanction the information, "I was making a dash straight from the Academy to the Lyceum," with complete details of what must have been the shortest route. Something has to account for this if Grice's notion of the Cooperative Principle is to hold up.

I have settled on the auditor's framing question as being, "How in the world did you ever become friends with Lysis?" This question would call for a brief and pertinent recollection of life as it existed for Socrates before he met Lysis, but not too much. It wouldn't do, for example, for Socrates to begin, "I was born..." and work up from infancy to meeting Lysis. Rather, one might start to make an answer to this question by remembering the immediate events before it, accounting and recognizing the contingency



of the meeting. Such chance meetings often interrupt intentions and plans already drawn, for example, getting oneself straight from the Academy to the Lyceum.

This framing question will explain the title, the opening lines, and the details of the remembrance. For it is eventually due to Lysis that Socrates never arrives at the Lyceum, and thus due to him, too, that the friendships began to be made that day. Because the onset of friendship is a delicate web, pieced together by diaphanous threads knotted by contingent, unpredictable events, it becomes dramatically interesting and important that Hippothales pleads for Socrates' help and advice; that Menexenus is called away, foiling Socrates' plan to question him and forcing Socrates to address Lysis; that Lysis pleads for Socrates to stay just until he has to go home; that Socrates nearly blunders and that Lysis actually does blunder on the heels of completing successful conspiracies. All these near misses, plots, plans, and deceptions become relevant to the exploration of the tricky roads we negotiate in the making of friends.

Further, this frame works an interesting effect on the whole dialogue. In the recollection we discover the quirky events and decisions made that Socrates counts as having made their budding friendship possible. We discover a recipe for making those kinds of friendships, as well as the kind of friendships they are. But in telling the events to the unseen auditor, an almost utterly different recipe for friendship emerges than the one we gather up from that day in the palaestra. For there are two simultaneous conversations going on in the Lysis: a direct and an indirect one. Perhaps I should say there is a present conversation that swallows conversations of the past. It is strange. At the same time, Socrates recounts the conversations from the dramatic past while having the one that is taking place in the dramatic present. "Socrates narrates to a nameless audience...the story of an encounter and conversation he once had with some Athenian

boys." (Bolotin, David. *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship*, Cornell Univ. P. Ithaca. 1969. p. 69) Socrates is conversing with someone in the present. Who?

If we take the foregoing as frame, then we can paint a portrait of this auditor. First, the auditor is male. Socrates' detailed description of Lysis at 207a is meant to convey to his hearer something of the same admiration for this boys' noble and beautiful countenance that Socrates felt. The listener is apt to be moved in a similar way if Socrates' remarks are to be effective. Second, his auditor is not a boy. Socrates' aside at 211a3 recalls that Lysis asks him to stay in a "boyish and fondling way." That would not be something a mere boy himself would understand, but something a man removed from his own boyhood would understand.

This man was not present at the palaestra-conversation; he has never met nor seen Lysis, lest the details of Socrates' description be superfluous. Thus, the listener has asked Socrates about this friendship based upon hearsay, from others. These others are the onlookers who "carried away the reports" that day as the party broke up. The listener has heard the reports.

He is familiar with the roads and short cuts, or Socrates wouldn't have bothered relating them, and thus he is Athenian, or nearly so. And perhaps most important, this person knows Socrates. He knows him well enough to question him about scuttlebutt concerning the friendship. He has already dismissed or at least questioned the reports. He realizes that Socrates, despite the reports, has made a friend of someone called Lysis, and wants to know how that happened. And finally, Socrates knows him, too. Socrates knows him well enough to trust him with the whole scoop. The two men are either friends or potential friends themselves.

I imagined and concede that the opening frame may be occurring in a setting where others are present listening to this account; I call these others "onlookers"; the remembrance may be taking place before fifty people. But somebody, some one person, has asked this question, and it is to this prime mover that Socrates directs his answer. I also imagined that they might all be half-drunk, and the friend, a regular Alcibiades, has yelled out, "Hey, Socrates, tell us about how you got to be friends with, --whatshisname?- - Oh, yeah, Lysis," and that the throng laughs or cheers in chorus, "Tell, tell, tell!" But such is hard to fit against the quite serious and lovely description Socrates gives of Lysis upon first seeing him. Other details seem quite at home with this scene, though.

However we care to set the stage, with or without onlookers, the remembrance of Socrates in the dramatic present is a one : one remembrance undertaken at the request of a possible friend. If there are onlookers, they will be subject to the caveats announced at the end of dialogue. They will carry away the report; again.

Because I think the dramatic present is important, and because we tend to forget that this is a remembrance by Socrates, the outlines that follow take their major breaks at points where the asides to the auditor occur, for these Socrates injects for the benefit of this unseen auditor. These are the personal and confessional statements, often overlooked, that furnish us much of the information on the progress, as it zigs and zags along, in the making of friends. [Author's note: I realize that by importing a frame I am abandoning the view of interpretation subscribed to by Richard Robinson in his Plato's Earlier Dialogues where he "argues for very stringent canons of exegesis." (Teloh, Henry. The Development of Plato's Metaphysics. Penn State Univ. Press. University Park, Pa. 1981. p. 16) Robinson does not view the works as poems. He sees no problem in saying that there are "assertions" in the dialogues, while I see the whole body of "assertions" as

problematic insofar as they are imitative of thoughts, decisions, actions, and events that may never be directly alluded to by any personage in the dialogue, namely, that they are having a conversation. I would ask whether it is possible on Robinson's strict canons to decide any issue of color or force attending Socrates' opening lines? Are these "assertions", the recollection of a dream, a lie, an account made presently of a previous hallucination? Is Socrates talking to himself? The frame always sneaks in somehow. I am trying to be explicit about something we paradoxically take for granted and immediately dismiss as inessential. I am trying to discover what happens if we make the frame explicit and essential to our understanding of the Lysis.]

#### **The Main Breaks:**

##### **I. 203-206e: Opening frame and first aside**

##### **II. 206e2-207d: the second aside**

##### **III. 210e- 211c: the third aside**

##### **IV. 211d-211e: the fourth aside**

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##### **V. 213d3-213e: the fifth aside**

##### **VI. 218c2-6: the sixth aside**

##### **VII. 222a4, 222b1-4: the seventh aside**

##### **VIII. 223a to end: the last aside**

As one can count, there are eight asides that return the reader to the dramatic present, each one occurring at a peripety of the drama. There is a marked change that

occurs in Socrates himself at almost the dead center of the dialogue, confessed to the auditor in the fourth aside. Socrates confesses that he had become charmed by I think this marks a philosophic, as well as a dramatic shift, and accordingly divided the dialogue in half using asterisks.

**Stage directions for the reader: The recollection of the events and conversation of dramatic past occurs in straight pica type. The conversational asides of the dramatic present occur in *italics*.**

#### **The Main Breaks:**

##### **I. 203-206e: Opening frame and The First aside:**

*Ratification and Affirmation of past intentions*

*Accidental falling in with Hippothales and others (203)*

#### **Dramatic past:**

**203a-204b4: Hippothales' salutation and invitations**

**Socrates' affirmation of intention and cross-examinations**

**204b5-204c5: The personal turn**

**204b5: The question: "But who do you think, Hippothales?"**

**204b6: The answer: The first blush**

**204b7-204c3: Socrates' divine knowledge**

**204c4: The second blush**

**204c5-204e10: Ctesippus' accusations**

**204e10-205a5: Socrates' request for an imitation**

**205a5-205b6: Hippothales' denial and dodge**

**205b7-205d6: Ctesippus' oath: charged with *katagelastos*,**

**Hippothales' denial confirmed;**

**Other oral and written evidence.**

**205d7-206b9: Socrates' verdict: guilty of *katagelastos***

**Count one: song on yourself (205e-206a4)**

**Count two: ignorant hunters (206a4-206b6)**

**Count three: offending the muses (206b6-206b9)**

**206b9-206c4: Hippothales: pleads for the mercy of the court in hope of receiving instruction**

**206c5-206c9: The Court's dilemma; terms of the conspiracy:**

**Imitation of conversation;**

**Purpose: To instruct Hippothales in speech**

**for his sake and the sake of friendship.**

**206c9-206d8: Acceptance of the conspiracy:**

**Plan A and Plan B**

**Knowing the target: Lysis described.**

**Bait: Menexenus' relationship with**

**Ctesippus (206d, 206d2)**

**206d9: The First Conspiracy in defense of speech thus**

**begins...**

**II. 206e2-207d: the Second aside**

*Inside the palaestra: the conspirators (206e1-2)*

*Surveying the scene: (206e2-9)*

*The target described: (206e9-207a4)*

*Plans A and B: failures (207a4-207b)*

*Luck: Menexenus' eagerness and his arrival (207b1-207b4)*

*The target draws near (207b4-5)*

*Almost ready (207b5)*

*Hippothales' desire*

*Hippothales positioned to listen: (207b5-10)*

**Dramatic past:**

**207b10-207c8: Springing the trap:**

**"I turned my eyes on Menexenus and I said,**

**'Son of Demophon...'" {Lesson: indirection}**

**207c1-207c7: The three *poteros* questions: age; nobility; beauty.**

**207c2-207c8: The three *poteros* answers: we dispute; we dispute; laughter**

**{Lesson: he will come to you}**

**207c8-207d: Indirect Inclusion of the target**

**{Lesson: do not hurry}**

**III. 207d1- 207d6: the third aside**

***Socrates foiled by the interruption (207d1-2)***

***Menexenus' responsibilities and departure (207d3-7)***

***Fast regrouping (207d7)***

**Dramatic past:**

**207d7: First direct words to Lysis: "I suppose your mother and father love you very much?"**

**207d7-210d10: the imitation conversation**

**207d8-207e10: The syllogism:**

**P1: Being loved means being happy (207d8-207e)**

**P2: Being loved means being free (207e1-8)**

**C: You do whatever you want (207e9-10)**

**207e11-12: Lysis' denial of C**

**208a1-209a5: Restrainers of Lysis:**

**charioteers (208a3)**

**mule drivers (208b4)**

**pedagogues (208c6)**

**Mother (208d4)**

**virtually everyone (209a)**

**209a6: Lysis' defense: my age**

**209a7-210d5: Socrates' reply: not your age**

**You read and write what you like (209a9-b6)**

**You play what finger you like on the harp (209b7-11)**

**209c4-209c11: Lysis' admission:**

**It is not my age, but my understanding**

**209c12-210c10: Socrates' comedic elaboration:**

**As you become competent:**



**Your father (209c8)**  
**Your neighbor (209d1)**  
**the Athenians (209c6)**  
**The Great king (209d8)**  
**The Greeks and barbarians**  
**And men and women (209b3-4)**  
**will entrust their concerns to you.**

**209b4-209c8: But if not, not**

**209d1-3: Reprise: "If you become wise, my boy, all will be**

**your friends and all akin to you- for you will be useful and good." 209d5-**

**209d10:**

**209d6: The sting:**

**"Is it possible for one to think big in regard  
to things in which he's not thinking?"**

**You still require teachers.(209d8)**

**You still have no notion of things, being thoughtless.(209d10)**

**209d10: Mission Accomplished: Lysis admits it.**

#### **IV. 210e1-211a5: The Fourth aside**

***Lessons to Hippothales complete:***

***(210e1-2211a1)"And when I heard him I looked over toward Hippothales..."***

***Almost a blunder in speech (210e2-5)***

***confessions of conspiratorial urges and wanting to crow***

***Seeing the agony of the student (210e6-211a1)***

*Remembering the student's hopes and condition (211a1)*

*Checking one's speech (211a1)*

*Menexenus' return (211a2)*

*The Second Conspiracy: in defense of speech*

*Lysis' flirtation and request (211a4-6)*

*Socrates' demurs (211a7-211b3)*

*Lysis: Assurance and plea (211b4-7)*

*Socrates' assent (211b6)*

*Returning affection;*

*building unity;*

*Uncovering Lysis' motives (211b7-211c9)*

*1)not to make Socrates katagelastos (211c2)*

*2)but rather to check the eristic speech in*

*Menexenus(211c3-9)*

**The Dramatic Past:**

**211c9-10: Ctesippus' suspicions**

**211d1-6: Socrates' lie**

**211d6-213d: The second pretense in defense of speech begins:**

**Target: Menexenus**

**Student: Lysis**

**211d7-212a: Socrates' confession: "I long for friends."**

**212a-212a8: Socrates' praise and acknowledgment of the**

**friendship between Lysis and Menexenus, and thus in view of his  
experience...**

**(The Elenchus of Menexenus: 212a9-213d2)**

**212a9- 212d: the lover is friend**

**212d-213a5: neither the lover and loved are friends unless...**

**213a6-213c: the beloved is friend**

**213c-213c9: reprise of the difficulties**

**213c9-213d2: Menexenus' confession: loss of a way to get clear.**

**Socrates' query: "Can it be Menexenus that we were seeking in an altogether incorrect fashion?"**

**213d3: Lysis' outburst, "In my opinion, yes!"**

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**V. 213d3-213e: The Fifth aside**

*Lysis described: (213d3-5)*

*Blushing*

*Involuntary outburst*

*His interest and love of philosophy noted*

*Socrates' admissions: charmed by Lysis (213d9-e1)*

*Crafting the discussion with Lysis in mind*

**Dramatic Past:**

**213e2-213-214a: rerouting the direction**

**214a1-214b: Voice of the Poets: Like to like**

**(Conjecture: The budding friendship of**

**Socrates and Lysis is explained by this proverb )**

**214b1-11: Making sure Lysis knows the voice of authority**

**214c-214e: The problem of enemies/bad people being like**

**revision: good to good**

**214e4- 215c5: suspicion announced on good to good**

**revision: self-sufficient are good**

**self-sufficient need nothing,**

**treasure nothing, love nothing**

**barring the way: like-like disallowed**

**215c7-216a4: Examining the Mythologues: Opposites attract**

**(Conjecture: The budding friendship of Socrates and**

**Menexenus occurs against this maxim)**

**216a5: making sure the two understand it.**

**216a5: Menexenus' qualified endorsement**

**216a6-216b10: Problems of opposites attract.**

**216c1-216c8: dizzy from the argument: revision afoot**

**216c8- Examining the Proverb: "The beautiful is the friend"**

**(Conjecture: The friendship of both Lysis and Menexenus to**

**Socrates occurs with this proverb in mind)**

**Indistinguishable: "Soft and smooth and sleek and**

**easily gives us the slip": phallic and**

**homoerotic symbolism of boy-man**

**relations(216c9-216d1)**

**Speaking to both boys; responder is ambiguous**

**Elaboration: the good is the beautiful (216d2-3)**

**Speaking as a diviner: the neutral is friend of the  
beautiful and good (216d4-**

**217a)**

**Revision: instrumental friendship (217a4-217c)**

**caveat: on account of the presence of  
evil but not being evil (217c1-5)**

**elaboration of presence: (217c5-218a3)**

**218a5-218b8: The ignorant are friends:**

**Socrates describes himself.**

**(Conjecture: The friendship of Socrates for Lysis and  
Menexenus occurs with this development.)**

**218b8-218c3: triune agreement**

**VI. 218c5-9: The Sixth aside**

*Socrates rejoicing*

*Echoes of hunters and prey from advice to Hippothales*

*Strange suspicions arise*

*No knowledge of their origin*

*Socrates cried out at once...*

**Dramatic Past:**

**218c9-10: "Woe is me, Lysis and Menexenus, I am afraid we  
dreamed our treasure."**

**218d-218d5: Menexenus responds to the cry before Lysis**

**Socrates worries they have been false like those boasting types. (eristics)**

**218d5-218e: "For the sake of something on account of something"**

**218e-218e4: Menexenus admits he doesn't follow:**

**Socrates admits they will both follow better if he recrafts the problem. (attentive to the student)**

**21834-219b7: Elaboration of friend "on account of and for the sake of"**

**219b8-219c: Letting pass the concern over violating rule against like-like**

**219c1-219d2: Call for an end to "going on like this", and announcement of the need of a friend in the first place, and for the sake of which all other things are also friends.**

**219d3-220c1: The phantom friends contrasted with the "friend into which they terminate"**

**220c-220d11: If evil were removed, would what is good still be loved, but not on account of the evil?**

**220e-220e9: The proto philon does not resemble those other friends**

**221a-221d3: Evil banished, but desire, love and befriending would remain for that friend which is not on account of something for the sake of something else.**

**221d4-221d9: Desire is the cause of friendship;**

**The rest has been a "long poem strung together."**

**221d10-221e10: Desire desires that which it lacks;**

**love, friendship, and desire what is kin.**

**(The conjecture: the friendship of Lysis and**

**Menexenus parallels this development)**

**221e12: Lysis and Menexenus assent to "the kin as friend"**

**221e13: Socrates solicits the double agreement to "if you are friends to each other,  
you are therefore kin."**

**222a1-222a6: akin in his soul, or character of his soul, or way,  
or eidos of the soul ...**

**VII. 222a7, 222b1-4: the Seventh aside**

*Socrates marks the different responses of Lysis  
and Menexenus*

**Dramatic Past:**

**222a8-9: "We love what is akin by nature: therefore it is necessary for  
the passionate lover who is genuine, and not pretended, to be loved by his favorite"**

**(seventh aside continued)**

*Socrates notes the hesitancy of and in the assents  
of Lysis and Menexenus*

*Hippothales is radiating all sorts of colors  
on account of his pleasure*

*Socrates yearns to examine the argument for himself*

**Dramatic past:**

222b4-222c4: The danger of "akin" being the same as "like"; Out of  
tune to say the what is useless is friend: their choice to say whether "akin" and  
"like" are the same, and violoative of the rule against like-like.

222c6-e: The choice and the boys both agree that each is akin to  
each, with rapid dissolution owing to violation of Like-like.

222e-22e10: Reprise of their search : Socrates is at a loss for  
words. "I no longer know what to say..."

**VIII. 223 to end: The Eighth aside**

*Socrates looking for help from some of the "older fellows"*

*The pedagogues appear like otherworldly spirits*

*They are summoning the boys home*

*It is late*

*The group tries to drive them away*

*We made no impression on them*

*They were tipsy from the hermaea*

*They relented and broke up the party*

**Socrates calls out to the boys as they were leaving**

**Dramatic past:**

223: "Now, Lysis and Menexenus, we have made ourselves ridiculous, I an old  
man, and you. For our listeners here will say as they leave that although we count



**one another friends, -you see, for me I take my stand with you- we have not yet become able to discover what is a friend."**

### **203-211e: Overview of the first half**

The first four sections of the dialogue will be taken up first. The actions and decisions of Socrates as told by him to the auditor about the palaestra-conversation show Socrates' embarking upon Aristotle's friendship of utility. Up until the point that Socrates finds himself charmed by Lysis, Socrates undertakes being useful first to Hippothales and his impatient friends, whose concerns are elaborated and ably voiced to Socrates by Ctesippus, and second to Lysis by agreeing to punish or correct Menexenus for his eristic tendencies.

Hippothales is currently madly in love with Lysis, who doesn't know Hippothales exists. His emotions have turned inward, driving Hippothales' writing of poems, singing of songs, and wailing the name to his poor, wearied friends. Socrates does not know the name "Lysis", and because he knows virtually everyone, surmises that Lysis is young. (204e) Ctesippus remarks Lysis' beauty (*to eidos*), states the family name, which Socrates immediately recognises. On hearing more from Ctesippus, Socrates concurs that Hippothales' use of speech is ridiculous, self-defeating, and self-damaging. Upon Hippothales' request for help in the proper way of speaking, Socrates concocts a plan. He thinks he can give Hippothales an imitation of the way to address Lysis that might help him. The three plan how they might lure Lysis to converse with Socrates. The friends of Hippothales are privy to this plot. As they enter the palaestra, fortune attends them. Menexenus comes to sit down. Lysis overcomes his shyness and joins his cousin. Socrates makes sure that Hippothales is within earshot. The student is Hippothales. The

target is Lysis. The purpose is training up proper speech in those who are in love. This conspiratorial pact is completed successfully at 210e.

Then, because he is beseeched to stay in turn by Lysis, Socrates enters a second conspiracy. Lysis' cousin and friend Menexenus is a student of the harsh and mocking Ctesippus. That tutelage has made Menexenus eristic. Lysis asks Socrates to perform on Menexenus a similar humbling and checking to the one that Lysis has just received. Lysis would hear the whole thing said "over again" to Menexenus. They formulate their plans whispering. To bring the conspiracy to fruition, Socrates lies.

The sample will teach Lysis the art of humbling and checking. Similar to the first conspiracy, Lysis is the student and Menexenus, the target. Once again, the purpose is reshaping the speech of one whose talk is ill-formed. This time the friends involved are Lysis and Menexenus.

Socrates hopes that his demonstration taught Hippothales to restrain his speech, his poems and praises; and he agrees to perform a variation of it on Menexenus because Lysis has asked him. But the effect upon the target is in each instance the improvement of the condition of his soul. If he is tempted to vanities, the checking-speech defuses the temptation rendering the target more susceptible to friendship. If he is eristic, the checking speech will show him its aridity.

The target in the second conspiracy is Lysis' cousin and friend Menexenus. His condition requires this correction, just as Hippothales' condition required it. His is the speech of disputation- eristic and cautious. He is a young, wary eristic who wears his words like armor to protect him, or hurls them like scuds to zing others. It is difficult to make friends upon such a "difficult road" for the object of such speech is battle, rather than truth. Eristic speech is a game of winning or losing, needing combatants and devoid

of partnership. Like Hippothales' words, which positively damage his future hopes, Menexenus is adopting a pattern of conversation that never sees peacetime.

In their ways, the speech affliction of Hippothales and Menexenus represent opposite extremes. Hippothales will commit anything to speech and to writing in order to bleed off the emotional foam of his love for Lysis. Menexenus' speech is cryptic, noncommittal one minute, committed the next. Socrates aims to reform the speeches of both Hippothales and Menexenus in order that their speech issue in the fruits of friendship. Socrates is thus beneficial to the targets of his deceptions as well as useful to his co-conspirators. Their souls are improved.

## **I. 203-206e: The frame and the first aside**

### **203-b1: Intentions:**

We have established from his opening account to the auditor that Socrates' did not intend to tarry with Hippothales and his cronies at the palaestra. Incredibly, the man who roamed the streets and alleys of Athens with the vigilance of a Hun didn't even know the palaestra was there.

That day he had his destination like a headache; he was in a hurry. He falls in with Hippothales, Ctesippus, and a group of young men quite by accident. Hippothales sees him approach, and calls out, "Ha, Socrates, whither and whence?"

Calling out this way suggests Hippothales' friendliness as well as his awareness of Socrates' evident hurry. Our normally gregarious Socrates tersely puts everyone on notice that he is in no mood to gambol, loiter, or chat by his reply. "From the Academy and I am going straight to the Lyceum." He remembers both his hurry and that he

announced it broadly to the group. He ratifies having had a fixed intention by remembering it for the unseen listener.

### **203b1-204b5: Temptations:**

Hippothales' tone changes. He may have hoped his gregarious "Ha!" would have been enough to slow Socrates; when it doesn't, Hippothales engages more direct measures to waylay him, saying, "Straight to us, I hope. Won't you turn in? It will be worth your while."

"Worth your while" is a barker's term of seduction, bargain and exchange. Socrates returns this invitation with an abrupt, rapid-fire series of clipped questions apparently intending to decide for himself if it will be "worth his while." Today he might have been considering buying a used car.

"Turn in where? And whom do you mean by 'us'? And what's all this, pray? And how are you passing your time? And who is your teacher there? Here, where I am, I should like first to be informed, what I am to enter for, and who is your prime beauty?" Hippothales has just time enough to draw breath to answer.

Despite the rapid question-fire, Hippothales quickly offers terms of exchange tailor-made for Socrates were he a mere creature of self-gratification. For his time, Hippothales tells him, he will enter this swell new palaestra, full of "fine fellows", who spend their time in conversation, a share of which has Socrates' name on it; plus, guess what, Socrates, your old friend and admirer, Miccus, is inside teaching and otherwise running the place; and there are beauties in abundance, enough, in fact, to furnish everyone a separate opinion.

Incredibly, none of these suffices to lure Socrates inside. Why not? Because, if we take Socrates seriously, from the first glance he cast upon him, Socrates realized that

Hippothales has a secret, but Socrates already knows what it is. Socrates is just toe-tapping.

Socrates' questions seem impersonally directed to discovering whether taking up the invitation will be worth his while. Thus, Hippothales mistakes the tenor of Socrates' question about the prime beauty to be of the same impersonal quality as the other queries-answers that were calculated to lure Socrates to stay on the grounds of its being worth his while.

Socrates' is not interested until he unearths the personal stake Hippothales has in his staying; Socrates is happy enough to know his old pal Miccus is the director of the school. He is gracious when offered a share of the conversation, but he is definitely not interested on these grounds alone. What is he to enter for? And who is your prime beauty? One senses arms akimbo and planted feet.

To move Hippothales to admit the personal stake he has in Socrates' staying, Socrates has to reject the terms of self-gratification Hippothales offered him; because Hippothales does not know that Socrates knows already, Socrates repeats his last question, which Hippothales had construed to be about *a* "prime beauty" rather than *his* "prime beauty". Socrates is doubtless stressing when he asks, "But whom do *you* think, Hippothales? Tell me this?"

Hippothales is suddenly aware that the terms of the decision to tarry have shifted. He must give up the role of the barker and confess his personal stake in the matter. Caught, Hippothales blushes. This blush is the first clear indication of Hippothales' character.

In the Rhetoric Aristotle addresses the importance of indicating character in a narration. He specifically mentions blushing as indicative of shame in Nichomachean

Ethics. Socrates is indicating to his unseen auditor the condition of Hippothales' character consistent with Aristotelean directives. The blushing of Hippothales is a fortunate thing; it lifts him above the traditional scholarship that denounces him. We shall investigate this later.

Aristotle says, "We think it right for a young people to be prone to shame, since they live by their feelings, and often go astray, but are restrained by shame; and hence we praise young people who are prone to shame." (En 1128b35) The "many obey fear, not shame," whereas only someone who fears for his reputation, who is "decent and properly prone to shame" is praiseworthy. (EN 1179b12 and 1115a13) The indications from Aristotle are that Hippothales' shame points to his decency. Although Aristotle rejects the commonplace of Greek thought which counted shame a virtue, he accepts it as indicative of educability. (Cf. Terrence Irwin's remarks on *aidos*, Nichomachean Ethics. Hackett Press. 1985. p. 425)

#### **204b5-204c4: Socrates, God, and another deeper blush:**

Socrates eliminates the possibility that Hippothales is not in love by means of a divine revelation. I think the language of the dialogue places Hippothales' condition beyond the pale of interpretative debate as well.

Socrates tells Hippothales that he needn't deny being in love, for God has given him the gift of seeing both who is in love and who is beloved. His is not a mere gift of abstract or binary knowing of the sort we might employ by T or F, the sort we might designate with a simple "yes" or "no", but rather a divine knowledge of the presence, depth and degree of love Hippothales feels.

Upon first glance, Socrates has a divine insight that Hippothales is "far gone" in love. The only thing he doesn't know is the name of the beloved. If Socrates has this

knowledge as a matter of divine revelation, it is indubitable and indisputable. Further, he deems it a "gift" from God. God's gifts generally do not arise over cheap or trivial matters. This kind of knowledge is more certain than any *a priori* deduction. If we take it literally, such knowledge counts against anyone, anywhere, who contends that Hippothales is not a genuine, true, bona fide, over-the-edge lover.

In response to Socrates' attempt to put him at ease with the discovery of his "secret", coupled with his previous request for the name of the beloved, Hippothales blushes ever more deeply, again. Even if we do not believe Socrates, Hippothales seems to believe him. Poor thing is wringing with shame.

There are some who may think that Socrates is not serious here and that we ought not take this literally. Socrates doesn't really think he has such a gift, but only says this to prevent objection by Hippothales. I think there are two very immediate reasons to take this section of the dialogue literally. Additionally, there is a more remote reason.

First, if Plato takes the trouble to remove possible objections by Hippothales by nesting Socratic assertions within divine insight, readers ought pay attention. How else is Plato to remove an assertion from the table of speculation except to couch the assertion in this way? Socrates might have been made to say merely, "I can tell by looking." Invoking the authority of divine revelation is gratuitous, both dramatically and philosophically, unless Plato intended to convert Socrates' averment into a steel girder given.

Second, such knowledge would have descended upon Socrates the first instant he laid eyes on Hippothales; it would have colored the initial exchange between them. "Let's get to the point, Hippothales," would be Socrates' toe-tapping attitude as Hippothales gamely tried to induce Socrates to do what would be "worth his while". The

tone of Socrates' rapid-fire questions make more sense if Socrates has known from the moment of hailing by Hippothales that the issue of his staying has more to do with Hippothales' condition than it has with what is worthwhile to Socrates. If he does not have indubitable knowledge from the "first glance", we have to resort to multiple guesswork concerning Socrates' motivation.

For example, David Bolotin thinks Socrates is very much calculating the advantages he might gain by stopping off. He pictures Socrates as "not convinced", but "curious"; then as increasingly so; then as "fearing" intrusion; as suspicious of the motives of the request, and then as worried about "discord"; then, as not trusting Hippothales. Bolotin has to explain the series of questions put by Socrates in this layered way because he does not *allow* Socrates to know that Hippothales is in love until after he blushes. Even then, Bolotin allows that it is only a "surmise." (Bolotin, David. Plato's Dialogue on Friendship. Cornell Univ. P. N.Y. 1979. p. 72-73)

This patchwork quilt of disparate emotions is unnecessary if we take seriously the possibility that Socrates knew it "at a glance" and work forward from that glance. The character of the questions becomes unified. The blush does not give Socrates any new knowledge of Hippothales' condition so far as *eros* is concerned. But it does give him new knowledge of Hippothales' educability if we take Aristotle's remarks on shame to heart.

It is the unmasking of Hippothales' attempt to play the barker, to lure Socrates to stay solely upon self-centered grounds that causes him to blush. One does not need to resort to such ploys with one's friends. That is part of the reason that Hippothales is blushing. The unification of the questions occurs if we see them as Socrates' impatient way to move Hippothales to be sincere and to admit the real point: *eros*. When



Hippothales begs for instruction from Socrates, he has acquired the proper frame of mind to receive instruction.

When Socrates tells Hippothales he has known it all along as a matter of divine revelation, there is a second, deeper blush. Wouldn't we blush, too?

The remote reason for reading as literal his claim to divine knowledge concerns Socrates' speaking as a "diviner" later in the dialogue. If we are not willing to grant the present claim as sincere, then the later claim drops from the sky.

#### **204c4-205d5: Ctesippus' complaints: the onlooker's view**

This is a very dangerous section of the dialogue, for it is here that readers unconsciously elect whether to adopt the viewpoint of Ctesippus. His frustration and impatience with Hippothales' condition is one we hear in detail, pressed on behalf of himself as well as those standing around them; he seems to be fairly shouting his denunciations as they stand outside the palaestra gate. On their account of things Hippothales has become a bullet-proof fool and crushing bore: he moooooons; he composes poems; he sings songs. All their ears are stretched and overflowing with the name "Lysis." It is "Lyyyyyysssiss" morning, noon, and, night. But now Hippothales can not even get the dreaded name out of his mouth. Ctesippus is amazed, derisive, mocking, incredulous.

Socrates does not know the name "Lysis". From that he infers Lysis must be young. Such is Socrates' way of saying that he knows almost everyone in town. On learning his family name, Socrates remarks on the nobility of Lysis' lineage. Ctesippus allows that Lysis is beautiful to behold, and that he has no doubt that Socrates will appreciate his beauty. It is Hippothales' speech-acts that Ctesippus denounces.

Having heard enough from Ctesippus, Socrates asks Hippothales to "give a performance" or imitation of the way he talks, along similar lines that his friends have born. Hippothales tries to save face: "Surely you do not attach any weight to this fellow's account?" Socrates says, "Do you deny loving the person he mentions?" No, Hippothales does not deny loving Lysis, but avoids the request for a sample or self-portrait.

Socrates asks for the performance that he might "know whether you understand what a lover ought to say of his favorite *either to his face or to others*." ( 204e10- 205a1-2, Loeb translation, my emphasis)

It is a matter of crucial importance that Socrates collapses the issue of whether Hippothales has treated Lysis, or his friends, or both to these songs and other poetical works. By collapsing the issue, Socrates intimates that the important issue is the speech and poetry, be it to Lysis or anyone else.

This judgment offends our modern view. If the lover has managed his emotions in the presence of the beloved, something is still salvageable even if his friends have to hear it day and night. Socrates disagrees. He wants the performance irrespective of the recipient.

Against Ctesippus' descriptions, Hippothales flatly *denies* having made such verses or speeches "on" Lysis. This is ambiguous. What Hippothales means is that he has not said them "to" Lysis. Ctesippus takes Hippothales to be denying the writing and singing altogether, and strenuously objects calling him "mad." Hippothales demurs to Socrates' request for a sample of his language before this onslaught of criticism by inviting Ctesippus to vent further. Ctesippus seizes the chance.

Ctesippus *confirms* that Hippothales has not approached Lysis with his lovesick mawkish drivel. "It is a *ridiculous* story, Socrates. The idea of a lover devoting himself

exclusively to the object of his love, and yet having *nothing of a personal interest to say* to him that any child might not say- isn't it *ridiculous?*" (my emphasis) Because of the fatuous ineptitude on the part of Hippothales to do more with Lysis than talk to him as any child might talk, the rest of them have had to suffer his poems, songs, and tales of the family, their glorious deeds, service to the city, ties to the gods, and such.

Ctesippus is mocking the distance between Hippothales' conduct with Lysis as compared to his incessant wailing to others, his friends. It is the impersonal things Hippothales says to Lysis that he derides. "Any child" can make the small talk Hippothales makes with Lysis.

Would any child serenade Lysis, repeat his name over and over, or give the family history to the very one who doubtless knows it? Hippothales *has* kept his exchanges with Lysis impersonal; he has not smothered him, rather, he has masked his feelings. This insincere cover is one with which Socrates is familiar.

To conclude that Lysis has any knowledge of Hippothales' condition, that he even knows who Hippothales is, goes too far. To think that "Lysis has a certain dislike for Hippothales perhaps because of his good sense," is unsupportable. (Teloh, Henry. Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues. Univ. of Notre Dame Press. Notre Dame, Indiana. 1986. p., 72.) To find release, Hippothales has vented his foamy emotions upon his friends, treated them to the staircase wit and lovelorn doggerel. They have "been compelled to listen"; they have had enough.

From the onlooker's view, Ctesippus' for example, or ours perhaps, -that is, from the point of view of one who is not in love, this story of love is always ridiculous. It is the agelessness of that component of "the story" that intrigues me.

Being in love is one of the most vulnerable emotional states a human being suffers. The turmoil of the soul is such that one's former steadiness tends to vanish in proportion to the rising turbulence of one's heart. Particularly if one is a novice and unseasoned, one's character, whatever it was, goes on holiday. The need to speak the name of the beloved, to sneak it into conversations about the weather, the price of eggs, the stock-market is one of its most enduring features. Common to the condition, too, are writing poems and rehearsing the excellent qualities, beauty, and virtues of the beloved.

Of course, we have just learned that Hippothales doesn't know Lysis well enough to rehearse his virtues; he says no more to him than "any child" might say. Thus is he seizing upon what he does know: the virtues of the next best thing: Lysis' illustrious family.

That Hippothales cannot or simply will not give Socrates a sample performance of his language is one of the marks of being in love. One doesn't see oneself clearly in such a condition. If he had possessed the psychic distance to enable him to self-parody, Hippothales would not have been in the state of emergency that Socrates diagnosed: "far gone."

I maintain that almost any assessment of Hippothales is apt to be precipitous for the reason that *eros* unleashed just is that condition which suspends one's habits and routines. Eros is a stretching, testing, trying and loosing of the very fabric of one's life. There is pathos here; empathy, too, if one cares to remember her past. What there isn't, is a way to reduce the character of Hippothales to unidimensional droplets such as "base", "shy", "self-conscious", "egotistical", "selfish", "foolish", "modest", or anything else.

Any one of these traits may bob to the surface, moment to moment. I suggest that any description of Hippothales as a "base lover" or not a "true lover" are unsupported by

experience and denied by the text. (Teloh, Henry. Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues. Univ. of Notre Dame Press. Notre Dame, Indiana. 1986. p., 72.)

Love: at one moment Hippothales is wailing the name. The next, he is the picture of reserve. After all, as far gone as he is, he isn't singing or moaning now. Socrates tells us in the dramatic present what he is doing; but in an hour, or tonight, who knows? That is the misery and euphoria of being in love. Presently, Hippothales is standing by, suffering the derision and abuse of Ctesippus, and blushing to the roots of his hair. In a moment he is going to plead for Socrates to help him: to instruct him on the proper language for one blindly in love with another. Being far gone in love unsettles the soul. Greeks were aware of this.

"In ancient Greece, sculptors made busts of the semi-deity Silenus which had a trick to them. Inside the hollow clay likeness lay a little gold figurine which was revealed when the bust was open. According to the Greeks, Eros is the power which discerns the golden figurine within the clay...[for] within his [clay] actuality is the golden figurine which love discerns - his possibility." (Philosophies of Love, ed. Norton and Kille. Rowman and Allenheld Pub. Totowa, N. J. 1971. p. 81) With the onset of Eros the lover's eyes fill up with the beloved's myriad possibilities. It would be like opening one's eyes, when all one has ever seen were various shades of gray, to discover oneself seeing in color. The gray-sighted and the color-visioned both see the lamp, the tree, the sea. But their experiences are different in crucial ways. Hippothales' world is a different world than Ctesippus', than Socrates', than ours. His is a Lysis-world.

Ctesippus' world is the one we readers inhabit. If we shared the condition of Hippothales, we wouldn't be calmly reading a dialogue, but outside with our Barlows carving initials into the nearest White Oak tree. Onlookers have difficulty managing to

remember their ocean voyages with Eros, not to mention trying to divine the golden figurine someone else apprehends in another. The onlooker is often swallowing back "What does he *see* in her?"

Hence there is a temptation to swallow down Ctesippus' view of Hippothales without serious inspection. We look and see clay. He looks and sees the rainbow and tephra explosions of Lysis' myriad "possibilities." He *can't* be serious with those poems and songs. Snap out of it. He gets worse, not better. We indulge. We tire. We deride. So it goes.

Ctesippus' two uses of "ridiculous" (*katagelasta*) introduce an idea of importance to this dialogue: the onlooker's view. This term becomes the only straightforward denunciation of Hippothales. It is owing to it that Socrates agrees to put off his trip to the Lyceum. If it is the *alpha* of his decision to remain, it is also the *omega* of the afternoon. For Socrates himself acknowledges later to his auditor that he will have been perceived as *katagelasta* by the onlookers at the dialogue's dramatic end.

"The term 'ridiculous' (*katagelastos*) occurs six times in the dialogue. The first four usages all occur in the first section and are applied to Hippothales [205b7; 205c2; 205d5; 206a1] The other two are applied to Socrates." (Tessitore, Aristide. "Plato's Lysis: An Introduction to Philosophic Friendship" Southern Journal of Philosophy. Vol. 28. no. 1. note 6. (1990) p. 129-130) It is Socrates who applies the term to himself, later. How serious is it, this denunciation?

Aristotle tells us that the ridiculous is a "species of the Ugly" and as such "it may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others." (Poetics, 1449a33-35) Calling Hippothales "ridiculous" does not bear the stigma of moral or intentional fault as occurs in a vicious person, but rather a failure of purpose owing to

fumbling artlessness. Inasmuch as the dialogue will conclude with Socrates' admission that he, Lysis, and Menexenus have made themselves "ridiculous" before the onlookers that afternoon, it cannot be such a matter as to stain one's character.

Most prominently, ridiculous personages appear in Comedies. There, Aristotle tells us, the personages are "worse" than ourselves, as opposed to "better" than ourselves as in Tragedy. If Plato's imitations are imitating personages "just such as ourselves", neither far worse, nor better than we are, then the species of ugly enacted by Hippothales is one to which most of us can relate without having to conclude that Hippothales is base or vicious.

[Author's note: According to Irwin, Aristotle uses the following terms almost interchangeably: "vicious, bad, base, *kakos*, *phaulos*, *poneros*, *mochtheros* " to contrast good or excellent. They "are applied especially to the lower classes, the MANY, in contrast to the decent people and respectable upper classes." (Aristotle. Nichomachean Ethics. tr. Terrence Irwin. Hackett Press. N.Y. 1985. p. 430) On the other hand, *katagelastos* derives from a verb meaning "to laugh scornfully, mock." (Liddell and Scott. Greek-English Lexicon Abridged edition. Oxford Univ. P. N.Y. 1993. p. 352) The connection between the Ugly and the laughable, on the one hand, to *kalos* (the fine, beautiful) and *aischros* (shameful) retains an aesthetic dimension akin to fumbling as opposed to fitting and graceful. (Irwin, p. 401) Shame indicates a "sense of disgrace" issuing from having violated one's standards. (Irwin, p. 425) In one who resorts to masks and ploys to save face, as Hippothales does with Lysis and did with Socrates, there is a loss of sincerity. Unmasking causes shame even as it restores us to sincerity. There are thus etymological as well as psychological defenses for the contention that "ridiculous" is not indicative of base character.]

### **205d7-206e: The charges, the plea, the plan:**

Having heard the account of the situation from Ctesippus, Socrates concurs in the denunciation of Hippothales: "Oh, you ridiculous Hippothales, do you compose and chant a triumph song on yourself before you have won your victory?" [Author's note: The victory song alludes to a practice dating at least to the odes of Pindar which sing the praises of the esteemed in terms of his illustrious family. Pindar's dates are probable 518-438. Elroy Bundy advances the theory that victory odes are sung on whole families. Bernard Knox. Backing into the Future. "Caviar to the General" WW Norton and Compaony. NY. 1994. page. 56-69] Having charged Hippothales with being "ridiculous", Socrates elaborates that charge in a three- part indictment:

1) The songs and poems are not upon Lysis, but rather redound to Hippothales himself; they are his unconscious attempt to control the future. He desires to make his eventual victory seem wondrous or his eventual defeat seem crushing. It is his attempt to shape the future estimate of himself. Estimate, by whom? By his friends, of course. Either way the events turn out, however, the actual poems are apt to generate future ridicule from his friends. Those who are practiced in matters of love are more circumspect.

2) Like a hunter who attempts to capture a butterfly with a shotgun, songs and poems sung "upon handsome boys" encourage in them pride and haughtiness, drive them wild, and render them harder to catch. Hippothales, then, is a poor strategist.

3) This being the case, the poems and songs are damaging to Hippothales; one cannot "be a good poet so long as he is damaging to himself." If we cast these charges religiously, we would say that Hippothales' songs and poetry have offended the Muses.



Thus we discover that Hippothales is a novice. He has yielded to the immediacy of his feelings; he has written and sung and composed with no thought for how such will adversely affect estimates of him. His friends are already weary. Should they have additional fodder to use against him in the future?

Hippothales has to be told how his compositions redound to himself. At first, he is incredulous at the suggestion and denies having composed them on himself. Such a denial "is not disingenuous. His disclaimer does not reveal dishonesty so much as ignorance...." (Tessidore, Aristide. "Plato's Lysis: An Introduction to Philosophic Friendship". The Southern Journal of Philosophy. vol. 28. no.1. (1990), p. 116) Having been shown, he acquiesces. The young man is educable.

He agrees without objection to Socrates' proposition that unsolicited praise is a spur to arrogance and vanity in the case of handsome, young boys, and has the presence of mind to draw the appropriate deductive conclusion concerning Lysis. People full of vanity and pride are not in the proper condition to be wooed or perhaps even befriended.

But finally it is the damage he does himself by these poetical works that Socrates is concerned to address with him. The reproaches of friends and the self-defeating actions ensure that Hippothales makes himself a worse poet by penning and singing them. His speech needs a correction.

Hippothales admits to the irrationality (*alogia*) of his predicament. He has no knowledge of the proper conversation. He beseeches Socrates to offer any useful advice "as to what conversation or conduct" will help "to endear one to one's favorite." He is far gone both in speech and emotion. If Socrates can help re[s]train his speech, perhaps he will become able to govern the emotional torrents. Conversation enters the dialogue here as subject to training and improvement.

Aristotle ties speech and reason together in the soul. The soul is a trinity of non-rational, partly rational, and rational elements. The very function of reason (speech) is to govern that part of the soul which is partially amenable to reason. Should his emotions and speech reach equilibrium, his gridlock and paralysis might be broken and Hippothales might find himself able to converse in a more prosperous and judicious way with both his friends and with Lysis. Perhaps then his friends will forgive him. Perhaps Lysis will start to notice him and like him back.

Socrates avers that it is no easy task to "say", but thinks that if he could talk with Lysis, he might be able to "show" Hippothales a sample of the kind of conversation he ought employ, "rather than those things that your friends say you speak and sing."

We shall discover that such conversations are not confessional, and hence not wholly sincere. Nevertheless, they are proper given the circumstances.

In sight of the whole group, at the instigation of Socrates, Hippothales, Ctesippus and Socrates devise a plan to bring about this sample conversation, this audio-visual instruction. Hippothales relates that Lysis is "exceedingly fond of listening" and suggests that if Ctesippus and Socrates simply go in and start conversing, Lysis will come to them. That is plan A. But: just in case plan A fails, the three devise plan B. Lysis knows Ctesippus through Lysis' cousin and closest companion Menexenus, who is a student of Ctesippus. In the event that Lysis hangs back, Ctesippus will call Menexenus to him and that will draw Lysis.

In these two plans we learn of both eagerness to listen and shyness or natural modesty in Lysis. The events will unfold confirming Hippothales' intuitions of Lysis. He is an eager listener and he is naturally shy. Thus, it isn't the case that Hippothales has paid no attention to anything other than his own hot lust. He has paid sufficient attention

to Lysis to divine his admirable qualities. His isn't a case of ambition, of I-wanna-be-part-of-that-family's-glory, despite the themes of his songs and poems.

We also receive a foreshadowing of Menexenus' situation. This boy is student of Ctesippus. From what we know of him, sympathy and empathy are in short supply. Being a student of Ctesippus is not likely to arouse envy, is it? One would have to be tough to withstand the kind of abuse and derision of which he is capable.

Finally, we should feel a bit of apprehension. We have plans. Plans are always fragile. Nevertheless, having plans A and B in place, Socrates resolutely cries, "This I need to do." And he recalls to his listener that he turns, takes Ctesippus (by the arm?) and strides into the palaestra like butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. The conspiracy is afoot. The others duly follow after them.

Before we explore the second aside, we need to note with care the dramatic implications of the first section above. Socrates, having been beseeched, in an effort to benefit Hippothales, has agreed to give Hippothales a sample of the kind of conversation lovers ought undertake with the object of their affection if they would make them tractable while at the same time governing the torrents of their own *eros*. Only those outside the Palaestra know this plan. Nobody else learns of it that day.

Almost everything that follows to 211 is subservient to Socrates' conspiracy to deliver this sample to Hippothales. The exceptions involve those uncontrollable events that attend all plans; such as: the plans don't work; or the first sample speech is interrupted; or in the course of its execution, the instructor begins yielding up emotions of his own in admiration of the target of the plan. Some things cannot be planned for. They can only be met head-on; the way we meet the contingencies often determine our outcomes.

The stockholders in this conspiracy are numerous. They include Hippothales, of course, and the friends of Hippothales who are with him. All of them are privy to this plot. For it is the friends of Hippothales who have suffered with him both the disquieting effects of unharnessed, uneducated, very verbal *eros*. Socrates is making himself useful to these companions as well. Their voyage may come tomorrow or next week. The presence of *eros*, its effect on speech, and by extension reason, is important enough to defer his intention to go "straight to the Lyceum". *Eros* and the defense of speech are the centerpiece of Socratic efforts in the dramatic past of dialogue.

### **The Second Aside: 206e2-207d: Inside the Palaestra**

#### **Making Ready.**

Socrates describes to his auditor the activities and events he witnesses upon entering the palaestra in lush detail. It is teeming with hustle and bustle. There are court games, dice games, the completion of sacrifices, and everywhere well-dressed boys and youths. These activities mirror Aristotle's description of the activities enjoyed among friends in Nichomachean Ethics. "Whatever someone [regards as] his being, or the end for which he chooses to be alive, that is the activity he wishes to pursue in his friend's company. Hence some friends drink together, others play dice, while others do gymnastics and go hunting, or do philosophy." (EN 1172a1-5) Socrates notes all of the above activities in the course of his recollection right down to drunken slaves with the exception of "hunting" and "doing philosophy." Hunting, however receives two mentions in the dialogue and is symbolically present, for Lysis is a target of sorts. "Doing philosophy" requires no mention. That activity they will be engaged upon shortly.

In addition Socrates notes especially for his listener the following. "Among them was Lysis: he stood among the boys and youths with a garland on his head, a

distinguished figure, deserving not merely the name of well-favored, but also of well-made and well-bred (*kalos te kagathos*)." His admiration is an involuntary, unplanned response.

As per their plan(s), Socrates and Ctesippus make their way to a quiet place, sit, and begin to talk. Lysis does not come over. Neither is Menexenus around to call. Both plan A and plan B are total failures. So it goes. Socrates can see that Lysis wants to join them, but shyness prevents him. Wherethehell is that damned Menexenus? Outside playing on a court somewhere.

Thankfully, Menexenus chances to step inside and glimpse Socrates with his teacher Ctesippus. Not waiting for a summons, he leaves off his game without hesitation and comes straightway to sit beside them. The resoluteness and confidence of Menexenus lends Lysis the same. He comes to sit down beside Menexenus. Almost ready.

Socrates tells his listener that the rest of the group came along shortly. When the group became large and dense enough, Socrates watched as Hippothales stationed himself "in a position where he thought Lysis would not catch sight of him, as he feared that he might irritate him; in this way he stood by and listening.

Then I, turning my eyes on Menexenus, "Son of Demophon,' I said..."

That completes the second aside. Readers move back into the dramatic past. The importance of this aside is threefold: first, the description of Lysis and his behavior indicate his singular quality and provide the first independent testimony by Socrates to the fact that Hippothales is drawn to an appreciation for good, rather than mediocre or base, people. Second, their well-laid plans collapsed. Had Menexenus not stepped inside, this conversation might never have happened. Fortune attends our plans. And

third, Socrates waits. He waits to begin until Hippothales has secured a position from which he can listen. It would be vain to start without him. This entire upcoming conversation is an imitation, a poem, served up to Hippothales directly, and to the boys on the slant. Were Hippothales unable to hear it, their plan would go for naught.

Hippothales is out of sight of Lysis, but Lysis is not out of sight of Hippothales. Socrates notes that is from fear of giving offense, irritating, or angering him. I ask the reader to recall the flush of first love. Here she comes... the foudroyant sight of the beloved... her glorious fuscia dazzle... why even her very shadow is shimmering. And there: there *you* stand: you with your sweaty, pathetic grey plumage, mottled and dull and stringy ...

Is it any wonder now why he hides? To understand why Hippothales screens himself from view, we need only think 3 seconds deep into our pasts. When we are in love, we do not want them to look at us. No, no, not even for a moment. They are beautiful; we are ugly, ungainly, awkward twits. They are poised and with it. We are falling apart. Nor do we want them to talk to us. No, no, not to us, for they are witty and wise and articulate; we are stuttering, flubbing, fools of the second plumage. Sunk and covered in the drab clay of our own actuality, we behold their golden possibilities. Butterflies and caterpillars. Lightning and lightning bugs. Why wouldn't their seeing us startle, anger, irritate, and even repulse them? The dramatic moment Hippothales hides himself he is fearing the worst. This episode resonates with our experience if we can bear to recall it.

It is not the case that Hippothales' hiding himself reveals that he has taken himself out of the conversation. The whole ensuing conversation is winging its way to him. It is undertaken by Socrates for his benefit. Nor is it the case that his lack of participation

indicates that his "eros may be beyond education." (Teloh, Henry. Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues. Univ. of Notre Dame Press. Notre Dame, Indiana. 1986. p., 72.)

For it is his *eros* that Socrates is trying to shape and educate by offering this imitation.

The larger dramatic point is philosophic. People learn how to converse well by witnessing, reading, remembering, and studying imitations of conversation that poems of the kind Socrates is crafting for Hippothales supply. Perhaps they also learn from Platonic imitations like the Lysis. [Author's note: In the Timaeus Socrates does little talking. Would we say that he has taken himself out of the conversation?]

### **207b11-207d: The first pretense**

Socrates' turning his eyes on Menexenus and addressing him, "Son of Demophon...", opens the pretense that Menexenus is of primary importance to Socrates. Why? The target is Lysis. The student is Hippothales. The message is: Do not be too direct.

By turning his eyes on Menexenus and by using direct address, Socrates has accomplished more than the elevation of Menexenus to the position of prominence. He has excluded everyone else from answering.

"Which of the two of you are...?" opens their exchange.

This is the form of the first three questions put directly to Menexenus. The form is important because they work an indirect inclusion of Lysis in whatever answer Menexenus gives. Lysis is at the mercy of his answer, for he is included in the subject of the question, but excluded from responding by the design of Socrates. He is of subordinate interest, somehow. Socrates' questions, which-of-the-two-of-you is older? from the more noble family? more beautiful? become increasingly more personal. But Lysis' mouth is closed by the technique employed by Socrates.

Menexenus' answer to the first query on their ages is surprisingly, "*Amphisbetoumen*", -"We dispute about that".

These boys are not twins, but cousins. They surely do not dispute this issue, do they? Did their mothers go into labor the same day and hour? Did Greeks not know how old they were?

I think the cadence or rhythm of the three questions, taken together with Menexenus' answers, reveals a wariness on the part of Menexenus to answer any question, even the most straightforward, without caution. If the answer is both a parrying as well as a confessional description of the way discourse between Lysis and him operates, then we glimpse the closeness of their ages, the equality of their families, the beauty of both of them, and their penchant to banter and dispute matters. That Menexenus responds in this manner shows that he is not afraid to be cryptic even with adults.

Unruffled by the first response, Socrates gamely tries the latter two questions. He receives for his trouble another parry and then laughter from both boys. Their laughter is a dramatic acknowledgment the rhythmic and playful quality of the question-response. Lysis' laughter is not an answer, but rather delight at having heard his cousin deflect the questions while answering truthfully concerning their relationship. However, it is by his laughter that Lysis has won for himself a place in the conversation without having been personally addressed even once.

Socrates notes that laughter carefully; his next non-question, concerning issues of wealth, shifts to a declaration directed to both of them. Grammatically, the dialogue uses the dual form of Greek when Socrates rhetorically asks them: "For you two are friends, are you not?" It is the first use of the dual in the dialogue.



The lesson of Lysis' laughter goes to Hippothales: make him come to you.

Having gained their unanimous agreement that they are friends and that they hold all things in common-be equally rich- through that relationship, if such be true, suspends the necessity of asking about wealth. To this both boys agree.

Socrates is still speaking directly to Menexenus, but he has begun including Lysis without formally addressing him. Lysis' position has risen, but he has not achieved the prominence Menexenus has with Socrates.

Lesson to Hippothales: do not hurry.

### **207d1-5: The third aside: Foiled again**

Contingencies: how we meet them is critical. Socrates' imitation conversation with the boys is underway when the three are suddenly interrupted. Socrates recalls that the wrestling master needed Menexenus and thinks he was called to perform some part of the Hermaea.

This event is important for two reasons. First, Menexenus is responsible enough to be asked to perform a rite. He is not in trouble for anything. Second, we saw how quickly Menexenus dropped out of his game when he saw the two adults conversing. This arranges his priorities a bit for us. That he departs the conversation without complaint orders them again. For all the scholarship attending Menexenus, he has his priorities in a proper order. Fun and games count less than conversation. Conversation counts less than religious duty. That he will return to the conversation after completing whatever task needed tending tends to solidify the arrangement. His priorities are in order. It is his speech that is out of whack. Dramatically, however, we do not know that yet. Despite the cautious feint and parry of Menexenus to the opening questions, Socrates tells his auditor that he had planned to go boldly forward with the which-of-the-

two-of-you questions. We are not privy to how this strategy would have led to humbling and checking Lysis. Socrates only tells us that such was his plan, and that when Menexenus left them, he then directed his (first) address to Lysis.

Socrates must regroup. The indirect inclusion of Lysis has been foiled leaving him no room to continue it. Socrates was only using it as a vehicle to instruct Hippothales and with the departure of Menexenus to continue that line of questioning might invite Lysis to one of three unacceptable places: he could be tempted to hubris, insisting that he was the better half of the *poteros* question; or he could be tempted to false modesty, insisting that his cousin was the better half; or he could fall silent, feeling such questions disloyal or inappropriate in the absence of his friend and cousin. The jig is up. Direct address is unavoidable. We return to the dramatic past...

**207e-210d: One on two with Lysis**

"I suppose, Lysis, that your father and your mother love you very dearly...."

So begins the celebrated "conversation with Lysis", only it isn't. Simultaneously, it is the promised "imitation conversation" served up by Socrates directly to Hippothales in performance of his promise to him. That it is a conversation with Lysis and taken by Lysis to be straight, does not negate the layered nature of Socrates' speech. It is the continuation of the conversation with Hippothales so far as its surrounding, motive, and purpose go. Socrates is speaking "straight" to Hippothales. Lysis knows nothing of the circumstances attending what is happening here. So how is it that Socrates is speaking to Lysis? He is speaking "on the slant".

The "conversation with Lysis" is layered in another way. In its broad contours it strikes three chords each of which spread out like gongs to reach the current agreement and relationship existing between Hippothales and Socrates. 1) Socrates has asked Lysis

why, if his parents love him so much, he is so very restricted and constrained. This ironically marks the fact that Hippothales has been unrestrainedly doing what he "wants" to do, but because he is ignorant of the proper means to use, that very freedom has worked both to his own detriment and to the detriment of his friends. Unbridled freedom in a fool only appears to make such a one happy. Hippothales, after all, is miserable. He has shown that he cannot be trusted in speech; he needs someone to restrain him or at least to try to teach him restraint: Socrates. 2) Socrates leads Lysis to an understanding that such restraints will lift to the farthest reaches of the planet if Lysis should become wise. Being controlled or restrained by others has *nothing to with one's age*; rather, one's lack of experience and wisdom renders one useless in the matters one would engage and builds in the need for a controller. Ironically again, Hippothales' acts do not derive sanction owing to the fact that he is free, over twenty-one, and Greek to boot. Like Lysis, his age has nothing to do with the inefficacious nature of his speeches. He needs to gain understanding: from Socrates. 3) If Lysis were to make himself intelligent, teachers and controllers would not simply vanish. Rather, they would all befriend and honor the now-wise-and-qualified person. Ironically, Hippothales is hearing Socrates tell him that if he learns this lesson, Socrates will trust him, and others, Lysis for example, will flock to and favor him above all others. Just look at how you, Hippothales, have flocked to me for help in this matter. Until you are intelligent, then, nobody is going to love you. Such is the sound of the conversation on Hippothales ears. We have all been the recipients of these coded ironic conversations.

The "conversation with Lysis" as it occurs on the slant to and with Lysis is of a very different timbre of course. By equating being loved with being free to do anything one wants, Socrates "proves" that Lysis, who is certainly not free to do more than that

which he has the proper knowledge and capacity to handle, is not loved. After all, he isn't allowed to drive the mule, fiddle with the loom, touch his mother's combs, skip school, or hitch up the chariots. These restraints are not a matter of his age. He is free to play his harp, choosing any fingering he likes, or to read the household correspondence, in any order he desires, or write letters using his judgment. These freedoms he enjoys owing to his being qualified by his experience.

By playful extension Socrates argues that the day his father sees his intelligence warrants such, he will turn over the household to Lysis; then the neighbors will see it, and do the same with their possessions and valuables; then the city; then the whole world.

Now, Lysis, just how wise are you? "Is it possible to have a high notion of yourself in matters of which you still have no notion?" Admitting that he still needs a teacher in these matters of which he has no notion, necessitates that he can have "no great notion of himself, still being notionless" (This layer goes for Hippothales, too.)

What a crazy kerfuffle for Lysis. To know full well that one is well-born, into family the city admires; to be connected to ancestral greatness; to live in a household wealthy enough to own chariots, mules, slaves and employ paid workers to boot; to be all dressed up in one's finery, wearing a garland, literate, musical and yet be led to admit that one can have no great notion of himself on account of those things is surely a surprise. (204c4, 205c1-d4, 208a7, 208c7, 206e-207a2, 209a9-b8, 207d) Through this conversation Socrates has deftly changed the basis of Lysis' self-estimate from accidents of birth to the achievement of knowledge used for the benefit of others. Socrates himself is the embodiment of such an activity right then.

Mission accomplished. This conversation has wrung the reply Socrates set out to achieve for the benefit of showing Hippothales how to speak to the object of his affection

in a way that prevents vanity and arrogance. It humbles and checks Lysis by suggesting to him this truth: that being loved depends on something more than accidents. It largely depends on the acquisition of intelligence, which would lead him to choose the right means and proper ends for his endeavors. This would make him a boon to those he would have love him.

#### **210e1-5: The Fourth Aside: A Near Blunder**

Socrates tells his auditor that the instant he gained the admission above from Lysis, he "turned [his] eyes on Hippothales," wanting to crow, "This is the way, Hippothales, that you should talk to your favorite, humbling and checking him, instead of puffing and pampering him, as you now do." Conspiratorial success generates glee.

Fortunately, however, he just perceives the agony in poor Hippothales' visage, and remembers in the nick of time that Hippothales does not want Lysis to notice him. Socrates bites his tongue. It was almost the blunder of the day. Menexenus, in the meantime has returned and taken his seat beside Lysis, who has turned to Socrates and in a "boyish and affectionate way, unobserved by Menexenus, whispers..."

#### **211a6- 211d6: The Second Conspiracy and a Covering**

##### **Lie**

"Socrates, say over again to my cousin what you have just said to me..."

In this portion of the dramatic past we find Lysis beseeching Socrates to "say over again" to Menexenus what he has just said to Lysis. There is the distinct feeling that Socrates is making a move to leave. Perhaps he still has time to get to the Lyceum, for he tells Lysis, "Oh, you can tell him yourself, Lysis... You were listening...and if you forget anything, you can ask me later...the next time you see me...." Like Hippothales before him, Lysis must make his request to stay more personal and concrete: " Oh, I will ask

you, yes, but just tell him something else, that I may hear it too, until it is time for me to go home." Socrates understands, now, that Lysis would have a sample upon the same lines delivered to Menexenus. Lysis loves to listen. He wants to learn.

Lysis' request indicates that he knows that the kind of conversation he has just had with Socrates can be performed upon, not merely with, Menexenus. He ought to know. It was just performed upon him. This is the first indication of Lysis' intelligence; it is the trait that is going to snow old Socrates.

Socrates agrees to stay and admits it is because it is Lysis who bids him. Now this is a change of motive. The desire to please Lysis bubbles up for the first time; it is not a part of the former plan to instruct Hippothales. Nevertheless, there it is.

Returning the affectionate playfulness, Socrates bids Lysis to come to his rescue if Menexenus should attempt to refute him, noting that Menexenus is inclined to practice eristics. This is bit of banter recalling Menexenus' previous feint and parry of the which-of-the-two-of-you-questions; Socrates alludes to it to build solidarity over the agreement that has been struck. Lysis has ably demonstrated that he will be no help at all if the chips come down, having just admitted his "notionlessness".

Lysis confides that Ctesippus' eristics is the reason for his request. But such a reply delivers up Lysis' motive in an ambiguous way. Playing the straight man, Socrates asks if Lysis wants to see Socrates make himself "ridiculous" referring to the goal of eristic refutation which is to beat or best an opponent to his shame and humiliation, rather than converse as partners on a similar quest. (Cf, Euthydemus)

Lysis protests vehemently. He assures Socrates that he is not seeking revenge on Socrates for their previous conversation. Rather, he wants Socrates to restrain and punish Menexenus along the same lines as he has with himself. Lysis has discovered in his

conversation with Socrates a dimension of performative speech, the illocutionary force of which might curb the eristic tendencies in his cousin. He asks Socrates to "say over again", but he means for Socrates to "do it to" Menexenus.

Socrates feigns concern over this undertaking. After all, he says, Menexenus is a student of the eristic, impatient Ctesippus, who is present, and who Socrates pretends is a formidable (*deinos*) opponent. Socrates can't very well say to Lysis, "Oh, never mind of Ctesippus; after all, he and I are here together teaching Hippothales a little lesson about how to talk to you."

The point of feigning here is the solicitation of encouragement from Lysis in order to build unity of purpose. "Look at the risks I would undergo on your request. Your briefest urging would build my confidence." These sentiments hover around Socrates' remarks. Duly noting the psychology of his by-play and wanting the solidarity issue to clear between them, Lysis urges Socrates forward. Such is another mark of the intuitive nature of the boy. The nuances of such an exchange with its balance and rhythm often occurs between friends; its harmonies tend to unify anticipations and hopes. Lysis exhorts Socrates to "pay no attention" to Ctesippus, or anyone else, but "to begin, converse with him."

This conspiracy is an echo of the earlier conspiracy in two ways. First, Socrates is beseeched in both. Second, its purpose is to re-channel the speech of Menexenus into a field more productive and protective of friendship. Just as Hippothales' speech spills over its banks in a flood, drowning the captive audience, Ctesippus' derisive and hostile speech, which he has been teaching to Menexenus, will suck the sap of the friendship shoot bone dry.

Who has not had a friend like Ctesippus? the person who would rather score points than share unguardedly his beliefs. Frippery can be entertaining, of course. But really: is that all there is? It is wearying to scrutinize every sentence and logic-chop every idea to declare a winner. Eventually, we grow as fed up with it as Ctesippus has grown of Hippothales' poems. We spot the fellow a mile away and turn the corner in haste to avoid him. The prospect of exploring life's wonders, of gaining the rare friendship with such a one is "a difficult road". Should young Menexenus grow this trait into habit and regimen, what then for Lysis and him? Socrates would re[s]train the eristic speech just as he would the mooning lovesong to preserve the souls and the soil of friendship.

The twin conspiracies underscore an Aristotelean insistence that we are the most "imitative creatures" in the world; we learn the conditions for speaking well by hearing others speak well. The dramatic point is the same. One learns to speak well by training and education. We learn to humble and check not by being humbled and checked, but rather, by listening to samples or imitations of it. (Cf., Euthydemus; especially note Ctesippus. He is not the target. Clinias is. It is Ctesippus, though, who learns the eristic tactics.) Wittgenstein makes a similar point when he says we show a student how to calculate by doing calculations which he then imitates. (Cf., On Certainty)

It will be Lysis' first lesson in the art of humbling and checking and Hippothales' second. Of course, Hippothales is not privy to this plot; thus, Socrates is constrained by his earlier conspiracy with him, and must keep it along the same lines lest Hippothales misread it.

Bolotin alleges that Lysis' conspiracy with Socrates contains "the seed of betrayal. Though Lysis may well be innocent in the sense of not knowing what he is doing, he is



evidently not free from injustice." (Bolotin, David. Plato's Dialogue on Friendship. Cornell Univ. P. Ithaca, N. Y. 1979. p.106) I disagree with this assessment for two reasons. First, it takes the *feelings* of Menexenus as the paramount arbiter of whether he has been betrayed. That is the way we settle questions of betrayal today. But that is not to settle the question of whether Greeks saw it this way, and in particular whether Socrates and Lysis have a defense to such a charge. Such judgments preempt dramatic and philosophic questions concerning betrayal.

Aristotle would not count this an instance of "betrayal" unless the friend has done something unjust. Bolotin assumes this of Lysis. But if Menexenus' speech needs correction, then it would be unjust for a friend not to attempt it. Does Menexenus merit this punishment? If so, Lysis' attempt to secure it is not unjust in either seed, stalk or leaf. "The friendship of decent people is decent, and increases the more often they meet. And they seem to become still better from their activities and *mutual correction*. For each moulds the other..." by such corrections as noble people conceive to be proper for noble people. (EN 1772a10-15, my emphasis) That Menexenus' speech needs correction is more important to justice and the preservation of friendship than his hurt feelings. The acquisition of virtue concerns educating one's feelings and emotions. That Lysis is Menexenus' best friend gives him concern about this eristic tendency. Noble people try to improve their friends and expect the same improvement from them.

At this point in their whispering, their planning is interrupted by none other than nosy Ctesippus, who, seeing them whispering, suspiciously objects. "What is that you two are whispering over without giving us a share?" Socrates can not very well say, "Oh, we are plotting to humble and check ol' Menexenus here." So: he lies. When

Socrates lies, we should sound the alarm. It is a masterful, glorious, fulgurant lie of the first plumage.

We must remember the dramatic memory of Menexenus. When he left the earlier conversation in order to perform the Hermaea rites, he abandoned his position of prominence in the conversation. For all he knows the which-of-the-two-of-you questions continued in his absence. There are only three possible outcomes of such questions: 1) Menexenus is better, 2) Lysis is better, or 3) it is indeterminate; they don't know; it is disputed; they are tied.

Given his eristic training to view and use speech as "win or lose", for all Menexenus knows he has been designated the "loser" in these questions. (Everyone knows this feeling having abandoned and later returned to a group conversation, not knowing how it went for them.)

To quiet that apprehension Socrates lies. He strips Menexenus of it by saying that Lysis has confessed that "he does not understand something, but believes Menexenus to understand it." This frame prevents Menexenus from forming the idea that he is competing with Lysis. There is no rivalry between them shadowing the upcoming conversation. Socrates has drained it away by this singularly efficacious lie.

More: through the lie Menexenus has already "won" by default on whatever issue is coming to him for his erudite view. Lysis has confessed his confusion. Thus, Menexenus has won whatever contest between him and Lysis on "that" that might have arisen, whatever "that" happens to be. Lysis has entrusted the whole matter to Menexenus. If Menexenus "loses", that won't help Lysis. Lysis has defaulted.

Finally, the lie casts Menexenus as helper or at least as consultant with respect to his cousin's alleged confusion. He, Menexenus, is thought to possess the remedy to

Lysis' confusion. Lysis is trusting Menexenus to clear up his confusion. Such would make Menexenus a benefactor to Lysis. Or so it is made to appear by this lie. This lie, then, effectively moves Lysis out of the role as contestant. It banishes any leftover taste from the initial exchange with Socrates concerning the "which-of-the-two-of-you" questions.

The motive for Lysis' asking that Socrates converse with Menexenus is to stem the rivalry and the enjoyment of eristics by his cousin. Rivals win or lose. Given what we know of his shyness and modesty and the notonlessness he has just confessed, Lysis probably emerges bruised from such encounters. But it won't help him one whit if Socrates simply bruises Menexenus in turn. Pecking orders being what they are, defeated Menexenus would simply try to become more competent; he would likely practice on Lysis.

If Socrates could reform Menexenus' speech by showing him its aridity as a method, perhaps Menexenus would pick words less as decoys and mines and more as flowers. But he won't do that unless he learns the impropriety and vapidness of eristic conversations. Merely feeling the other end of the eristic club will not reform Menexenus' speech. It is this correction Socrates needs must administer to Lysis' cousin.

Once again, in defense of speech and to protect friendship opportunities, Socrates defers his intentions and employs the guile of conspiracy to achieve his purposes. Although Menexenus is as far on the other end of the spectrum of speech-acts from Hippothales as he can be, Socrates would humble and check Menexenus in order to teach him the Golden Mean of speaking well. Such is the same aim he had with Hippothales.

The motive this time is to please Lysis.

**211d7-213d2: The second pretense: the elenchus of  
Menexenus and the blunder of Lysis**

Having dodged the bullet shot by Ctesippus, Socrates turns quickly to Menexenus saying, "Now please answer, Menexenus, whatever question I may ask you. There is a possession I have desired (*epithumia*) since childhood... I long passionately for friends, and would rather have a good friend than the best quail, or dog, or cock, or all the gold of Darius...."

Socrates admires and congratulates Menexenus on having gained at such a young age the possession of Lysis' friendship and Lysis the possession of Menexenus' friendship. This congratulatory praise reinforces the lack of competition Socrates tried to establish by his covering lie above. The praise is on them both. They are both already winners. Socrates laments that he is without such a friend. He asks Menexenus "in what way one person becomes a friend of another, ...in view of your experience."

Some interpreters take the reference to Menexenus' "experience" as spoof and irony by protesting that he is too young to have any experience of friendship compared to old Socrates. They judge Socrates either to be cynical about friendship or to have a wagon load of friends. I disagree. Socrates does "long for friends." That is what drives him through the streets of Athens day after day. He is in search of the rare dialectical partner described by Aristotle as the rare friend: lovable, virtuous, and good. He is in search of "another myself" in Aristotle's idiom.

Scholarly ridicule of the friendship of Lysis and Menexenus is disappointing. Are they too young to have had the experience of friendship? Socrates says he has longed for friends since childhood. Is it not in childhood that such longing appears? How old does one have to be? I would say from my own experience and recollection: kindergarten.

But even that is late. "The development of a social circle may begin far earlier than ever suspected. According to a university researcher in Columbus, Ohio, friendships may form between children as young as 2. ... To determine whether friendships were forming, researchers looked for such behavior as copying each others' (sic) actions, separating themselves from the group and helping each other.[ These three emblems are either implicit or explicit in the Lysis.] ...The researchers found four friendships in the group [of ten toddlers] that were exemplified by very clear-cut behavior. The friends would consistently play certain games with each other and supported each other and shared with each other. ... When one girl stopped coming to day care every day, her friend...suffering from the separation, played alone...and roamed around the room hitting others." (The Nashville Tennessean, quoting Robin Fulton Manly of the *Los Angeles Times Syndicate* , "Friendships Form Early", Section F, Sunday Edition, August 20, 1995.)

Do old people or young have the advantage when it comes to the experience of friendship? Compare the inhabitants of the playground/palaestra to those in the office/temple of the Archon. I would say the former have the advantage. Aristotle agrees with me. He thinks old people have surrendered the search for pleasure and rare friendships in favor of pursuing advantage through the harshest kind of utility friendships; Aristotle lodges the pleasure friendship in youth. (EN 1157b14; 1158a3; 1156a35-1156b1-5)

The best reason to deny the above disparagement of the friendship, however, is the conversation Socrates held with Lysis. We know that some learning takes a long time and that with time comes age. But Socrates has just moments ago *denied* with Lysis that age that confers wisdom. It is ironic that Lysis can be brought to see that it isn't a question of age, but rather experience and learning that seasons the soul, while the

interpreters of the Lysis who have just read that conversation nevertheless fling that very conclusion against Menexenus.

Chronological age is just the passage of time. Experience authorizes. Becoming qualified to act or speak on a matter may arrive at any age, but age without the relevant experience will not qualify or season anyone. Wisdom depends upon these qualifying experiences and the intelligence to gather up their meanings. Think of the gift God has given Socrates in the matter of who is in love. This prescience may have descended upon and seared the soul of Socrates at age nine. Similarly, Menexenus' experience of friendship with Lysis has been familiarly connecting them since their births. Such an enduringly long experience authorizes and qualifies him to speak on the subject. The question is: how will he speak of it?

Socrates' remarks establish a premise: that Menexenus is qualified to speak. The question then becomes whether he will speak well or poorly- cooperatively or combatively, once qualified. The elenchus of Menexenus is meant to show that speaking poorly when one is qualified is improper. In a like manner, Hippothales' love qualifies him to speak, too. The issue is how he will speak, not his authority to do so.

We expect someone without the relevant experience to fumble, mumble, and lose his way. Of one with the appropriate experience we expect more. But adopting the eristic strategy will render vain the efforts of even one qualified by his experience to speak. This lesson will not work unless we take Menexenus as having been qualified to speak on account of his friendship with Lysis to the issue of friendship. Only then will Socrates be able to show that employing ultra-sane methodology, ever-cautious and untrusting, is self-defeating. In the same way one who is unqualified to speak loses his way, one qualified to speak loses his if he employs eristic methods.

Socrates imitates the eristic. He sets up a question, lists the possible answers in turn, enlisting Menexenus' agreement each time, and then examines them each for flaws. In this way each proposal is treated as a winner-take-all proposition; finding any counterexample, be it laced with ambiguity or not, boots it from further consideration. Eristics exploit ambiguity to win. They do not care enough for truth.

Together Socrates and Menexenus consider that either the lover, the loved, or both together are 'friend'. Counterexample and ambiguities in their native language successfully defeat each proposal. They do not explore the subtleties of overlapping meaning or nuance. Their course is rapid and conclusive. "What then are we to make of it if neither the loving are to be friends, nor the loved, nor both the loving and loved together?" he asks Menexenus, having traversed all the available options without regard to their ambiguity. Menexenus admits he is without further means to explore the question. His own means of speaking, imparted by his teacher Ctesippus, proves sterile.

Socrates does not move to disqualify Menexenus. He does not call into question his experience of friendship. He does not say, "Well, this must prove you and Lysis are not friends and that you were lacking the proper condition to say something germane to begin with." What Socrates tenderly asks is whether, although qualified, they have employed an improper method, steering their course in an incorrect way. Eristic methods do not deliver up truth, but defeats. This may be the occasion for laughter, as it is in the Euthydemus, but it amounts to leveling; the unqualified and qualified alike are stripped of a means to say.

Menexenus and Lysis are Aristotle's pleasure friends. They have all the experience required to speak to this issue they may ever have; tomorrow, ill-fortune or accident may deprive them of it much as Priam was deprived. These declarations and

compliments were sincere, at least as far as they could be, for Socrates was in the middle of a pretense searching out the way to correct Menexenus' eristic speech.

At the confessional moment of Menexenus, the conversation undergoes a peripety. Lysis actually makes the very same blunder that Socrates barely avoided when his conspiracy with Hippothales came to its successful conclusion. At the question of the impropriety of their means, young Lysis blurts out, "I am sure I think it is, Socrates."

This gleeful interruption echoes the subterranean impulses of Socrates himself. He, too, felt the flush of success in his conspiracy with Hippothales; he, too, wanted to express his satisfaction. We have seen Lysis' fondness for listening, his natural modesty, and his affection for friends. He is eager to learn and would correct the antics of those who would disrupt friendship by eristics. He is starting to resemble somebody: Socrates.

This blunder by Lysis marks the climax of the first half of the dialogue and ushers in the frame for the second half. Lysis' outburst and the fifth aside occur almost at the dead center of the poem. Some scholars have noted that Plato often uses the center as the dramatic turning point and philosophical peripety of his works. (John Sallis, in his lectures on Plato, Vanderbilt University, fall, 1993) On my reading of Lysis, such is the case here.

David Bolotin's interpretation of this conversation is worth repeating. He rightly attributes Lysis' blush to shame, but for misplaced reasons. "For that remark, in addition to being a little unmannerly, reveals what could seem to be unbecoming seriousness over a mere quibble. It is not clear precisely what is responsible for Lysis' serious involvement in with the argument. Perhaps, in consequence of his earlier humbling, he feels compelled to prove that he is not utterly foolish." (Bolotin, David. Plato's Dialogue on Friendship, Cornell Univ. Press. Ithaca, N.Y. 1979. p., 121-122)



If my reading of the conspiracy with Lysis and my understanding of the conversation with Menexenus are tenable, then it is not a "mere quibble" that engages Lysis. Socrates' goal from the outset was to corner Menexenus into befuddlement and inconsistency. No one in the dramatic past knew that except Lysis, of course; the twisting and turning between "lover and loved" must have appeared quite "ridiculous" to the onlookers. It didn't get anywhere as far as they could see. A mere quibble, it was.

Nevertheless, the conversation arrived at precisely the place Socrates and Lysis intended. Menexenus has been forced to admit that he can't find a way through the problems. Lysis is watching this exchange with rising anticipation and cannot contain himself when the plan succeeds. It is the conspiratorial and shared success prompting Lysis' blushing, not exactly "shame" of the kind Bolotin describes. Menexenus is checked. Lysis is pleased. Mission accomplished.

### **Summary of the first half:**

Before turning straight to the fifth aside, a reprise may be helpful: Socrates enacts the Aristotelian friendship of utility, of benefit, in his efforts to correct the speech of Hippothales and Menexenus. The correction is important if friendship is to flower and grow. Too much speech is an excess; too spartan, a deficiency. He improves the character of both Lysis and Menexenus through his conversations with them. Any feelings of vanity have been bled away from Lysis. Menexenus has apprehended that the winner-take-all method of discourse leads to confusion and sterility. Socrates has now instructed Hippothales twice on the proper speech. In the first half of the poem we discover that *eros* and *philia* are dependent upon right speaking as much as they are on

other contingencies. But right speaking is not innate. It must be taught by imitations from which we gather up the meanings of things.

### **The Second Half: an overview**

In the second half of the dialogue there will occur again four asides that I treat as the natural points around which the action revolves. Unlike the first half, however, the second shows that conversation sows the pleasure friendship. Like a weed unplanned it grows from the conspiracies of the first half. The emergence of pleasure is owing to Socrates' increasing fondness for the intelligence of Lysis. Any remaining thought of the Lyceum vanishes. Socrates finds himself "charmed" by Lysis. The old fox, who thought he could simply be useful, finds new shoots and roots of friendship growing in him. This was not his intention; it has rather supervened upon the actions he undertook in order to be of use and benefit to others. He had already called each of them, Hippothales, Lysis, and Menexenus, "friend" in the course of their conspiracies and plotted conversations. Now he finds additional motives beyond those of being useful prompting him to remain at the palaestra.

Socrates has offered his correctives to defective speech, but he has not yet offered a sample of the right speech at the right time for the right ends with the right people under the aegis of pleasure. The end is friendship, the time is now, and the right speech is an honestly undertaken inquiry or dialectical search for the sources or grounds of his budding friendships with these two boys. We realize that his relationship with Hippothales is the symbol of the useful friendship. We do not know, as yet, the grounds of the other budding friendships. The imitation will reveal them in the course of the

second half as the trio trots out for examination the various common opinions in answer to the question " Who are friends?"

The second half displays the pleasure and energy of conversation and speaking well without an ulterior motive or conspiratorial background to correct the speech of another. Socrates has developed a stake of his own in their continued conversation. His desire to remain in their company, to continue their conversations, is due the pleasure he feels in their company.

The proposals under consideration in the second half divide into three main branches. Socrates takes his bearings from the common opinion and their authorities: from poets, mythologues, and Athenian oral tradition of proverbs. The poets advance the thesis that "like-like" is the basis of friendship. The mythologues advance "opposites attract". The last account offers a proverb, "The beautiful is the friend", which itself breaks into three twigs, the beautiful, the wise and the kin are the friend..

The three proposals match and coordinate in turn the basis for the emerging friendships in the speakers who investigate them. Their personal dramatic relationships parallel their individual dynamics. Thus, as Lysis and Socrates investigate Like-like, so Like-like is the explanation for Socrates' friendship with Lysis. Next, Socrates and Menexenus excavate the opinion that Opposites attract. Opposites-attract furnishes the basis of Socrates' friendship with Menexenus. The-beautiful-is-the-friend shows, complete with sexual images of the youths, how the two boys become the friend of old ugly Socrates. (Cf. Theaetetus at 143e-144) The wise-in-ignorance explains Socrates' friendship for the two boys collectively. Finally, the-kin-as-friend furnishes the ground of the boys' friendship for each other.

Even so, at the conclusion of their examination of each of the common authorities, the three find they are no closer to saying the ground of friendship because they have not discovered the friend that is not for the sake of something (else/friend) on account of itself.

Steps to say what they have in mind here are tentative and wary. Outside the common authorities and opinions, they are approaching having to say what has not been, and possibly cannot be, said. They are in a position to say, having discovered the flaws in their former proposals, and having channeled their speeches correctly, i.e., not too much and not too little, -but their saying may violate barring rules adopted previously. Socrates puts a choice to the boys as to what they might say of friendship that is not on account of something for the sake of something else. When the boys make their election, they find they have offended by homonym their previous rules.

Now they are back to square one so far as their logic goes. Socrates is unable to speak. He recounts the avenues, their ruts and potholes, exclaiming upon their multitude. He thinks of deputizing "someone older" to speak in his place, when the pedagogues appear to take the boys home. The afternoon has slipped away.

#### **The fifth aside: 213d4-e Socrates charmed**

Socrates tells his auditor that no sooner had he interrupted them, Lysis blushed. His outburst was not intentional, but had rather gushed like a geyser from him; he had attended intensely their conversation, his interest written all over his face throughout. "And so, wishing to give Menexenus a rest, and charmed by the other's love of wisdom (*philosophia*), I turned to Lysis and began to make my speeches *with a view to him*."

There are four issues of importance here. First, Lysis' blushing indicates the presence of shame. He has joyously interrupted his co-conspirator *in medias res* giving no thought beyond the pleasure he feels at the confession and illumination of Menexenus. Youth is often led by its feelings as Aristotle notes. Shame indicates the apprehension that such is beneath them. Hippothales' shame is similar. Such youth is educable.

But what Lysis has felt is very like the feeling Socrates had upon the conclusion of his imitation for Hippothales. Socrates is older and more practiced in restraining his feelings, and yet he, too, almost fell out of bed. That event is not re-recounted for the auditor, but we need only consider whether Socrates could have forgotten that he, just moments before, had been in a similar state to that of Lysis. Surely not. The resemblance has to have stuck him forcefully.

Second, Socrates had noted throughout the *elenchus* of Menexenus, Lysis' rapt attention. Coincident with loving to listen is the intelligence to appreciate the desired results of their plan. But it is the joy Lysis displays in his unwilling outburst that indicates his emerging love of the activity and purposes of philosophy. Those purposes include increasing the pleasure and benefit of others.

Unless the emotions be properly informing the intelligence, the activity is not "love" of wisdom, not *philia-sophia*, not philosophy at all. "According to Aristotle, the growth of *philia* keeps pace with the growth of *phronesis*. The lowest animals care for their young at least at the time of birth, and the higher we rise in the scale of animal *phronesis* (cf. 1140a 27n) the wider and more permanent does *philia* become, till at last in man it appears as the feeling of union with his kind upon which the family, the state, and all other human associations rest. cf. Gen. An. 753..." (Burnett, p. 344)." (Bashor, Philip. "Plato and Aristotle in Friendship". Journal of Value Inquiry. vol. 2, 269-280, Wint. 68,

n.6, p. 275) That the emotions and intelligence blend together to make both the character of the philosopher as well as the activity of philosophy is enacted by Lysis' rapt and attentive listening as well as at the moment of his outburst. Socrates, because he is similarly constituted, responds organically, body and soul. He is "charmed" by Lysis.

Third, it is this condition of having been charmed that fuels the rest of the afternoon's conversations. The lover of wisdom, Socrates, turns to the other and addresses his speeches with him in mind. Philosophy, then, is shown to be a highly personal and emotional activity. The plots and conspiracies connected to useful friendships vanish. The pleasure of the youths' company and the love of wisdom is the fuel generating their speeches and searches from now on. Socrates is drawn to the boys and crafts the speeches with the other in mind. The dramatic points of the aside underscore a philosophic contention. "It is, in fact, *philia* and *philia* alone that can bridge the gulf between *phronesis* and *sophia*, the practical and the theoretic life." (Burnett, as qtd. by Bashor, *ibid.*, p. 274, n. 5)

Fourth, Socrates does not divulge any change in himself to the two boys, and especially not to Lysis. He cannot very well say, "OOOhhh, LYsis, I am so charmed by you." Such a gratuitous admission would have offended the very sound advice he had gone to the trouble to display to Hippothales. He keeps his speech in the Golden Mean; he practices what he preaches. The lover of wisdom knows how to love and be loved in speech: do philosophy with one not unlike yourself.

This aside is most important for understanding the relationship among *eros*, *philia*, and *sophia*. It rebukes much of the philosophic tradition by urging a more personal and emotionally saturated activity than the discipline countenances. We are allegedly at our best when we are cool, impersonal, detached, and cerebral. We are

thought to be at our worst if we are personal; if we shape our speech with someone we love in mind; if we are sensitive to emotional cues in our dialectical partners. This aside calls into question our current ideas of who counts as a genuine philosopher and who counts as a future philosopher. It suggests an interdependence wrought in the both of them through feelings and emotions. Being charmed is a knot tying the endeavors of philosophical inquiry to the soul.

Against the explicit remembrance by Socrates, David Bolotin suggests that Lysis' outburst is intentional; that it is an attempt by Lysis to redeem lost face with Socrates. This reading is directly contradicted by Socrates' recollection that Lysis' remark burst from him unwillingly, and that the remark charmed or struck him as evincing a taste for philosophy.(213d5) Bolotin drives an unwarranted separation between Socrates and Lysis saying, "What shames the young gentlemen is a source of pleasure to the philosopher." (Bolotin, Plato's Dialogue on Friendship, 122) It is the character of educability and understanding underlying Lysis' blush that Socrates regards as important and admirable. Bolotin seems to think that the philosopher enjoys Lysis' shame for more sadistic reasons. But it is not the apprehension of discomfort that gives Socrates pleasure; rather, it is the recognition that Lysis is not unlike himself emotionally and intellectually that gives him pleasure.

Similarly, David Glidden, misses the point of Lysis' blushing at his own outburst. Glidden remembers and recounts the conspiratorial background, but then suggests, "Lysis too is unable to solve the puzzle and blushes with embarrassment." But Lysis is not hoping that the puzzle will be solved by Menexenus. He is hoping just the opposite will occur, and blushes at his outburst, when it does.

( Glidden, "Language of Love", Pacific Philosophical Quarterly vol. 61 (1980) p. 277) I hope that my reading furnishes a more plausible relation between his outburst and his blushing. It makes for consistency in Socrates' desire to furnish a safer harbor for friendship and love by engaging proper speech.

### **213e- 218c: Examination of The Three Authorities**

'Yes, Lysis, you are quite right, I think, in saying that if we had conducted our search properly, we should never have lost ourselves in this manner. Let us proceed, however, on this line of inquiry no longer- for I look upon it as a very difficult sort of road- but let us go back again to that point at which we turned aside, and follow in the steps of the poets. For poets, I conceive are as good as fathers and guides to us in matter of wisdom.'" (213d8-2142) In this way Socrates introduces the orientation from which the trio will conduct their investigate friendship.

The three pathways are interesting for three reasons. The first is structural. Socrates talks first one-on-one with Lysis, then Menexenus, then to the two of them jointly and together. This structure portrays an egalitarian sharing of thoughts among the three, a dynamic recommended if one would make friends.

The second reason to look carefully at the proposals as they emerge concerns both the content of the several proposals and the person to whom each one is directed. Each proposal originates in the common understanding of friendship; each draws respect from different sources within Athenian life and tradition.

The procedure of starting with the common opinion coincides with Aristotle's injunctions to begin with the common wisdom and follow it out before trying solo flights over unfamiliar terrain. "Here, as in all other cases, we must set down the appearances



(*phainomena*), and first working through the puzzles (*diaporesantas*), in this way go on to show, if possible, the truth of all the beliefs we hold (*ta endoxa*) about these experiences; and if this is not possible, the truth of the greatest number and the most authoritative. For if the difficulties are resolved and the beliefs (*endoxa*) are left in place, we will have done enough showing. (1145b1ff)" (Aristotle, as qtd. by Nussbaum, Fragility of Goodness, 240) Similarly, at Metaphysics 995a27-b4, Aristotle gives the following procedural advice:

For those who wish to have a clear path (*euportsai*) it is useful to raise the difficulties well, for the later clear path is the solution of the earlier difficulties, and it is impossible to untie an unfamiliar knot...So one ought to have gone through all the difficulties beforehand...because those who seek without first going through the difficulties are like those who do not know where they must go...furthermore, the one who has heard all the contending arguments, as if they were litigant, must be a better judge.

The Lysis is a good example of the sort of procedure Aristotle has in mind here. In fact, Nichomachean Ethics investigates two of the three theses, like-like and opposites-attract, just as Plato does in the Lysis. "Aristotle does rely on the Lysis." (Adams, Don, "The Lysis Puzzles", History of Philosophy Quarterly, Vol. 9. No, 1, Jan. 1992. p. 4)

Poets, mythologues, one step removed from Hesiod, and a common proverb shape the efforts of the three who are now in search of what friendship is. The three proposals echo three separate voices of authority. The first derives from the poets; Homers' Odyssey depicts Melanthius' barking "...and a precious pair you are. See how heaven brings birds of a feather to one another." (Homer, The Odyssey, ch. 17, line 218, trans. Samuel Butler, Van Nostrand Co., N. Y., 1944, p. 214) From ancient mythologues and

metaphysicians, dramatically placed one step from Hesiod, the thesis that "opposites attract" arises; and from the common oral tradition of Athens "The beautiful is the friend" comes forward. The boys are familiar with each one of these proverbs. [Author's note: Robert Hoerber's essay and notes directly assay these contentions by the Greek atomists, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras. He notes the many instances of the first sentiment in Plato's other works, their treatment by Heraclitus, and the reliance of Athenian medical arts upon the opposite's attract thesis. (Cf. , Hoerber, "Plato's Lysis", p. 22 and notes 1-3)]

More than recommending the way to make a beginning in one's inquiries, it is the handling of each of the proposals that creates the dramatic fact that the first two are directed carefully by Socrates to the two boys in turn, and that the third appears to be directed to them jointly. Does this matter, and if it does, how?

Recall that Socrates directs the first inquiry to Lysis, asking that they "go back again to that point at which we turned aside, and follow in the steps of the poets. For poets, I conceive, are as good as fathers and guides to us in matters of wisdom" (213e-214a)

The poet's explanation for who are friends is that God draws "like to like." The aporetic problems quickly emerge that enemies are "like" but cannot be friends, and the "wicked", although alike wicked, are not even like themselves, so characteristically unstable they are. In speech "Like-like" is a failure.

But if we consider the dramatic situation we discover other kinds of successes than those of finding a definition. Like to like is the theory under consideration. Why?

If we stop to consider the character trait that has emerged of Lysis that is most *like* Socrates, we will find that it is his intelligence, eagerness to listen and learn, and his love of philosophy. There is doubling in the dialogue that emphasizes their similarities.

Socrates and Lysis each forget themselves, exulting in accomplishing certain plans and aims. It is both in the planning and in the recognition that one's plans have succeeded that intelligence is required. Fools rarely plan, and when they do plan, those plans often run aground before completion. Thus, Lysis' outburst is the shadow of Socrates' own near-blunder. This doubling between the Lysis and Socrates is not an accident. I shall have occasion to note another instance of it below.

It is his intelligence, his interest in love and speech, that has made Socrates useful to both Hippothales and to Lysis that afternoon. If Lysis, too, is intelligent, his interest in friendship and proper speech may sow the seeds of their friendship. Lysis knows that his cousin needs a correction of speech just as Socrates knew it of Hippothales. He is not skilled in the method of humbling and checking but like Hippothales would learn by watching.

That being alike (or opposite or kin or beautiful) may furnish the ground of friendship, yet still be problematic logically is the conundrum buried in each of the three proposals. The dramatic point may be this: friendships do not arise from logic, nor depend upon definitions. The Like-like inquiry has the notable feature that Socrates addresses Lysis as "my friend" in this portion of the search for who is a friend. (214d4) He has already so addressed Menexenus at 213 d2-4 saying, "And yet, my dear friend, it is quite incomprehensible-indeed, I think it is even impossible- to be enemy (*echthros*) to one's *philos* and *philos* to one's enemy." [ Author's note: I am not claiming the trio are made-friends yet. Friend "making" takes time. Plato is illustrating the way useful and pleasureable activities bubble up from exposure to the Socratic virtue Aristotle calls "loving.", which is the virtue of friendship. This is a first meeting; first meetings are both essential and crucial to any emerging friendship. The use of "friend" by Socrates is as

much an invitation as a description of his feelings for the boys. Similarly, when students are admitted to medical school, their professors begin calling them "doctor" from day one. We, onlookers, can dispute that designation, of course. They aren't "doctors" after all. They only just sat down at their desks. But existentially speaking, the doctors who teach their classes are admitting them to a rank, inviting them to live up to that honorific, and trusting that their work and their lives will prove the honorific was not misplaced. If all your professors begin calling you "doctor" and if Socrates is calling you "friend", the title is yours to keep and foster, or lose by your future choices and actions. I think that is part of the reason Socrates calls them each "friend."]

When he addresses Menexenus, on the other hand, Socrates purveys the time-honored maxim "Opposites Attract" as an explanation of who are friends. This, he tells them both, "flashed across his mind." (215c7) He remembers that he heard it from one who "adduced the authority of Hesiod", the mythologue of Theogony and Works and Days. (21510-11)

Socrates describes the various examples his informant set forth "with increased magnificence of position" and asks the two, "But you, my friends, what do you think of it?" (216a2) Menexenus unfortunately replies in his typically cryptic and noncommittal way. "Oh, it seems very fair at first hearing." (216a2) Their conversation rapidly unfolds the problems with the view.

Like the aforementioned Like-like thesis, true in its way of Lysis and Socrates, the Opposites Attract thesis under investigation by Socrates and Menexenus seems to present an image of them. Menexenus is quick with his guarded reply and his verbal jousting. He is quite a different fellow from Socrates who is trying to bind up the wounds of love in Hippothales and please Lysis for no better reason than "It is you who bid me." { author's

note: This is not to say that the dramatic Socrates is not able to joust. He may joust in other dialogues. Here, however, we know his motives to be other than jousting.]

Menexenus has had the benefit of having heard Lysis' inquiry into like-like founder. He has the seeming advantage of a process of elimination here. He asserts the doctrine "very fair at first hearing" and then admits to it "by all means." (216a2-3) Pressed by Socrates, it collapses. But that will not undo it as a plausible explanation of the chemistry between Menexenus and Socrates.

In the third and most complex foray Socrates invites both boys to "look again and see whether we be not still as far as ever from finding friendship." ( 2126c) This belies the existential as well as the dramatic fact that they have already "found" the tentative grounds for two of their relationships. The third attempt to find an explanation of who are friends dusts off an old proverb with which the boys are familiar: "The beautiful is friend." (*to kalon philon einai*) (216c9)

The source for this contention is oral tradition; Socrates' inclusion of both boys in the examination of it is his concession to their youthful beauty. The odd person out here is Socrates. He is old; even in his youth he wasn't much to look at if we take scattered descriptions across the dialogues as authority. The force of the traditional proverb acquires dramatic significance if the two beauties are friends of an old ugly. For Socrates is in the process of making friends of the two beautiful youths.

The conversation is triadic and ambiguous. This is another indication of the dramatic and poetic hints governing the budding friendships. Unlike earlier conversations, where we follow the speakers with ease, suddenly Socrates does not refer directly to either boy by name, but recalls only "he replied" or reports an unidentified agreement directly. At (217a4) Socrates reaffirms that he has been speaking to both

jointly, for he asks them, "What think you then, my children?" But he does not note which boy has answered. As beautiful friends to him, they are indistinguishable.

The conversation continues ambiguously as to which boy replies until 218 b6 where Socrates notes that they both reply and he, in turn, addresses them both by name, saying, "' Therefore now', I said, 'Lysis and Menexenus,...'", after which both boys reply again. (218c4)

The ambiguity of the respondent is an intentional poetic device. It saturates this part of the inquiry. If translators try to clear it away, they are thinking to improve a philosopher's clarity, rather than allow a poet's dramatic point to surface. If the proposal under consideration, however ambiguously cast as to the respondent, matches a relationship within the dialogue, then we can plausibly conclude that these boys are both friends to old ugly Socrates owing to their beauty. The need to distinguish them insofar as the proposal " The Beautiful is Friend" is unnecessary. We learned in the first exchange when Menexenus replies to Socrates' "which-of-the-two-of-you" is more beautiful that it is a disputed point between them. We know how gorgeous Lysis is. They are both beautiful.

It is the indefinite "we" all through this portion of the inquiry because carving out the definite is unnecessary on the proverb they are exploring. "The beautiful is friend" explains the boys' friendship to Socrates without his having to mark a distinction.

Finally there is Socrates' homoerotic and phallic allusion, within the context of the Beautiful as Friend, as something "soft and smooth and slippery"; something that "slides and slips through our fingers so easily." (216d) Greek boys, if I am remembering correctly, were portrayed in erotic relations with older suitors, in semi-flaccid, not fully erect states. That state is either a pre- or post-coital condition; post-coital activity would

certainly give rise to a penis' being "soft and smooth and slippery" and something that slides and slips through the fingers. That both boys are beautiful and erotically alluring is Socrates' point. Even an old man praises the erotic attractiveness saturating the beauty of youth.

In the later shift to "kinship" as the ground for friendship, the allusion is to the familial ties between Menexenus and Lysis. The boys are cousins, admittedly friends, and the proposal wrings agreement from both of them, twice. (221e 9-12) Of course like the proposals before it, it fails them logically speaking when they try to avoid violating the rules against "like- like" at 222c-222d5.

But what can explain the shift to speaking of the wise and the good as friend? If my reading of this proposal is correct, it has to account for Socrates' friendship to the boys taken collectively. For we can account for the two boys' friendship for Socrates as resting on their beauty, and their friendship for each other as resting upon natural kinship and familial connection. But we have not yet accounted for Socrates' friendship for them, taken together. His attraction for Lysis is Like-like, while his particular affection for Menexenus is Opposites Attract. How can we account for his budding friendship to the two boys taken together?

Socrates is one who, being neither beautiful nor kin, is friend to them nevertheless on account of his wisdom. At 217e-218b1 a description of Socrates himself occurs. Who else could it be? He is one who has the evil of foolishness, but who is "not, as yet, in consequence of it, foolish or ignorant," but still understands "that he does not know the things he does not know." The paradigmatic Socratic wisdom is bound foot and claw to knowing what one does not know. Socrates sums this condition in and of himself when he says, "And thus, you see, it is those who are neither good nor evil, as yet, that

are friends to wisdom, but those who are evil are not friends, nor again are the good" consistent with strictures derived from their previous conclusions.

The presence of ignorance "whether in respect of the soul, or of the body, or of anything else whatsoever...is friendly with the good on account" of it. (218 b9-c) As is consonant with the former proposals in turn here first we gained the agreement of Lysis, and then of Menexenus, and where we receive to "kin as friend" the boys' simultaneous agreement, this time we gain the unanimous agreement of all three. Even the structures of their agreements match the relationships dramatically surveyed in the proposals.

The sources of their personal relationships, in their various combinations and collectives, match the contentions the trio assembled and examined. From the voices of authority, we apprehend the specific undergirdings of the permutations of the several budding friendships.

#### **The Sixth Aside: 218c4-8**

The brevity of this aside should not lead us to underestimate its significance, for it is the segue way to the *proto philon* where the three find themselves outside *familiardoxa*

Socrates recounts for his auditor that he was "rejoicing, with all the hunter's delight" at having grasped the prey [he] had been so long in chase of..." (218c) The prey he thinks he has in hand is the grounds for friendship. And the prey he has in hand *is* the ground of his budding friendship with the boys, and for virtually everyone with whom Socrates converses transdialogically. It is by virtue of his peculiar wisdom- that he knows he doesn't know- that Socrates initially establishes himself with others. But accounting for particular friendships is not accounting for friendship itself. They have



arrived this far by examining the empirical contingencies of relationships which arise on account of something else for the sake of something else. What is this "else"?

Dramatically speaking, if Socrates is the person whose friendship to the boys is on account of his knowing that he does not know, it ought come as no surprise to us that Socrates says, "But then some most strange suspicion came over me- from where, I don't know- that the things we had agreed to were not true, at once I cried out in horror, 'Woe is me, Lysis and Menexenus, I'm afraid we have dreamed our treasure!'" For if he is wise on account of knowing his ignorance, he cannot be left in the condition of being wise on account of knowing his knowledge. That would be a paradoxical refutation of the stated condition for the grounds of his friendship with boys, wouldn't it? Thus, when he feels this suspicion creeping up, I think he is apprehending the paradox of his having grasped the prey. Socrates' shout, "We dreamed our treasure!", turns their unanimous agreement to ashes, but restores to him the ground of the incipient friendship he is making with them. Such an insight keeps for Socrates the wisdom of knowing his ignorance as the source of his friendship with them.

The self-description of Socrates to his auditor is of a "hunter" having captured his "prey." This is a self-image drawn in the dramatic present that echoes the very words Socrates employed with Hippothales at the beginning of the dialogue in the dramatic past. Such a description draws Hippothales and Socrates closer together, establishing a similarity between them that most of the scholarship will refuse to countenance. But there it is in the text. It is not my fault. Recall that the hunter is "ridiculous" who runs through the woods scaring off his game. In a similar way, the speaker is ridiculous if his speech defies his efforts to say what he wants to say. Both Socrates and Hippothales have had this experience.

Socrates doesn't give us an exegesis of knowing how he does not know; rather, he authorizes the most "strange suspicion" to indicate to him the phantom nature of their agreements. (218c5)

Dramatically speaking this creeping suspicion, the feeling, the inarticulate alone leads him to the outburst shattering their agreements made in speech. One of the existential points being made is that such agreements should be renounced if strange suspicions shadow them. And the philosophic point, epistemological point, if you will, is this: truth doesn't have "strange suspicions" shadowing it. Thus, we are told here in dramatic form to count our inarticulate suspicions as important. These are red alerts, not to be ignored, but embraced and voiced. The tradition of philosophy does not much approve "strange suspicions" as a ground for renouncing anything. As he did previously with Lysis' rapt attention and Hippothales' blushing, Socrates again embraces the inarticulate emotional cue as important to articulate explanation.

Socrates can no more feel such a suspicion and keep it under wraps than he can fly. It bursts from him as did Lysis' cry. I think the shout is further evidence of their similarity on Like-like. When one is wrong, promptly admit it. The friendships, if properly grounded will survive the deflation. It is my belief that the several budding friendships are properly explained by the proposals, even though the course of their speeches have found the voices of authority unable to account for or banish their perplexity concerning friendship.

In summary then, the structure and dramatic consideration of these three proposals brings about a symbolic enactment of and explanation of five relationships in question in the Lysis without resolving the logical problems attending the investigation of them.

1) Socrates is friend to Lysis through Like-like; 2) he is a friend to Menexenus through

Opposites Attract; 3) the two boys are both friends to Socrates on account of Beautiful is the Friend; 4) the boys are friends to each other on account of kinship and family ties, and 5) Socrates is friend to them on account of being wise enough to know he is ignorant. Their examined proposals cover all the concrete relationships they themselves inhabit.

T.F. Morris notes the significance of the number of relationships in this way. "At the close of the Lysis Socrates says that he considers Lysis, Menexenus, and himself to be friends of one another. This amounts to six instances of friendship; each of the three is a friend of the other two." (Morris, Philosophy Research Archives, vol. XI, March, 1986, p. 269) Although we differ in our counting, we agree that the separate relationships require different explanations and that "reading between the lines" is necessary to understand this dialogue.

#### **218(d)-221(e): the proto philon**

"Woe is me, Menexenus and Lysis, I fear we have dreamed our treasure...." It is Menexenus who queries Socrates rather than Lysis. Why? Socrates has addressed them both and continues to address them both in what follows. I think it points to a shift of character in him. To show immediate concern indicates wanting to know, not merely wanting to appear to know. He was the cautious one in the beginning of the dialogue. Now it appears he understands and shares the the agitation of Socrates. We know that Lysis, being a lover of wisdom will want to know, too. I think it is dramatically important that Menexenus beats Lysis to the punch; it evidences his rising desire to have real as opposed to pseudo-explanations.

Socrates summarizes his understanding of their accomplishment as having said what the friend is. That which is friend is friend on account of something (else) for the

sake of something (else). This "else" would have to be friend, too, or we wouldn't seek it. But what is it?

Menexenus candidly reports, as he did at the conclusion of the *elenchus*, that he does not "follow". This admission of confusion casts aside ulterior motives of winning or losing and adopts his present confusion as important. Eristic speakers are loath to admit such things. In conjunction with his admission, Socrates tries to explain for the benefit of the *both* of them. The enactment here is of an emerging partnership. Inquiry does not have to pit us against each other.

Socrates explores the value of instruments to their ends for illustrative purposes in order to explain that all they have is the instrument of friend making, but not the end; they are looking for a terminus or end. (219a-220a) They need the first friend, the friend that is not-on-account-of-anything-else-nor-for-the-sake-of-anything-else if they would know what a friend is.

Socrates warns the boys that they are dangerously close to offending their rule against like-like which originated in the like-like speech with Lysis, but lets it drop to pursue the question of first friendship. (291c) There is no logic-chopping objection against suspending their rules from Menexenus at this point. That, too, evidences his character is changing for the better.

Socrates asks the two boys, "...is it not necessary that we advance at once to a beginning, which will not again refer us to friend upon friend, but arrive at that to which we are in the first instance friends, and for the sake of which we say we are friends to all the rest?" (219c13-17) The request is for an explanation of friendship that is neither "on account of, nor for the sake of" something else "to which we are friendly", but rather for

one "to which we are truly friendly, [one to which] we are not friendly for the sake of any other thing to which we are friendly." (220 c8-b5)

Some scholars argue that an incipient theory of forms enters the dialogue at this point. For the perils of an infinite regress emerge if *philia* is always "for the sake of something and for a reason" beyond itself. (*heneka tou kai dai ti-* 218d8-9). Socrates requires at least one object that is liked for its own sake and not for the sake of something else. We need an intrinsic good, or a plurality of them, to stave off this result.

In other words, and better than my own, "We desire many *philia* for the sake of others: the former 'refer' us to the latter.

But we must reach a *philon* that is 'first', at which such reference will cease. Strictly speaking, it is the reference which will 'stop,' not the *arche*. The *arche*, i.e., the *proton philon*, is of course not what has been referring us along in the first place: no one thing has been the agent of reference, but rather a series of *philia* each of which refers. What then could Socrates mean by a 'certain *arche*' which '... will stop [referring],' if not an *arche* which *has been* referring until now?

The same as what he means by 'a certain *arche* which *no longer* (*ouketi*) refers.

...Socrates means that there must be an *arche*, a 'first friend', which -unlike the friends below it in the chain- does not refer us to anything beyond it." The image of an alpha and omega union, with its beginning and end occurring at the same time, is noted. (Kevin McTighe, American Journal of Philosophy, 104, 78, spr. 83)

Other scholars see in the passage something less than an emergence of the Theory of Forms. "Plato's argument here has the same structure as Aristotle's more famous argument about ends of action in Nichomachean Ethics I, 2: if were (sic) are not to desire

one thing for the sake of another ad infinitum, there must be an end wanted for its own sake." (J. Annas, "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism", *Mind*, 86, 535, p, 77)

I do not require resolution of whether the turn made at this point in the dialogue is, or only "begins to look remarkably like The Form of the Good" ( Haden, James.

"Friendship in Plato's *Lysis*". Review of *Metaphysics*. vol. 37, 327-356, 1983. p. 354)

Rather, its significance derives from the dramatic fabric: the conversation is the imitation I am concerned to address. It is their conversation that is important to the conversers. It is the conversation that furnishes them the source of their usefulness and pleasure to one another. Such an idea urges the boys to think beyond the voices of tradition and authority and beyond any and every personal, concrete, particular friendship to that which may sustain every kind of friendship, however it may arise in the personal and concrete settings of life.

I do not doubt that these boys had never considered such a notion. The three are beyond the comforts offered by common parlance and tradition. They have found the voice of authority in its several timbres and tones incapable of satisfying their queries.

"Socrates has just matched two authoritative poets in such a way as to make it clear that they offer opposing, indeed contradictory, teachings on the subject of friendship.

Whereas the verse from Homer maintains...that like is friend to like, the verse from Hesiod asserts that they are enemies." (Tessidore, 123) With the problems assayed concerning the additional proverb, "The Beautiful is the Friend", the three have had to conclude that the threads of authority do not stretch far enough to settle the issues before them. Their conversation, their sincere and pleasurable conversation, is the activity that has bound up their friendships. It is the "first friend" of this imitation.

This is not to say that the wisdom of the sages and ages is false through and through. It is to count it only part of the truth. "Socrates introduces a philosophic standard of inquiry into the discussion" by insisting upon a "knowledge of first principles, or to use again the language of the dialogue, that object into which all others terminate." (220b1-3; 220d8-e1)(Tessidore, 124)

Both Menexenus and Lysis assent "that passionate love, friendship, and desire happen to be for what is kin." (221e12)

But in elaboration of this Socrates says at 222a, "'And therefore'," I said, 'if someone desires another, boys, or loves him passionately, he would never desire, nor love passionately, nor love [as a friend] unless he happened to be akin in some way to his passionately beloved- either in his soul, or else in some character of his soul, or some of its ways, or some eidos of it.'"

Everyone who has a stake in Socrates' conversation that afternoon hears something different in this turn of the conversation.

We have noted that the character of the soul is amenable to education through conversation. I think the dialogue enacts the kind of loving education undertaken by philosophers for the sake of pleasure and for the sake of others' improvement.

#### **222a7-222b4 : The seventh aside: Apprehensions**

Socrates marks for his unseen listener the variation in the responses between Menexenus and Lysis; one response is verbal, one silence. Then he recounts his next statement, and quickly returns to mark for his auditor the comportment of Lysis, Menexenus, Hippothales to what has been said.

Why is he marking these responses? At 222a7 Menexenus agrees, but Lysis is silent. Upon a slightly awkward elaboration Socrates recalls that the two boys give

grudging assent and that Hippothales is "radiating all sorts of colors as a result of his pleasure." (222b 1-2) How do we tease these threads into some kind of workable knot? Why does Socrates recount them in such explicit detail without explanation?

First, I think he is speaking in the dramatic present to someone whom he takes as understanding his remark. He is honoring his auditor by explicitly noting the after effects his remark produces in others upon their first hearing it. Were I speaking to one who understood a particular thesis, but a thesis likely to induce a wide range of responses in others, my marking others' variations for my auditor would emphasize the separation between "us" and "them".

[Author's note: "The past is made in the future." There are several possible backgrounds that make sense of this statement. Were I speaking to one familiar with the statement, I might very well mark the responses others had to it for the sake of his interest and pleasure.]

One interpretation of Socrates' marking the responses insists that there is irony at work here. "Hippothales blushes with relief under the false belief that the argument has proved that unrequited love is impossible for the knowing lover and hence for himself. The skepticism of Lysis and Menexenus toward the significance of this general conclusion attests to their proper condition of believing they are ignorant, 218b1." (Glidden, note 117, "The Lysis on Loving One's Own", Classical Quarterly, 31, (1981) p. 53) Glidden casts "the selfish conceit of Hippothales" as "self-deceptive and futile" even while admitting that "once the lover has knowledge of his situation and the function love serves, he is then in a position to bring his desires into conformity with reality. In this way unrequited love, or vacuous love, becomes impossible." (Glidden, 51) If Hippothales knows his condition, then his unrequited love becomes impossible and



cannot be "futile" or "self-deceptive." The question just is whether Hippothales knows and appreciates his condition. We can't conclude his is a state of self-deception by arguing that his is a vacuous love. That begs the question.

My interpretation of marking the different responses harks back to what we know of the three youths. Lysis' silence upon the introduction of the soul as somehow related to friendship is appropriate for the budding philosopher. The soul not a particular friend or friendship, but rather the sap of friendship binding the reality of each and all particular friendships each to each. It can have no resemblance to the concrete dependent relationships upon it, and yet must sustain them (220e1-2). Anything "said" of "it" as a friend is a particularization foreign to it. Lysis' silence may be due to his thinking of the difficulties of how he can even "think it".

On the other hand, we should rejoice when we hear Menexenus' cry, "Indeed, it is so." at 222a4. The wary and cautious Menexenus, the eristic of the dialogue, has undergone quite a transformation. There is no evidence that he understands Socrates' suggestion; rather, he has begun to behave as though he trusts Socrates. He doesn't evaluate the statement, pronounce it fair on first hearing, or impose qualifiers. He has committed himself to it by way of an emerging trust placed in Socrates. Such is a signal for a character peripety from the cryptic, never-catch-me attitude Menexenus displayed earlier in the afternoon.

Both boys give similar reluctant assents to the next statement. I think this shows that Menexenus has become more like Lysis than previously. In the beginning of the dialogue the two laughed and agreed along an axis built by Menexenus. But here the assents seem generally forged on a Lysis-pattern. They reluctantly assent to the notion that a "genuine, and not pretended, lover is loved in return by the object of his love"

because such a statement sounds crazy. They are not quite sure how this works if the "object" is not any particular object loved "for the sake of and for a reason."

Nor, may I add, am I. For one of the conditions of this "object" is its non-resemblance to latter, particular, objects of love. Now this object does not love me back. There are a string of reasons why the *proto philon* is not something that loves me back, the first being that such would make of it one object among others, either loving or not-loving me back. A way to avoid saying that is to say, rather, that it makes it possible; it makes the possibility that the object of my love love me back and that possibility-that-she-loves-me is actual or real. Real possibility is a lot more comforting than no possibility at all. So in a woolly way does the object of my love have to love me insofar as its being a real possibility goes. It is the possibility-that-she-loves-me that is always present. Since the possibility is actual, "she-loves-me" is floating around somehow. Now, if I could just actualize it. It is no wonder the assent is grudging.

I think that Hippothales realizes the import of this very question for his own situation. To read with optimism, Hippothales' coloring radiance is due to enlightenment. Far from indicating the "impossibility of unrequited love", for surely he, better than anyone else, knows both the continuing possibility and the agony attending the actuality of that, it marks for him the significance and worth of that very condition insofar as it connects him to this "*arche*". He is rapturous from the realization that his admittedly painful and anxious condition is not wholly one of deprivation. So long as one loves, however ridiculous and unrequited, one is connected to the possibility of love-returned by the *proto philon*, that dramatically just is the good and and nurturing conversation.

I realise that my optimism is problematic. How can one who is not dialectically engaged in the conversation arrive at enlightenment when the participants themselves are

left in utter perplexity? I have no textual support for the contention other than the shifting countenance of Hippothales throughout the dialogue. His final "pleasure" has to be a result of one of two things. Either: consistent with claims by the scholarship that he is *not* a lover, we simply conclude that he is a fool besides. Or: he is lover, miserably deprived until he hears this sentence. I cannot imagine hearing any sentence in speech that would make Hippothales suddenly think, "Oh, that does it. Lysis loves me." He knows all too well that he not presently loved by Lysis. It seems more reasonable to conclude that the *proto philon* secures him the possibility and that alone is enough to raise his spirits. Most of the time love lives on the fumes of hope. What is "hope" but "possibility" dressed in emotional/existential rather than metaphysical language? The treatments of friendship by Plato and Aristotle has been cast in this very way. "Aristotle's *affirmative* treatment accomplishes much, and fails to accomplish even more. Plato's *negative* treatment does not accomplish much, but fails even less. Friendship remains, for Aristotle an actuality, for Plato a possibility." (Bashor, Philip. "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship". Journal of Value Inquiry. vol. 2, 269-280. Wint. 68. p. 277)

In his book, David Bolotin marks the importance of Lysis' silence, too, for this is the only time Socrates notes it explicitly. Bolotin suggests that Lysis is "thinking about his own relation to his lover, Hippothales." (Bolotin, 185). This, despite Ctesippus' description of their nowhere relationship and despite the fact that were they "lovers", Socrates would have had no reason to offer his advice to Hippothales in the first place. Hippothales is hidden from view and probably the last thing on Lysis' mind. Even if Hippothales never wins Lysis' affection, he has learned that his condition is not wholly deprived.

Hans-Georg Gadamer reads the silence of Lysis as Bolotin does by insisting that "Lysis,...who has no eye at all for the lover who pursues him so persistently, falls silent and only unwillingly admits that the boy for his part should love the true lover too. Obviously, the result is not to his liking." (Gadamer, Hans-Georg. Dialogue and Dialectic. Yale Univ. Press. New Haven.1980. p., 19)

What is this "should" doing here? There is no hint that Lysis *ought* to love Hippothales from any of these considerations. Lysis' silence is not indicative of something "not to his liking." He is intelligent. Why, then, can't he be thinking? [Author's note: Isn't this silence a most proper reaction if one is suddenly blinded by the sun, having emerged from the cave below? And doesn't the inability to speak or say anything of it cause the person a lot of trouble? Even death?]

The dialogue rapidly unfolds to a conclusion from this point.

**222b-223: A difficult choice:**

Socrates notes the three may finally "be in a condition to say what is meant by a friend" (222b6-7), but that there is a difficulty in "saying" owing to the debarring condition against "like-like". The words are the same. Aware that they are "intoxicated by our talk" Socrates puts to the boys a choice of how to "say" what they are at last "in a condition to say". (222b6-c2) The boys elect to say "that good belongs to good, evil to evil, and that which is neither evil nor good, to that which is of the same nature." (222c3-6) But this leads them to the conundrum of *saying* "that none are friends with the good but the good" and an apparent violation of previous rules barring "Like-like". (222d1-8) Even were the words "good-good" rendered "The Good-a good" their sameness would have violated rule against the homonymic and onomatopoeic condition of "like-like."

Socrates admits, "I no longer know what I am to say." Socrates now doubles the very condition of silence that Lysis exemplifies at 222a4. I count this as a further doubling as evidence of the Like-like condition attending their budding friendship.

**223: The Eighth Aside: Socratic silence, interruption, warning, farewell.**

At this point, a tongue-tied Socrates recalled for his auditor that he was desperate; he was on the verge of rousing to his aid "one of the elders" of the group, when the tipsy pedagogues appeared calling for Lysis and Menexenus to come home. The afternoon has slipped away. (223a1-5)

I laughed aloud at Socrates' sudden thought of calling for help from someone "older." Who is older than he is? He admits he is an old man when the party breaks up. So what can it mean here when he thinks of calling on somebody "older"? I think it suggests two things: generally, conversations like these are ageless; if we have them at all, we recover much of what it means to be young; our having them with youths like Lysis and Menexenus puts us on a par with them. In the course of their conversation, Socrates has forgotten his "age" and forgotten that he himself is old. Seeking wisdom through philosophical pursuits is an agelessly youthful endeavor.

Chronological age has already been shown in the conversation with Lysis to be of little importance, but it is socially and perennially the condition of youth to call on adults when they feel helpless and tongue-tied. Thus, like a youth, Socrates momentarily thinks someone, someone older than "we" are, will surely know how to go forward; he is forgetting that he is the somebody older that somebody young would look to. This tends to suggest that the pursuits of philosophy sometime render old and young alike as helpless as the newborn. It is not about chronological but something more like psychological age.

That he remembers himself as an old man when the enchantment of the party is shattered by pedagogues appearing like spirits from another world is both a loss of the enchantments of conversation and a signal of the return to ordinary temporal concerns. But just for moment, he was green and young and riding the tidewaters of discovery again. Plato is recommending these conversations as the fountain of youth when he has Socrates cast about for somebody "older" to help the three conversers.

Socrates tells his listener that everyone assembled thinks of resisting the importunate calls by the slaves to the boys; that everyone is momentarily for "driving them away"-not simply the boys and Socrates, but all the bystanders as well; but in their drunkenness, and perhaps because of it, the slaves keep at their business of shepherding these boys home; they prevail upon the party to break up their conversation.

Bolotin ignores this emphasis on the groups' reaction to the appearance of the pedagogues in order to offer an interesting reason for Socrates' considering resistance. His interpretation, however, conflicts both with the events of the afternoon as well as with Socrates' own recollection. Bolotin suggests that Socrates would usurp the "lawful rule of fathers over their sons" if he could get away with it, but "after a show of struggle, he resigns himself to the temporary freedom he had enjoyed with two boys while their attendants were away. He was not so foolish as to continue a hopeless effort to keep the boys to himself." (Bolotin, 198-9)

This, despite the fact that it is first Hippothales' begging and then Lysis who begged Socrates to stay until Lysis has to go home (211b4) and despite the fact that Socrates has given us no reason whatever to think either that he wants these boys "all to himself", or that he wishes to undo the relation of father and son. Bolotin offers no textual support for such a contention.

Similarly, Tessidore reads Socrates' thought of resistance as importing a tension "between a fondness for hearing philosophy and the duties and obligations attaching to parental and religious authority in Athens" coloring the mere thought of resistance a "significant (even if comical) rebellion against parental authority." (Tessidore, 126)

The foregoing conceives friendship as a pie to be divided rather than an unlimited reservoir to be tapped. If Socrates eventually becomes the friend of Lysis and Menexenus that does not displace either Hippothales or fathers. Rather, friendship is a condition fostered in good conversations among those whose souls are in the proper condition of generating and sustaining such conversations. Plato is showing how conversation seeds the ground of friendship among likes, among opposites, among beautiful, kin, wise-in-their-ignorance, etc. If fathers and suitors would bring their love to fruition, they needs must learn from such imitations how to converse, listen and explore important subjects, not with an eye to keeping the eristic's score, nor to the end of venting the foam of *eros*, but rather to bring out the condition of trust and confidence in the other over time. We hear much of "quality" time and "quantity" time spent with children today. The Lysis insists that the quality time we spend be spent in conversations of this kind if we would be friends.

I think the point of their resistance to the pedagogues lies elsewhere than the scholarship suggests.

Socrates has every reason, as do the bystanders, to resist the party's collapse. They all know that they are finally "in the condition" to say what a friend is. What does he mean by this? I think he means that they have exercised due diligence in their researches; through conversation, they have fashioned for themselves the budding and varied friendships which have emerged; and they have discovered the flaw in them insofar as

their inability to account for an intrinsic friendship goes. Theirs is the proper condition *both* intellectually and emotionally. They are each and all poised now for this triumph.

Certainly, the sudden porlock by the slaves is discomfiting. But philosophy is no different than any other activity in that it is earth bound. It is constantly suffering the interruptions and contingencies of life. The balance between the search for truth and the empirical conditions of living well is a problem attending the very activity of philosophical discourse. We cannot escape the setting sun, neither when it summons boys home, nor when it marks the moment we must drink the hemlock. The question is how shall we live and negotiate the inescapability? Shall we resist the slaves? Fight them off? Socrates forbears.

These fellows are both a little drunk and quite persistent in calling for the boys. They have duties. It is late. Socrates doesn't want to foster quarreling. Rumbling with drunken slaves would not only destroy their proper existential condition, it would be dangerous for the children. They all relent.

The final and arguably the most existentially conclusive scene of the dialogue is recalled by Socrates to his unseen listener. "Just as they were leaving, I managed to call out, 'Well, Lysis and Menexenus, we have made ourselves rather ridiculous today, I, an old man, and you children. For our hearers here will carry away the report that though we conceive ourselves to be friends with each other- you see, I class myself with you- we have not as yet been able to discover what we mean by 'friend'.'" (223a 11-16)

What shall we make of the warning and farewell?

The warning concerns the risks one runs when one does philosophy before a group of onlookers. Like the speeches of Hippothales and Menexenus, it has the strange gaunt look of failure all around it. But unlike the slush fund of love words and the



breastplated words of the two extremists in the dialogue, the philosopher's speech does not generate failure when it comes to making friends. Such would be Plato's point by having Socrates note that the onlookers, who never say single word, do not apprehend the difference. They, like Ctesippus, are looking for results in speech. When they do not get it, they deem the participants ridiculous. If, however, the speeches shape the soul and sow the seeds of intimate, vital, loving friendships, then philosophy is anything but a failure and the participants will have the last laugh.

The children are young. Socrates will be dead soon. He needs to warn them that onlookers are dangerous people to irritate. We have a glimpse of the extent of their irritation in Ctesippus' mockery of Hippothales. If the connection between being "ridiculous" and being "ugly" is replaced with being "ridiculous" and being "dangerous to the state", we discover just how scary the onlooker view really is. In the final moments Socrates qualifies their failure in two words: "not yet". They have "not yet been able to say what a friend is"; but possibly next time. This yet-thread of future possibility laces and binds all emerging friendships. Having a friend is sharing our possibilities whether those possibilities be confined to instruction and utility friendship, pleasure friendship, or the rare friendship. By this "not yet" Socrates invites them to continue their efforts with him on another day. Fortune decides this matter in the concrete world, but its caprice cannot disturb its possibility as it exists for friends.

Others disagree with me. For example, Bolotin denies that Socrates bears the boys any friendship at all. He tries to explain Socrates' warning and this parting affirmation saying, "We should observe that Socrates does not say, in regard to himself, that he even supposes he is the boys' friend; he merely claims that the others will say so as they go away. Though he may want the two boys to feel comfortable with him as their

friend, he himself in all likelihood resists the temptation so easily as to suppose they are his. (cf., 212a4-7) One sign of his successful resistance is that he can speak of his forced separation from his young 'friends' as no greater an evil than the occasion for ridicule." (Bolotin, 199)

Bolotin's reading makes it sound as if Socrates is patronizing the boys. But that is not consistent with his attitude toward Lysis.

Hans-Georg Gadamer also denies that Socrates is the friend of the two boys stressing the separation in their ages and by recalling the fact that Socrates was thinking of asking assistance from one of the "older" members of the group when he admitted he no longer knew what to say. Gadamer thinks that all the afternoon long Socrates had rather have been discussing this subject with someone who might just understand friendship- someone "older".

( Gadamer, Hans-Georg. Dialogue and Dialectic. Yale Univ. Press. New Haven. 1980.p., 20) Is this not to ignore the lesson on age taught to Lysis in the first conversation? There, we found that usefulness, experience, wisdom conferred friendship and that age was not important when these were in place.

Neither does Gadamer believe that Lysis and Menexenus are friends. What can such children know of friendship? Their understanding of it is puerile and "childish". That they "dare to answer Socrates' questions on the basis of their understanding of life" is evidence enough that their relationship is other-than-friends. (Gadamer, Hans-Georg. Dialogue and Dialectic. Yale Univ.Press. New Haven. 1980. p., 6,12) For Gadamer, no one in the dialogue qualifies as having friendship. Unless the *ergon* matches the *logos*, the day is a waste.

But what if *logos* is an *ergon*? What if, despite the appearance of not matching, they match up perfectly well once the ill formed-speeches are set properly on course after the correctives by Socrates? This idea will change our idea of what counts as a "well formed speech."

The extremes of speech will not be well-formed even if they luck-up and hit upon right definition. The middle course of speech is going to be well formed even if it does not generate the definition. Following Socrates' correctives, the participants in the conversation have at least won and wear the proper attitude as they search for the definition of friend in the second half of the dialogue. The symbolic point, the dramatic point, and the philosophic point is: it may take one-half of our learning or day or lives to find and to adhere to the middle way in speeches; even then we may not find our definition; but at least we are going to be in the condition of sowing friendships while we search for the definition.

Gadamer, like Bolotin, takes the tender affection of Socrates, turns it into a menacing irony and destroys an enchanted day the conversers spent together. They are the onlookers Socrates warns the boys of in parting. The thrust of Socrates' calling out to the boys is in the nature of counterfactual. "They" will say such stuff about us, but "we" know better.

Gadamer's contention that adults have a better understanding of friendship than children, that youth is puerile, silly, and knows nothing of it, is a claim refuted in two directions. First, it is refuted daily on every playground in every kindergarten where children play and plan and work out their problems together. Second, it is refuted by adults who place the growing number of pages dedicated to personal ads in every newspaper. It is not children who run these ads for friends. It is adults: adults who are

lonely, alienated, and bereft of friends. It is adults who make a mess of their friendships with each rising sun, and it is adults who make enemies with every high tide. It is adults, not youth, who are richly incompetent in this arena. If we grant that youth does not "know" what friendship is, we have ample evidence that adult "knowledge" fares even worse. Add this to Gadamer's reading, and we will have shown that nobody, anywhere, has friends. Not the youth, because they are too young; but not the older generation either, if the evidence of life be trusted; hence, nobody.

Gadamer ignores the frame of the conversation and the direct statements of Socrates to the effect that the boys are his friends and he a friend to them; he turns the entire dialogue into a Socratic pummeling of children who have the chutzpah and hubris to think they know something about friendship. I simply do not recognize this portrait of Socrates or the boys as faithful to the tone and tenor of Socrates' recollection. Budding friendships take time to grow. His endearments and parting words are part of the virtue of "loving". He is open and hopeful that their relationships will grow. Of course that will take time.

This completes my reading of the dialogue in its essentials.

## CHAPTER III

### OTHER READINGS

I turn now to a few samples of the scholarship concerning the Lysis to show the distance between my views of this work and others who read it with something else in mind. The comments tend to fall into 1) commentaries on the success or failure of the several speeches in the dialogue, 2) the developmentalist's view of its relation to later dialogues, either in terms of the Theory of Forms or the puzzles of love that the Symposium and Phaedrus solve, 3) the ambiguity and syntax leading to the *aporiae* of the dialogue, or 4) various character or dramatic assessments that differ from my own. The last represents the closest neighbor to my own field of inquiry.

Insofar as the readings by others address character portrayal, they often draw from other dialogues to support their contentions. The reasoning runs, "Socrates is like this in the Gorgias. There he explains 'it' in this way. That must be what he is driving at in the Lysis." I confess that I have not canvassed the entire corpus for hints at what might be occurring transdialogically. The only other dialogue that shows Socrates primarily in the company of youth is the Euthydemus, which I read as being closely allied with Lysis in terms of Socrates' defense of speech and his concern to divert youth from the aridity of eristics. We have explored this already with Menexenus in the Lysis.

The danger of transdialogic readings, though, is that we posit "what Plato thought" as our target and move toward it. That method tends to lessen considerably the dramatic power of the individual work. The text of the Lysis must lead us. In this dialogue Socrates carefully tailors his speeches to address the needs and conditions of those around him. Looking for a generic Socrates will be troublesome if Socrates tries not to be generic in his dealings with his dialectical partners.

[Author's Note: Recovery of our initial wonder is difficult and perhaps impossible. Repeating, "This is an imitation...this is an imitation of a conversation..." helps. But just as a Shakespeare scholar might attempt to read "King Lear" without other tragedies in mind, there is the possibility that he simply can't.

However fruitful it is to compare across the Shakespearean tragedies to support the contention that King Lear's fool is wise, it is the fool in "King Lear" who must ultimately win that accolade on his own merits. If, however, we begin with that wisdom as a premise, we shall find it, and for all of our trouble we shall have "dreamed our treasure" no less than did the boys and Socrates.

It is from the work that we must gather up the meaning; but if "the work" is already entangled with our own prior endeavors and training, then it is all but impossible to let it breathe. I can only offer the inane sop that there is a Golden Mean of interpretative endeavors. Initial readings are without sufficient background. Saturated "apoetical" readings bring too much to the text.]

The contingencies of making friends, its accidental circumstances, its rooting in involuntarily felt emotions and its being subject to interruption and transformation are dramatic events bobbing up and down throughout the dialogue. I bring it to the reader's attention now to stress that these accidents do not generate much interest in the literature. But if the topic is friendship, these contingencies affect its making as surely as yeast affects bread.

The duck-rabbit challenge to a reader's evaluation of personages is another dimension that receives little attention. We are exhorted by my reading to explore what Lysis or Menexenus or Hippothales might have said of the afternoon were they asked to remember it. Here we have only one standpoint: the standpoint of Socrates. Because Plato is offering the "the philosopher" as his imitation is no reason to stop thinking about these other personages. Not only did they converse, too, Socrates is constantly attending to clues to their states of mind and condition. We continue a facet of the imitation of

Socrates when we attend to the question, What were they thinking between the lines? We imitate Socrates when we individualize our efforts to harmonize with their various conditions.

Lacking appreciation for the different standpoints, onlookers step beyond the evidence when they categorically declare some particular turn of the conversation to be the key to the dialogue. Key, for whom? Those who did not participate in the conversation are confined to a straight transcript from the dramatic past. It reads very differently from a remembrance that supplies us with insights from a speaker who has left much unrevealed until he undertakes the remembrance. This said, let us turn to few of the remarks found in the literature.

"The topic is friendship (*philia*), and the conclusion failure: Socrates opens the main body of the discussion by remarking, 'I do not even know how one person becomes the friend of another.' (212a5-6); he closes the whole dialogue by admitting, 'We have not yet been able to discover what a friend is.' (223b7-8) (Price, A. W. Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle. Oxford Univ. P. Oxford. 1989. p.1)

Price's ease in identifying "the topic", in slicing off 203-212a5 as irrelevant to "the main body", in nailing down the "admission" of an unqualified failure, even in the presence of a dramatic qualifier "not *yet* been able", said "yet" being the most important kind of qualifier echoes Socrates' prediction of the dramatic onlookers. They go off thinking, "How ridiculous."

Onlookers fail to notice that Socrates has already agreed to this conclusion. He admits that others will think they have made themselves "rather ridiculous." (Lysis, 223a12) Why does it not make us uneasy to fulfill that prediction? The more subtle point Socrates suggests is that making ourselves "rather ridiculous" to outsiders is a price we pay for making friends. Does this not ring true? Have we not each seen others we deemed ridiculous, who, for all of that were playing out the activities of friends? Have we not been in situations where the onlooker's oculogyrations put us on notice that we were

being judged adversely, but for all of that, we, not they, were engaging in friendship activity?

In some arenas scholars grouse at Plato: "Had Plato chosen to allow Socrates and his followers to essay a definition of *philia* rather than *philos*, perhaps the discussion would have proceeded...with somewhat less tendency for the dialectic to prove abortive." (Levin, in Anton and Kustas, 240). I suppose so.

Or, having decided that the dominant unresolved issue of Lysis to be a question of the relation to *eros* to *philia*, one scholar will argue that Plato included *eros* as a species of *philos*, while another will counter that friendship and love are as distinct as an elephant and photograph of one. (Levin, in Anton and Kustas, 241)

If we make the Vlastos-turn, our first task is to strip the artistic garnish. Then we are at liberty to carve off the speeches on friendship inside a single dialogue; well then, why not carve them out wherever they appear across the several dialogues, paste them up side-by-side and pore over them? By such methods scholars begin to form "the developmental view of Plato's thought."

They began to graze; from Lysis they range across the Symposium and dive into the Phaedrus to support their contentions concerning "what Plato thought" on friendship; no sooner does one draw and publish his conclusions from his transdialogic journey, but he suffers rebuke for "leaving Laws 837 A-B conveniently out of account." (Levin, in Anton and Kustas, 241) To the reply that Laws is not "about" friendship, there is always the response that whenever the term "friendship" occurs, we need to attend. So it goes.

Historically, Lysis came to prominence in just the above described way. Two developmentalists, Max Pohlenz and Hans von Arnim debated the significance of Lysis to the other two dialogues about friendship from 1913 to 1921. "The Pohlenz-von Arnim battle over the *Lysis* actually grew out a more general issue. Whether the dialogues show a gradual development of Plato's thinking, going through definite changes, or whether



they are *simply* separate revelations of systematic ideas which Plato had definitively arrived at before he launched on his career as an author." (Haden, 331, my emphasis)

The split psychology of Plato, philosopher-inquirer or poet, and the problems of the "primum mobile" are themes buried both in this debate and in the above description of the debate. If he is mere artist, that renders his dialogues just so many "simply separate revelations". But if not, then by due diligence we might find the philosophy, and make inquiry into whether Plato held his stock of philosophic ideas like so many little golden nuggets, each one waiting to be placed within the artistic form, or whether his philosophic ideas grew, ripened, and waited for pruning, arrangement, and final placement in a suitable Grecian urn, the poem. On either image, nugget or plant, we should be able to discover whether his thoughts are consistent, dialogue to dialogue, as well as how the several ideas of one dialogue impinge upon and relate to other dialogic treatments. But on both horns of the debate, we are to strip the sensuous detail and artistic garnish away. The developmental debates countenance and require the split-personality and the Vlastos-turn. Armed with such a presupposition, "it is always possible to appeal to later dialogues- for instance to relate the *Lysis* to the *Symposium*...." (Haden, James. "Friendship in Plato's *Lysis*". Review of *Metaphysics*. Vol. 37, 327-356, 1983. p. 332) I suppose so.

We find announcements that "the shipwreck of every effort to explain who is friend to whom and why "is rescued by the Phaedrus, with sighs of relief parading as comment: "It is indeed fortunate that other dialogues have salvaged conceptions...out of the shambles..." of Lysis. (Levin, in Anton and Kustas, 246) And if Lysis had been the only surviving dialogue would it be a useless collection of flotsam and jetsam arrived on the pristine beaches of rational inquiry from the "shipwreck" of a conversation concerning what a friend is? Can a Platonic dialogue founder? Doesn't such alleged foundering say something about our capacities for learning to gather up the meanings of things?

There are commentators on Lysis who attend to ambiguities and problems of the dative and genitive case of the terms employed by Plato. There is no evidence from any of the dialogues that Plato had ever considered the grammatical structure attending the dative and genitive case. That he was a master of ambiguity testifies to the ear he has for his native tongue. Plato spoke and wrote competent Greek just as writers of novels in English speak and write competent English. I cannot imagine that William Faulkner needs ever to have heard of the "dative case" to have written *As I Lay Dying*. Even if the entire book turns on an ambiguity of his native language, his ear for his language explains such better than an analysis of grammatical forms. How does that focus improve our understanding of the work he bequeathed to us? The same goes for the attention paid to active and passive and middle voice verbs.

It is not that such debates are without merit. The debates stretch out a thread of the dialogue for serious scrutiny. But if the point of the poem is the imitation of making friends, the motion of making friends through such debates is attenuated at best and sterile at worst. However interesting and lively these scholarly debates are for those writing them, this enterprise does little to imitate what Plato had in mind when placing Socrates in a corner of a palaestra with Lysis, Menexenus, and others to prepare the speech in ways that their talk of Friendship might issue in friendships.

In seizing a single thread of a speech to lasso a huge conclusion, we overlook the unraveling effect that has upon the whole. We tend to read for the conclusions we are sniffing out. We brutalize the text and the personages of the dialogue.

For example, Donald Norman Levin, a developmentalist, argues that Lysis establishes a difference between *eros* and *philia* disparaging to *eros*. Levin describes the emotional state of Hippothales as one of "egotistical and sensual passion," and insists "in Lysis it is not called *philia*, but *eros*." Second, he notes that "the former term does not even enter the picture *until the conversation with Hippothales has been terminated* and Socrates turns his attention to the two comrades- 'You are friends', he says to them

(207c8)-Lysis and Menexenus. Addressing *them*, not Hippothales...." (Levin, in Anton and Kustas, 241, my emphasis first, then emphasis Levin) Next, Levin favorably colors Lysis and Menexenus as two boys "speaking as one" through *philia*, contrasting their condition against that of the egotistical and selfish Hippothales; by extension from this coloring of characters, Levin argues that *eros* is selfish and egotistical, and hence unable to furnish a *philia* oneness. The two are terms differ because *eros* is the unfulfilled, ugly-step-sister of *philia*. By these textual interpretations Levin declares that "*eros* is not identical with *philia*- that the latter is the genus, the former the species..." (Levin, in Anton and Kustas, 242)

My reading is quite different because I take the personages as the primary subjects of the dialogue.

Levin and others conclude that Hippothales is "egotistical" from Socrates' observation that the songs and poems and genealogies he writes, while in praise of Lysis, "have reference" to Hippothales, whatever the outcome of his pursuit. They forget that this is news to Hippothales; he denies it. "Egotistical people are often unaware of their condition." (Teloh, Henry. In conversation.) But when Socrates elaborates his charges, Hippothales seeks his help. Egotistical people rarely do that.

Socrates notes those practiced in these matters are more cautious. (206a1) In this tiny exchange we learn that Hippothales is a novice, rather than a cunning and practiced "hunter" in such matters. Readers must try to remember their own first love. Otherwise, we are in no position to judge Hippothales with charity. Those who see Hippothales condemned by Socrates as egotistical and selfish will almost naturally attribute those qualities to *eros*, and come straight to the conclusion that Plato valued *philia* above it ; the Lysis is taken to be about reaching "what Plato thought" about *eros*, its difference from *philia* and their relationship.

Against the notion that Hippothales' feelings are attributable to a selfish and egotistical character, there are those who argue that Hippothales resembles Lysis. The

two characters both possess "modesty. Hippothales first reveals this aspect of his nature by blushing when Socrates asks him who is his beloved. (204b). He further indicates this characteristic when he denies having composed prose, verse, and song in praise of Lysis, and then, after admitting such compositions, has Ctesippus tell Socrates about their content. (205a-b). His modesty caused him to object to Socrates' charge that by praising the family of Lysis he is really praising himself (205d). Hippothales again illustrates this feature of his character by hiding from Lysis...(207b), and...near the end of the dialogue by turning all sorts of colors (222b)." (Hoerber, R.G. "Character Portrayal in Plato's Lysis". Classical Journal, vol. 41, (1945-6) p. 272).

I am unwilling to grant this fine attribute to Hippothales. Hippothales' is the overwrought state of one in love. "Modesty" is a stable trait, not given to drunken singing and loud bellowing. I rather think of "volcanic anxiety" with all the instability it implies. Had he been "modest", compositions of the sort Ctesippus describes would have been unthinkable.

Other scholars conclude "Hippothales, at least, is a genuine lover in the sense that he is willing to lose himself and risk looking foolish in pursuit of his desire. ...The true philosopher has to resemble Hippothales more than Menexenus, and risk appearing foolish in his passion for wisdom." ( Haden, James. "Friendship in Plato's Lysis". Review of Metaphysics. vol. 37, 327-356, 1983. p. 356) I *almost* agree.

Hippothales is indeed a lover, but he is decidedly not "risking" looking foolish. One of the points of the dialogue is that he just is foolish; there is a difference. Socrates, by contrast, *is* "risking" looking foolish. He knows it, deliberately chooses it, and he admits that this is what they have done- so far as the onlookers go. But not so far as they themselves go. Their endeavor was not ridiculous any more than Hippothales' love for Lysis is ridiculous. Further, restricting our choice of lovers as one between Menexenus or Hippothales ignores Socrates entirely. Treating the three as each lovers, the question comes down to how they differently balance their speech with their emotions. The three

dramatically represent different points on Aristotle's Golden Mean. The only way to hit the mark in this business is to choose Socrates as exemplifying the Mean. I realise that I shall have to prove this contention. In the next two chapters I shall do my utmost.

Socrates' speeches are deliberate. They suit the circumstances and his understanding of his dialectical partners. His speeches are tilling the ground for friendship whereas the speeches of Hippothales' and Menexenus' are not and do not. [Author's note: I am indebted to my friend and mentor Henry Teloh for his sensitive observation that the grammar and form of Socrates' addresses to those other than Lysis and Menexenus are complex grammatically; when he speaks to the boys, on the other hand, Socrates downsizes his grammar to accommodate their youthfulness. We made this discovery when I was translating the Lysis. I was easily reading the conversational Greek "on the level of an eleven year old" whenever Socrates spoke to the boys. When he speaks to his auditor or to Hippothales and Ctesippus, who are more erudite, it quickly became for me, well, "Greek" in that other sense.]

The injection of the Golden Mean as furnishing us a way to understand the characters of the Lysis may be construed by my critics as a confession on my part that both Hippothales and Menexenus are "bad" or "vicious" because they occupy the extremes. Such a view oversimplifies the notion of "vice".

These are youths whose experience and activities have not yet crystallized into "vice." They are both works-in-progress needing instruction on and proper channeling of their speech. They need the example of one who knows that *eros/philia/epithumia* and speech are connected. For the rational part of the soul to govern the emotions, it must be taught and habituated. There will be occasions in which youths speak too much or too little and in the wrong way. They jeopardize friendship when they do that. If we are to make friends, we need skill in conversation.

Hippothales' speech is for the right end, in the wrong way, to the wrong person, at the wrong time. Menexenus' speech goes awry as a method of speaking. But it is

precipitous to declare these boys bad or vicious. Socrates is the useful friend to them both. The exhortation is that adults ought befriend, correct, and improve youth.

To qualify as virtue, our hitting the Golden Mean must be more than a matter of luck. Virtue requires deliberation and practice. Socrates chooses those before whom he will become ridiculous. Unlike Hippothales, he knows that making oneself "ugly" before one's friends or one's favorite is generally not a good idea. But before some "onlookers" appearing ridiculous may generate rewards. It may be the only way to go. Sensitivity to the time, place, circumstances, means and ends is required of the virtuous person. Only practiced and ingrained habit that ignores these conditions qualifies one as vicious. It is not too late for either Hippothales or Menexenus, but it soon will be. Youth flies.

Hippothales' conduct before his friends is clearly vexing and annoying. Friends have been lost over less. He is ridiculous before the very people he can't risk if he would be happy. The passion and agony of *eros* causes these woes. Left uneducated, Hippothales will lose himself again and again. He still has shame. There is still time.

And finally, hermeneutic efforts have uncovered within the imagery of the dialogue and among the historical details of the god Hermes enough data to suggest that the sexual and passionate forms of love are the subterranean subjects of this poem. "Accepting the central sexual connotation of Hermes, it is entirely normal and natural to see [the structural image of the entrance to this palaestra with Hippothales pointing to it] in terms of sexual intercourse...." (Haden, 348) Why, in the face of this textual evidence for the primacy of *eros*, do scholars conclude otherwise?

"Most writers on Plato affirm that he conceived of *eros* as the 'motive power' of intellectual activity, as the drive best evidenced in the philosopher's constant search for beauty and truth...*eros* is the force at work not solely in the acquisition of knowledge but also, and more pervasively, the force compelling man's activities at non-intellectual work and play, his drive to create, to relate socially to others and to establish the conditions of

communal living." (Cacoullous, Ann R., "The Doctrine of *Eros* in Plato". Diotima. Vol. 1 (81-99), 1973. p. 81,83)

I draw the following conclusions. Hippothales' condition, love, is important. His is the condition of an unseasoned adulthood, whose education concerning *eros* is important to him, his friends, to Socrates, and to God. Longing and desire surface repeatedly as main points of the speeches. Those speeches are contextualised by this boy's flaming cheeks and pleas for help. If we forget these surroundings, we forget Hippothales.

Levin's contentions concern me in other ways, too.

First, he pays no attention to the dramatic fact that Socrates is the only speaker in this dialogue. He is speaking in the dramatic present to an unseen person; he is recollecting for him an afternoon in the dramatic past. We will have good reason to remember this fact on my reading of the dialogue, for the dramatic present is as important as the dramatic past in Lysis. This person is hearing what no onlooker that day could ever have divined. I have found no person concerned with this issue.

Concerned to draw the developmentalist's conclusions concerning the inferiority of *eros* to *philia*, Levin asserts that Socrates' "conversation with Hippothales" begins at 203b and "terminates" at 206e when the group enters the palaestra; while outside with him, the word *eros* occurs. Once inside at 207c8 "Socrates turns his attention to the two comrades" and "addressing *them*" with the word *philia* Plato firmly banishes *eros* from the stage. But is this what happens?

Socrates' *recollection* of his conversation with Hippothales begins at 203b. But that recollected conversation continues *unabated* until 211 at which moment Socrates has fulfilled his promise to "give [Hippothales] a specimen of what [he] ought to say...in place of the speeches and songs which [he] is in the habit of treating [Lysis and the others] with...." ( 206c)

Upon achieving the sought-after reply, Socrates says he "turned [his] eyes on Hippothales, and was on the point of...[saying] 'This is the way, Hippothales, that you should talk to your favorite, humbling and checking, instead of puffing and pampering him, as you now do!'" Socrates wants to bark at Hippothales, and only just bites his tongue in the nick of time when he glimpses the agony of poor Hippothales and remembers that Hippothales has stationed himself in a manner so as to be screened from Lysis' view. (210e1-5)

This, then, *pace* Levin, is the dramatic moment that the conversation with Hippothales "terminates" from Socrates' own point of view.

[Author's note: I do not think this matter a mere quibble on the word "conversation", nor on who counts as "in" or "out" of a conversation. It is not only Levin who draws important conclusions by his view that Hippothales is not "in" the conversation. (Cf., Teloh, 72) Whatever a "conversation" is, it entangles us in an ontological problem having five layers. It is a big problem that Plato is actually trying to hint at in the dialogue, though. Because the Lysis imitates a conversation and exhorts us to have them, one of the items on the table is how we decide who are its participants. 1) Moving from the outermost rim to the inner sanctum, those who mark the boundary of "in" and "out" are we readers. I declare readers to be "onlookers" pure and simple as we move from the dramatic past to the dramatic present. We are *better off* than the dramatic bystanders who just happened to be among the listeners that day. They are not "in" the conversation, but at its rim. We move back and forth in dramatic time owing to our eavesdropping on the asides. These others do not. But we are still "onlookers". 2) The student/conspirators are "in" the conversation: these people shift in the dialogue. Those privy to the plot with Hippothales, Ctesippus and the rest, are "included" in the conversation in a way that innocent bystanders are not. They know more than any dramatic bystander. 3) The student whose education is taking place is a converser; he is one who has asked for help and is receiving an answer from Socrates. Thus the



"conversation with Lysis" is Socrates' answer to Hippothales. He is "in" the conversation, for that answer has been shaped *with him in mind* and he well knows that it has. He is listening for it. Ditto: Lysis in the check of Menexenus. For all the appearances, Socrates never stopped ontologically speaking to them. 4) The intended target of the conversation, Menexenus, for example in the opening questioning, is "in" the conversation directly and conventionally and properly speaking, but "on the slant" ontologically speaking. He doesn't know that, of course. 5) The auditor who is hearing this remembrance is "in" the conversation of the dramatic past as something more than an onlooker of it and less than a direct participant on a par with Menexenus, but I don't know how else to capture his status. Additionally, the auditor is having a conversation with Socrates right now in the dramatic present. We overhear part of it.]

Given the reading above, what are we to make of Levin's conclusions concerning "philia" and "eros"? I make this of it:

If the object is to bring to fruition the fruits of *eros*, that doesn't mean one has to *talk* about "*eros*". That is one of Socrates' points to Hippothales. Quit all that singing and mooning and declaration of love stuff. Talk about something, anything really, so long as it has the required effect: humbling and checking. The conversation with Lysis begins with Socrates' asking, "I suppose your father and mother love you very dearly?" (207d6) That question is subservient to the conspiracy stuck before Socrates ever laid eyes on Lysis. It is not only subservient, Socrates owns to his listener that it was an unplanned beginning. It is a complete fluke dramatically speaking. It occurs owing to Menexenus' sudden departure.

This contention returns us to Levin's second mistake. He insists that after Socrates has "terminated" his conversation with Hippothales, Socrates "turns his attention to the two comrades...addressing *them*" with "*philia*." But Levin's report conflicts with Socrates' recollection of what he did.

Socrates and the others have ambled into the palaestra and found a seat where it is quiet. It is his cousin Menexenus' presence that encourages Lysis to come forward to the group. Although he loves to listen, Lysis' shyness or natural modesty has checked his desire. He doesn't venture over until his cousin does. (206c9, 207a1-5) Others gather who shield Hippothales from view, but Socrates tells his unseen listener that although screened from view, Hippothales is well-positioned to listen to "our conversation. I began it by turning my eyes on Menexenus, and saying 'Son of Demophon, which of you two is the elder?'" (207c)

What can be clearer than Levin's ignoring Socrates' ignoring Lysis? Socrates did not "address *them*". He not only ignores Lysis by "turning his eyes on Menexenus", he emphatically excludes everyone except Menexenus by nominating the "Son of Demophon"; the form of the "which-of-the-two-of-you" question Socrates puts to Menexenus has indirectly involved Lysis in whatever answer Menexenus gives; but that puts Lysis at the mercy of Menexenus' reply. It doesn't invite Lysis' reply. Having been expressly excluded, but nevertheless involved, Lysis does not answer even though he is sitting right beside his cousin. It would have been surprising, given his bashfulness and exclusion if he had.

In the opening lines we learn that Socrates is not to be deterred from his course upon slight grounds. Something else, something of moment, something like love-gone-wrong on account of speech, presents itself for diagnosis and therapy. Otherwise, Socrates' appointment would have taken precedence. Apprised of the scope of the debacle and duly beseeched for aid and advise, Socrates stays. (206c) *Eros* is important.

Socrates avers the limitations of straight speech and "will not give advice as it is usually given; that is, he declines to provide some sage insight or teaching concerning friendship. Rather, while acknowledging the difficulty of Hippothales' request, Socrates says that he may be able to 'display' or 'exhibit' (*epideixai*) how one should 'converse' (*diaslegesthai*) with a view to friendship. [206c4-6]" (Tessitore, Aristide. "Plato's Lysis:

An Introduction to Philosophic Friendship". Southern Journal of Philosophy (1990) vol. 28. No. 1. p. 117) Socrates, like Plato, uses the imitation to show what is "hard to say." The dialogue suggests that character can change if the person is young and with the right teacher.

From the beginning of the dialogue Menexenus' character and conduct contrasts Lysis'. He is "bustling with activity from the start. As soon as Menexenus sees Socrates and Ctesippus he comes over to sit down beside them." (Tessidore, p.120). Socrates credits his being called away by the wrestling master as owing to responsibility for the sacrifices. He is the more experienced, reliable, worldly of the two boys. He is definitely the more confident. But Menexenus practices eristic, contentious speech. "It is surely no accident that the very first thing which Menexenus says *amphisbetoumen* (207c2)." (Tessidore, note 13, p. 130) "The contentious nature of Menexenus is clear from Lysis' query: *n ouk oistha oti eristikaos estin?* (211b)" (Hoerber, R. G. Classical Journal. vol. 41 (1945-6) p. 273. transliteration mine)

Plato sanctions both conspiracies as correctives to speech. First, one may give a sample of humbling and checking to educate a lover with the malady of Hippothales. Second, one may use it to check boys who are either full of puffed up arrogance or eristically contentious for the sake of their souls and the hope of preserving the soil of friendship. Like a skipping record we thump to enable it to play, such sample speeches *justly* correct the conditions mentioned.

The scholarly comment on the relationship between Lysis and Menexenus casts them in the Homeric shadow of "youthful rivalry." While this is probably apt as a description of many Athenian boys at the time of Plato's writing, it does little to illumine the dramatic action taken by Socrates in response to Lysis' request. By agreeing to humble and check Menexenus for Lysis, Socrates is attempting to turn back the sharp edge of wit, poised and ever on the alert, that Menexenus might become more tender and

trusting. This, he does, in service to the friendship between Lysis and Menexenus, for the sake of and because it was Lysis who bade him.

Tessidore notes that "the difference in character between the docile Lysis and the contentious Menexenus leads Socrates to approach each of the boys in very different ways" along the lines of structuring a "debate" between them. (Tessidore, 120) But I do not agree that Socrates has set the parameter as a "debate" between Lysis and Menexenus. His lie drains away the penumbra of debate. I have spoken to this previously.

What then do we make of scholars who insist that "youthful rivalry" incites Lysis to ask Socrates to "put him down"? (211c3) (R. G. Hoerber, "Character Portrayal in Plato's Lysis". Classical Journal. Vol. 41, (1945-6) 271-73, p. 272) Or the assurance that Lysis has been taught in his conversation with Socrates "where his true value lies" and that all he lovingly wants for Menexenus is to discover the same thing? (Tindale, Christopher. "Plato's Lysis: A Reconsideration". Apeiron, vol. 18, 102-109, 1984, p.103, 105) I do not know.

The structure of the two conspiracies in the first half of the dialogue suggests a state of need in both targets and the desire to learn on the parts of both Hippothales and Lysis. The strength of the friendship between Lysis and Menexenus is less an issue here than the intelligence and curiosity of Lysis. Similarly, the strength of love Hippothales bears Lysis is less the issue than educating Hippothales. In both the conversation with Lysis and Menexenus Socrates "is a friend who presents the other with the opportunity to excel, the occasion to learn. The view of friendship extolled here is inextricably wedded with learning. One acts for the sake of the other's betterment; friends wrestle, throw and are thrown on a sphere above the physical. Socrates de-constructs to present the possibility of a learning process in the reconstruction." (Tindale, Christopher. "Plato's Lysis: A Reconsideration. Apeiron, vol. 18, 102-109, (1984), p. 107)

At least one scholar has argued that the *elenchus* of Menexenus is the crux of the Lysis. "As I understand the work of the dialogue, its task is to provide a solution, or *lysis*,

to the elenchus of Menexenus." (Gliddens, David. "The Language of Love: Lysis 218a-213c9", Pacific Philosophical Quarterly vol. 61 (1980), p. 277 ) If Aristotle's contention be taken seriously, there are many meanings to be gathered up from the imitation.

Philosophers are gatherers of meaning. There is no "crux".

Others complain that the exchange is "boring and trivial" and grouse at Plato for being "irresponsible." (J. Annas, "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism," Mind, vol. 86 (1977) 532-533) I cautiously withdraw from this debate. That Plato "shamelessly exploits a semantic ambiguity by using 'philos' in two different senses" cannot change the words on the page.

This dialogue has many layers and supports many interpretations. "Gathering up these meanings" is the philosophic enterprise. On my own interpretation, Bolotin and other scholars somehow became onlookers. The outburst by Lysis only looks "unmannerly" if one doesn't know he is in league with Socrates in an attempt to redirect Menexenus, and that this is part of the secret plan between Lysis and Socrates to keep the two boys on an experiential par. It looks strange to see Lysis evincing such interest in their conversation only if one has forgotten his personal stake in Menexenus, and forgotten as well that Lysis is "singularly fond of listening" as Hippothales states before they go into the palaestra that day. (206c8)

The trouble with Bolotin's view, with the view that Socrates is being mean, with the view that Plato is being "irresponsible", or with the view that this a mere "quibble" is that Socrates has told all of us their joint plan in the aside to his listener; he has indicated as well his motive for doing it. We have enough knowledge of Menexenus to fear for his future as a calculating, little, logic-chopping brat. This day may be the cross-roads for him. If he doesn't turn today, then when? The possible emergency of it all is lost as we read for syntactic orders and shameless ambiguities. There is nothing at all wrong with such readings. But the condition of loneliness and alienation are endemic in the the human condition. Mining the imitation in the Lysis may inform our understanding of the

existential roads to its amelioration. One of these roads is surely, "Watch what and how you speak."

The Lysis is often grouped among those dialogues that "defend Socrates against the charge of corrupting the youth, by showing him in action. The case studies are designed to show his concern and the good effect of his method on young audiences." (Brumbaugh, Platonic Studies of Greek Philosophy: Form, Arts, Gadgets, and Hemlock, St. U. of NY, Albany, 1989, p. 94) On Gadamer's reading of the Lysis, however, we find Socrates is one who enjoys befuddling the boys. He doesn't corrupt so much as he abuses the youth. James Arieti is convinced that the Lysis is a prose comedy whose "*dramatic point* makes sense only if we see the philosophical vacuity of the arguments." (James A. Arieti, Interpreting Plato: The Dialogues as Drama, Rowman and Littlefield Pub. Savage, MD. 1991. p.152) I agree with that statement. But Arieti insists that dramatic point of Lysis is that friendship is a humbling experience. He reads the failure of the speeches as proof that "philosophical nemesis [descends] upon those who presume too much." I cannot find, and Arieti does not offer, any textual evidence beyond the *aporiae* of the speeches to use as evidence for this sweeping conclusion. He takes *aporiae* as a kind of nemesis. The only character who seems to have presumed too much is Hippothales. He presumed upon his friends by wailing the name. But he is not a partner in creating the aporetic speeches.

Arieti is correct if he means that friends may require humbling and checking if friendship is to flourish. Our friends may require restraint in those matters of which they are ignorant, as Lysis' mother restrains him when it comes to her loom. That much is certainly supported by the events of the afternoon.

In addition, Arieti offers the suggestion that Plato's point may have been to show that Socrates did not corrupt, so much as befuddle, the youth. (Arieti, Interpreting Plato, 153-4) Such renders the Lysis a belated rebuttal offered after the verdict is in and the execution over: closing the gate after the cows are out of the barn. This last interpretation

requires our attention inasmuch as the rebuttal view of the Lysis dapples the scholarship on the dialogue. Like Hoerber, I think there has been a "failure to comprehend the unity of the Lysis- that is, to observe the dramatic technique intertwined with, and illustrating, the philosophic content." (Hoerber, R. G., "Plato's Lysis", Phronesis. vol. 4 (1959) 15-28, p.17) When scholars find "primarily negative results, or only vague positive contributions,"we tend to read for Plato's unswerving loyalty to Socrates. ( Hoerber, R. G. "Plato's Lysis", vol. 4. (1959) p.16) We historicize the poem when we do this against the explicit statement by Aristotle that poems concern our possibilities, whereas histories do not.

I am sure Plato deemed the verdict returned against Socrates an unjust one. We have this confidence and issue these pronouncements because we have the benefit of having read 35 dialogues; Plato's sympathetic treatment of Socrates is undeniable. But Arieti's claim purports to be about the Lysis. I maintain that it proves too much. This interpretation succeeds with respect to every Platonic dialogue in which Socrates appears if we drag our knowledge of history into the frame of the dialogue. Thus, while it may be true that Lysis is a defense of Socrates, such an interpretation suffers from the failure of being overbroad.

The import of this dialogue is both broader and more philosophic than the rebuttal view allows. In the following chapters, I hope to show that it offers recipes that bridges to Aristotle's treatment of friendship in Books 8, 9, and 10; if it does that, then Plato is doing more than casting a wistful backward glance at the charges, verdict, and death of Socrates.

In summary, then, the Lysis is a poem in imitation of a conversation recollected by Socrates detailing the contingencies and accidents attending his making friends with Lysis and Menexenus. He recalls the conspiracy struck outside the palaestra for the purpose of aiding a lovelorn and ridiculous Hippothales. By offering to show him a sample of proper speech-conduct, Socrates hopes that Hippothales might learn how to

speak both to and of his beloved in order to avoid self-sabotage, as well as to improve the odds of bringing his heart's desire to full flower. One must be in the proper condition to accomplish such ends.

Once inside the palaestra, Socrates' notes the beauty and modesty of Lysis for his listener. The conversational tactic of humbling and checking Lysis through indirect means abruptly dissolves when Menexenus is called away; that departure forces him to address Lysis directly. In the exchange between them, Lysis is led to admit, *contra* all the facts, that he has no idea of himself and that one in such a state, be he young or old, requires restraints such as those his parents, the mule driver, and the pedagogues place upon him. Unless he possesses good sense, his liberty to do as he pleases ought be restrained. The double edge of these remarks sting Hippothales, too. He is "wringing" when Socrates looks at him.

As his lessons to Hippothales draw to a close, Lysis entangles Socrates in yet another secret plot to humble and check his cousin, who is just now returning to the group. The motive for his participation in this plot has altered however. Socrates agrees to the request because it is Lysis who asks him. It is an echo of the first conspiracy in that it would teach one the proper kind of speech. There are issues of the Golden Mean lurking here if we contrast Hippothales with Menexenus.

Caught whispering midstream, Socrates prevaricates in order to cover their plans. Menexenus' flummoxing causes in Socrates an appreciation of Lysis' character and his love of philosophy. It is this unanticipated appreciation for Lysis' intelligence and aptitude for philosophy that directs the efforts of the trio for the remainder of the afternoon.

Plots and conspiracies pushed to the background, the benefits of them having been conferred, the three explore the conventional wisdom concerning friendship in the three proverbs already outlined above in ways symbolically related to their relationships each to the other. While these explorations fail to supply them an explanation of who is a



friend in speech, they supervene, dramatically speaking, as explanations for their existing, personal attachments.

Already friends, and having found the pedestrian proverbs too limited and concrete for their purposes, Socrates declares the three of them "in a position" to say what is meant by friend without recourse to particulars. But owing to the difficulty of saying, he puts the choice to the boys. Having made their election, the discourse that follows is judged to have run aground upon earlier errors already discovered and abandoned.

(222d1-2) At the moment they are trying to recover their bearings for a fresh start, the slaves arrive to retrieve the boys, and the party reluctantly breaks up.

The recollection of his parting call to the boys reveals that Socrates knows, both at the time and later, they have made themselves "ridiculous" before the others, the non-participants, their listeners. He does not now revise his opinion as well he might. His is a warning to the boys to prepare themselves for those reports, and it is his declaration to them that despite their having made themselves so, he counts himself with them, a friend. He and they are budding friends despite their "not yet" having been able to say what is a friend. (223a 15-16) Failures in speech generate rewards.

Lysis is the enactment of the intertwined fabric of the birth of friendship with the philosopher. "The solitary thinker is the anti-thesis [of the imitation in the Lysis.] The quest for knowledge is a cooperative venture. ... Truth, if it is found anywhere, is to be found in the dialogue of our lives, and not in the words that at their best can only express the periphery of that dialogue." (Tindale, Christopher. "Plato's Lysis: A Reconsideration. Apeiron, vol. 18, 102-109, (1984), p.107.)

Philip S. Bashor presented in his dissertation a schemata of the scholarly views of Lysis. In a latter article, he ratified that research as aptly cataloguing "(1) the ever-popular ( and well-founded) *depasser* theory- the 'surpassing' of the Lysis by the Symposium...(2) a 'concealment' theory- Plato's real truth is covered up by a pretended denial...(3) a 'play' theory- as Socrates plays with his auditors so Plato plays with his

readers...(4) an 'elimination' theory- we simply forget about...the Lysis in order to go on gratefully to the more practical minded Aristotle. " (Bashor, Philip. "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship", Journal of Value Inquiry, 2, 269-280, Wint. 68. p. 270, n.1)

Nevertheless, Bashor admits the following: "Escaping the notice of all but recent Platonists are the full implications of the imaginative portrayal of situation, character, and action in the dialogue as a whole." (Ibid., p 272) I hope my interpretation helps these recent Platonists win a separate number (5) on Bashor's outline. That said, we are finally at liberty "to go on gratefully to the more practical minded Aristotle." [ Author's note: I regret any tone of impatience with others who have made a study of the Lysis. I was a lawyer once; the taint of eristic runs deep. It may leave its stain although I have tried to bleach it out of this work. ]

## CHAPTER IV

### RECIPE I

In defense of reading the Lysis nestled against Aristotle's remarks on friendship, recall the importance of the topic to Aristotle. Devoting one fifth-plus of the lecture comprising the Nichomachean Ethics to friendship, he unqualifiedly tells us, "[T]he presence of friends is choiceworthy in all conditions." (EN 1171b28) "More of the EN is devoted to friendship than to any of the virtues. It is a necessary component of HAPPINESS, not merely instrumental to it." (Aristotle. Nichomachean Ethics. Irwin, Terrence ed. Hackett Pub. Indianapolis. 1985. p. 404)

An existential problem attends Aristotle's recommendation. However choiceworthy friends may be, we cannot directly choose the presence of friends as we might snap a finger or make a fist. Before we can choose their presence, we have to have them; and before we can have them, we have to make them. If Aristotle counts friends the "greatest external good" (EN 1099b, and 1169b 10); if Aristotle believes "[a]nyone who is to be happy... must have excellent friends" (EN 1170b18), then it is no trivial matter to attend to matters of their making.

The Lysis sheds light on making friends. "The dialogue as such has many advantages over the philosophical treatise. Consider the bravery with which Plato can tackle vast problems in the briefest encounters. How ineffective even a Plato would have been if he had tried to write a fifteen page essay on the connection between morality and religion (instead of writing the Euthyphro), a twelve page essay on what a man owes to a state after it has treated him unjustly (instead of writing the Crito), or even a book on whether the good man or the unscrupulous man gets the most worthwhile thing life has to offer (instead of giving us the Gorgias and the Republic)!" (Gould, Thomas. Platonic

Love. Free Press of Glencoe. NY. 1963. p. 60) I offer a similar encomium of the Lysis as it concerns making friends.

Just as Socrates finds it difficult to say to Hippothales the kind of thing he has in mind for humbling and checking Lysis, but can give Hippothales a sample of it, Plato finds it difficult to say how to make friends and provides us a sample topography through characters and their conversations. In the brief Lysis, we encounter an imitation of Socrates' making three kinds of friendship canvassed in Nichomachean Ethics. In the dramatic past Socrates excersizes the Aristotelean virtue of loving to befriend Hippothales, Lysis and Menexenus. The budding friendships that sprout in the dramatic past are those of utility and pleasure.

Placing Aristotle and Plato's works side by side and using them as partners ameliorates a disadvantage each bears taken singly. The disadvantage of solely relying upon the poem seems to be its devotion to particularity and concreteness; the treatise remedies that. On the other hand, the disadvantage of the treatise is its neglect of the temporal immediacies attending the birth and sprouting of friendship. The dialogue remedies that cool abstractness. If both treatments of friendship be approached in a way that they "honor" each other, our *understanding* improves. [Author's note: I must at this point try to illustrate the activity of "understanding" due to its centrality in the contemplative life. I offer this example. In studying Biology texts students encountered amoebic mitosis as a step-by-step, linear arrangement of five event-stages we term "interphase", "prophase", "metaphase", "anaphase", and "telophase." These five terms umbrella a kerjillion other changes occuring in the amoeba as its life/division occurs. When a student sees film of the amoebic life, she suddenly sees the gapless, continuous, oozing, smoothness of it all. Had she watched the film without the terminology, it would have been an incomprehensible mush to her. If she doesn't see the film, the life of an amoeba is a staccato series of saltation jumps into and out of these five conventional terms. "Understanding" would blend both the effortless smoothness of the amoebic life

with the apprehension of how one "stage" spills effortlessly into the next. The treatise orders what we have seen allowing us to appreciate the "film" the dialogue shows us.]

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Cataloguing and elaborating the three species of friendship occupies substantial sections of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics and Eudemian Ethics, but when we look for tactical strategies attending the making of friends, we find Aristotle stating the obvious: "There is no stable friendship without confidence, but confidence needs *time*"; or, "Nor is a friend made except through *time*"; or, "...a friend is not to be had without trial nor in a single day, but there is need of *time* and so 'the bushel of salt' has become proverbial"; or, "*Time* is said to show the friend, and bad fortune rather than good." (EE 1237b10-1238b20, my emphasis) Aristotle is not endorsing the idea that sheer time creates friendship; so, time spent, how; doing what?

The dramatic events imitated in Plato's Lysis flesh out Aristotle's contentions concerning time needed for making friends by slicing off one of the most important times: the day, hour, moment of first meeting. There is, after all, the problem of that first meeting. How does one who would make friends convert that accidental meeting into the opportunity of making friends or securing friendship?

Plato's Lysis imitates the answer: we may have to cast off our busy and hurried intentions and take the time to talk with and benefit another. In retrospect we are apt to consider the first meeting a matter of luck or fortune. "Aristotle remarks that the fact that a flourishing life requires external goods, as well as the goods of mind and character, leads some people actually to identify eudaimonia with good fortune (*eutuchia*) (1099b7-8, cf. also 1153b 21-3). That is presumably because, as he remarks at *Politics* 1323b 27-9, 'the goods external to the soul come of themselves and by luck (*tuche*), whereas no one is just or temperate from or on account of luck.' Hence Aristotle himself sometimes

describes external goods also as goods of fortune." (Cooper, John M. "Aristotle On The Goods of Fortune", The Philosophical Review, XCIV, No.2, 173-196, (April 1985), p. 178) Socrates' announced intention to have gone to the Lyceum underscores this notion of luck. Had he held firm, the budding friendships would not have been sown and could not have been harvested at a later, non-dramatic time.

Time taken, we discover what we should do with it when Aristotle cites and approves the connection between friendship and conversation citing the proverb, "'Lack of *conversation* dissolved many a friendship'." (EN 1157b14) He says that friends either do "live together", or long to do so; but his terminology is radically other than our own. He defines "living together" as "sharing *conversation* and thought, not sharing the same pasture, as in the case of grazing animals" (EN 1170b10) Sharing conversation is the *primum mobile* of making friends. Aristotle writes that our "friend consoles us by the sight of him and by *conversation*, if he is dexterous, since he knows our character and what gives us pleasure and pain." (EN 1171b3-5) Aristotle emphasizes the activity of conversing as one that those already friends engage. Lysis shows it seeding the ground as well.

Although the Lysis imitates men-in-conversation, the only speaker in the dramatic present is Socrates. The only continuous converser in the dramatic past is Socrates; either he is listening to one who is speaking to him, or he is talking to someone. The primary personage Plato imitated in the Lysis, then, is "the philosopher". This is not always the case in the dialogues. (Cf. Timaeus, for example, or even Theaetetus.) [Author's note: Stanley Rosen believes that the presence of the voice of Socrates is pointing to a conflict between two streams in Plato's view of philosophy which Rosen names "the poetical" and "mathematical." Rosen says, "Plato seems to think of philosophy as composed of two incompatible aspects...poetical and mathematical...[and]...criticizes both from the viewpoint of philosophy...while employing [them] as 'ways' in his dramas." (Rosen. Stanley. The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry. Routledge P. London. 1988. p.

103) My view is that Plato's imitations reveal that sometimes the philosopher talks and sometimes he listens. I confess that in a work like Laws the imitation is scant. I have a hard time deciding whether it is a poor imitation or an average essay. The line between them blurs.]

The Lysis recommends the acquisition of Socratic habits of "conversation and the sharing of thoughts" as that activity that generates new friendships. Socrates' sample conversations given in conspiratorial contexts with Hippothales and Lysis repudiate the effectiveness of both moony love-talk and eristic talk as inimical to friendship. On the other hand, once these demonstrations are complete, he gives us a positive recommendation for shaping conversation of another kind, a philosophical kind, an inquiry. He counsels us to explore the opinions all know well, on a topic that all agree is important; upon finding the limits of those opinions, venture further out to assay new and untried ground. Never mind that others think it ridiculous. The generator and rudder steering the conversation in Lysis, as well as the catalyst for the conversations conducive to those friendships that arise is Socrates.

Because the time we spend in our initial conversations offers a menu from cabbages to kings, we need particulars concerning the purposes, participants, the subjects engaged and the general conditions attending those conversations germane to friendship. Absent these markers and bouys on the sea lanes open to us, a bald exhortation to spend time in conversation is likely to run aground. "Converse!" leaves as much to be desired as a recipe for friendship as "Sugar, salt, meat, dough," does for Beef Wellington. In recipes we require the relevant quantities. In recipes for friendship we require the relevant background conditions. The character and conditions of the personages and the setting of the poem are these backgrounds. I call these "the kitchen" of friendship. Socrates is the main chef of the Lysis, but he cannot make friends out of thin air. There are ingredients of a special type required: the other people in the conversation. They do not come to the conversation *ex nihilo*. Their present conditions, expectations, habits, and character

matter. Plato is crafting an imitation of the raw materials we confront when we make friends. He is addressing the character required of friends and the makers of friends.

The most steely academic defense for this contention derives from the lament of the Poetics. Aristotle insists that the modern poets neglect character. The tragic poet is not emphasizing, nor creating an "imitation of a person, but rather of action and life, of happiness and misery." (Poetics, 1449b 15) Aristotle complains that "tragedies of most of the moderns are characterless- a defect common among poets of all kinds, and with its counterpart in painting." (Poetics, 1450a 15) For the tragic poets, "the imitation of a person ...comes second" while their actions and emotions come first, dragging the person along as mere drape in order to focus on action with its attendant waves of emotion.

Unlike tragedy or comedy, the Platonic corpus is not imitating "action, what men do and suffer"; rather his poems imitate various kind of character inscribed in everyday conditions that present the possibility of fostering the friendship relation as it appeared to be possible for men of the-then-present-day. Thus, if character dictates both the thought and the action, then to mine the character we need to attend to the conversation as both expressing the thought as well as the principal deeds of the characters so displayed. This blended speech-act is the principal imitation, and it seems to be both the principal means of making friends as well as the primary insignia of friendship.

Lysis is imitating Character in Aristotle's sense It is endorsing its acquisition as possible and open to us to practice and imitate. "Aristotle closely associates character and thought: ' it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these- thought and character- are the two natural causes from which actions spring..." (Poetics, 1450a2). Character has exclusively to do with one's moral being. Aristotle defines character as "that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kinds of things a man chooses or avoids." (Poetics, 1450b).



Choosing is the building block of Aristotle's concept of character. In the Nichomachean Ethics he says virtue is developed through 'habit.'" Choosing repeatedly generates habits. ( Smithson, Isaiah, "The Moral View of Aristotle's Poetics" , Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. XLIV, Jan-Mar 1983, 3-19, p. 3) Moral habit is not blind or mechanical. It is connected to the deliberative efforts of reason, craft, intelligence and perceptive acumen.

Just as tragedy will imitate actions arousing fear and pity, since that is the distinctive function of this kind of imitation" (1452b 30), the "Socratic conversation" would have its distinctive function: the imitation of character arousing..." what? If the character be good, admiration, respect, and imitation; if cowardly or base, contempt and avoidance. The poems tempt us to imitate Socrates, the dramatic paradigm of the man of practical wisdom. Plato's poems address the lament of Aristotle. They are long on character and thought, and give short shrift to action, joy and sorrow.

Aristotle's friendship "is a virtue, or involves virtue"(EN 1155a) and all-important is "to acquire one sort of habit or another, right from our youth."(EN 1104a 20-25) The Lysis endorses this recommendation by showing Socrates' involving youth in conversations. He uses both sample-conversations to teach the craft of humbling and checking that informs and reforms the speech patterns of his target, as well as open-ended philosophic conversations. In both sorts of conversation, the personages feel themselves showered with individual attention and concern. Socrates is not a lecturer. He is not treating the boys as if they are intersubstitutable generic things. In the conversations of the first sort there is a benefit conferred. In the second there is shared enjoyment, elation, perplexity and pleasure that arises in the course of the conversation.

Plato's dialogue exhibits in the personage of Socrates a point that was well understood by Aristotle. Both men knew, as do we, that "education adapted to an individual is actually better than a common education for everyone, just as individualized medical treatment is better...Hence it seems that treatment in particular case is more

exactly right when each person gets special attention, since he then more often gets the suitable treatment. (EN 1180b8-10) Socrates is the personage in the Lysis who is improving each of the three youths in tender, specialized ways. He attempts to improve Hippothales' speech by his sample of checking Lysis. He improves and ministers to the intelligence of Lysis by directing his thoughts toward the *proto philon*. Over the course of the afternoon, Menexenus is turned from the initial banter of eristic and wariness to the birth of trust. What is trust but that seed of "confidence" mentioned by Aristotle? Hence all three youths receive special and individualized attention from Socrates. They are on the road to friendship through the care taken by Socrates. Care of one's ingredients requires intelligence; this is his special virtue and talent. "For not just anyone can improve the condition of just anyone, or the person presented to him; but if anyone can it is the person with knowledge,...attention and intelligence." (EN 1180b26-30)

Socrates is a lover. "There are base desires, lovers, and friends...and there are true lovers, friends, and desires as instantiated by Socrates." (Teloh, Henry. Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues. Notre Dame Press. Notre Dame Indiana. 1986. p.70) If we would learn to imitate the paradigm, we need a blueprint of him. For the object of this inquiry "is not to study", but to put the imitation to use, to have friends, live well, and "become good," as Aristotle says of his own inquiry.

Aristotle opined that "arguments and teaching surely do not influence everyone, but the soul of the student needs to have been prepared by habits for enjoying and hating finely, like ground that is to nourish seed. For someone whose life follows his feeling would not even listen to an argument turning him away, or comprehend it [if he did listen]; and in that state how could he be persuaded to change?" (EN 1179b24-27) The ability to "listen to argument" is one of the dramatic features of each personage in the Lysis. Each of the three young personages stay the course with Socrates that afternoon listening intently to the arguments. Hippothales, Lysis, and Menexenus each have potential for virtue themselves. They each listen. They each learn during the course of

the afternoon. They are not lost in the crowd of the intractable, uneducable, many. Socrates is not turning sows' ears into silk purses.

Most readers have only nebulous ideas of what "listening to argument" entails. The Lysis shows us that it is not so passive an activity as it sounds. "Now if arguments were sufficient by themselves to make people decent, the rewards they would command would justifiably have been many and large...and rightly bestowed. In fact, however, arguments seem to have enough influence to stimulate and encourage the civilized ones among the young people, and perhaps to make virtue take possession of a well-born character that truly loves what is fine; but they seem unable to stimulate the many toward being fine and good. For the many naturally obey fear, not shame...What argument could reform people like these?" (EN 1179b5-18) The ability to listen to arguments and a sensitivity to shame mark the civilized, educable youth. Because friends are the greatest external good and because Socrates has fertilized its possibility that day for each of the three youths, this dialogue is instructive on matters regarding the kind of conversation, attention and intelligence that needs must be brought to social gatherings.

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If friendship supervenes among those who share their thoughts in conversation, imitation conversations should present a background to tie down that possibility. Just as actual conversations have concrete backgrounds that tie them down to actuality. Wishing to engage in fruitful conversations is not enough to guarantee its occurrence. Richard Cory comes to mind. Kierkegaard's picture of the man who has been the life of the party, its very soul and entertainment, is yet the poignant portrait of a man who suffers self-

loathing as he makes his way home; he has had an evening of sterile, fruitless conversation for all his panache, flourish and praise.

The kind of conversations we are seeking are treasures, neither easy to find nor make with others. A conversation is not a hard and fast datum. It is not a noun politely standing still for calm perusal like a rock, a tree, or a text. These do not answer back. The points of view multiply the facets and dimensions of a conversation. Conversation is a series of polite interruptions. Participants are speakers and listeners in turn. We speak of "brilliant" conversations whose energy and light shoot off in all directions like diamond glow; we speak of "dull", "insipid", "boring" conversations. A sense of words alters radically as the background details shift. "Shall we kill them all?"- "By all means, yes!" is not the same conversation if we shift the intended victims from medfly to Middianite, nor if the speakers are children looking at a jar of lightening bugs as opposed to German soldiers looking at Jews in the Polish wood.

A spectator or onlooker at the edge of a conversation, imitation or real, has to take special care. She is not participating in the full sense. She is apt to neglect the surroundings and character of those who are fully engaged participants. The speech by Polonius to his son Laertes is one of the (few) comedic moments of "Hamlet" precisely because Polonius is a man so drained of originality by court life, with its mandate to flatter, that his parting advice to his beloved son reduces to the safest platitudes and banal proverbs imaginable. (Isn't it absurd?- Polonius has nothing to say to Laertes that any child might not say.) But sometimes I lazily read the speech blissfully forgetting that it was Polonius who spoke it. If the speech floats free from its context, it becomes a seductive flow of words. I miss "the" point concerning Polonius and grasp "a" point, another point. I can take it apart logically. I can dissect its form. I dismiss the rest as flowery gloss. I make the Vlastos-turn.

With Rosemary Desjardins "I argue that the purpose of Plato's dramatic presentation is *essentially philosophical*: in other words, the point of the literary

dimension of the dialogues is not only (nor even primarily) to charm but rather to provide necessary parameters of interpretation that will allow us to cut through the ambiguity of the discursive level." (Desjardins, Rosemary, "Why Dialogues? Plato's Serious Play" in Griswold, ed., Platonic Writing, Platonic Readings, 119) In the Lysis, the *aporiae* make the failure of the conversers to find the definition of something while finding seeds of the something instead. For the dramatic conversers the way in was the way out. But from an onlooker's view the *aporiae* are no such thing. The discussion simply stumbled into a ridiculous cul-de-sac.

The sharing of thoughts in conversation is more than mere amusement to be evaluated later as having been ridiculous. "Now, in assuming that serious thinking was best done in conversation of some sort, Plato was...in the direct tradition of the earliest Greeks. Thought, to a Greek was always best advanced by asking and answering questions: proposing alternatives, raising objections, predicting consequences, and comparing the consequences of alternative courses of action." (Gould, Thomas. Platonic Love, Free Press of Glencoe, NY, 1963, p. 58) Sharing conversation, then, can be a contemplative activity. To glimpse what Aristotle meant by the contemplative life requires exploration of the kind of conversations that Lysis displays. Contemplative activity is more than finding places to rest on one's laurels and agree that we have found an answer. Suspicions, for example, are given weight even if they spoil celebrations.

Unlike any other virtue, "loving is the virtue of friends." (EN 1159a35)  
"Friendship seems a sort of moral habit" (EE, 25-31) in which "loving" is its virtue.  
What comprises the virtue, as opposed to the feeling, "loving"?

Against the whoosh and jerk of daily contingencies, we rely on our five senses for immediate access to the pain and pleasure of the world around us. Unlike the automatic operation of our five senses, "virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts by previously activating them ... we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate action, brave by doing brave actions." (EN 1103a33-36) If practicing just or

generous acts make us just or generous, by analogy it is reasonable to suppose that "loving" grows from "loving actions" one of which is practicing conversations that benefit, that give pleasure, that take and appreciate the dialectical partner in his uniqueness. Such conversations *are* the virtue of loving. At the same time they are conducive to making friends and friendship. Just as with the virtues some people are called good for their state of character, others good in their activity, the same is true of friendship"(EN 1157b5, 29) Thus, "loving" is both a state and an activity.

Aristotle notes that old, sour people often do not have friends. (EN 1158a2-5) What is it that old, sour people lack? Their conversations have run dry. They are pursuing advantage, bargain and exchange, utility. Others represent obstacles or stepping stones to their goals. If they are affable or amiable, it is not from the passionate longing for friends as has Socrates, but for more calculating reasons. Old sour people often achieve high honor and distinction despite their cold-heartedness or crabbiness. Nevertheless, Aristotle notes that even above honor we want to be loved, and "friendship seems choiceworthy in itself." (EN 1159a26) It is Socrates' longing that shapes the virtue of loving in Socrates..

Aristotle distinguishes virtues of character and virtues of thought noting that the latter "arise and grow mostly from teaching, and hence needs experience and time," while the former "results from habit" and practice. (EN 1103a14-17) Conversation in the Lysis blend the virtues of character and thought. How to speak well and appropriately is the task Socrates undertakes to teach. He has both habits and experience informing his decisions and actions that day in the palaestra. He imparts his lessons to Hippothales and takes the time to structure an experience of dialectical inquiry for Lysis. His topic is friendship. And so his end.

Because friends are made and friendships emerge from conversation and because conversation can exhibit both virtues of character and virtues of thought, friendship arises

in a blurring of the boundaries between these virtues of thought and virtues of character. Under both, however, lies Socrates' *longing* for friends.

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The morphology and phenotype of "loving" as it displays itself in conversation is complicated. Simply saying it hits "The Golden Mean" will not help us. A virtuous action is anything but a pristine datum that one can pluck from its context and examine. Action is ambiguous. Aristotle insists that the entire gamut of virtues of character done "at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, **is** the intermediate and best condition and this is proper to virtue." (EN, 1106b20-25, my bold) Anyone might get lucky and hit the middle once or twice. It is "hard to be good" because an action done in the Golden Mean is hedged and contextualised by these five conditions.

Once we realize that these five conditions **are** the mean and have to be met, that they and nothing besides determine the middle, we ought be a bit humbled and checked ourselves. For if the activity of virtue just is a coincident intersection of these conditions attending our feelings and actions, then recognition of the presence of these attendant conditions is crucial. That recognition depends upon the virtue of thought Aristotle calls "intelligence".

Aristotle tells us that the exercises of our virtues "require intelligence" and "correct reason is reason that expresses intelligence...For it is not merely the state expressing correct reason, but the state involving correct reason, that is virtue. And it is intelligence that is correct reason in this area." (EN, 1144b21-30) "Virtue makes us reach the end in our action, while intelligence makes us reach what promotes the end." (EN 1145a5-6)

There are at least two ways to interpret Aristotle here. Does he mean that one must, not just correctly, but intelligently, identify each of these five conditions as present and accounted for *before* one responds, or is he rather offering an *ad hoc* description of virtue's being just that which is done or felt at the right time, about the right thing, toward the right people, etc. taking such as indicative of intelligence? The former increases the difficulty of hitting the mark factorially and would explain Aristotle's saying, "[T]hat is why error is easy and correctness hard, since it is easy to miss the target and hard to hit it." (EN 1106b30) For example, I might apprehend the salient and relevant conditions in every way except my timing. My action, then, would still "miss the mark."

On the other hand, the latter interpretation seems to be indicated by his references to the public customs of blaming the deficiency and the excess. "The intermediate condition is correct and wins praise." (EN 1106b 26-27) If the public opinion is taking its conception of the excellent man as a model, we praise those whom we identify as having acted/felt like him and we blame those who do not; the arenas of praise and blame then become cognitive markers of the Golden Mean. (EN 1106b25)

Perhaps this dilemma can be solved temporally. In youth we acquire our sensitivity to present circumstances against the praise and blame apparatus of our social background; later, we encounter situations in which we calculate the distance between our former experiences and our present options. For example, if a community transmits its apprehension of virtue and its fabric by educating its youth to the parameters of virtue and vice by exposing them to the concrete instances of praise and blame, those actions and feelings so appraised will have a particular environmental surround of time, things, people, ends, and means attending the public evaluation. The denunciations of a culture may involve one of these, but not the others. The youth learns the territory of "right time" for, say, courage, from observing the wider practices of praise and blame in his culture. He learns "right means" in a similar way. And so forth.



As he matures, the tacit or background knowledge of "this" surrounding as being an instance of the "right time" for courage becomes an identification he makes much the same way that he remembers his way home. Recognition and remembrance, rather than algebraic calculation, is his guide here. Unless such recognition is part of the apparatus, there is the problem that one has "never (temporally) been in this situation before"; if so, then knowledge of "right time" (etc.) becomes all but impossible. If "the right time" did not occur repeatedly, if it were not recognizable, one could never know if one were in "the right time" for a particular action or feeling; one could never practice the appropriate response; one could never succeed in developing the disposition or habit to hit the mark.

We learn by exposure and experience, by suffering correction and remonstrance, then, the arenas of the five conditions. Our experience of witnessing and participating in cultural praise and blame inform and create the memory of these conditions as being present; we come to recognize our own feelings and actions as having been appropriately felt and taken. We do not, then, calculate from scratch the question of "right time", "right people", "right things", "right ends", "right ways" before we act or feel. We remember former instances and analogize to the present case. The bearings we take in any present situation resemble, more or less, the paradigm cases of our previous experiences. The more closely they resemble those cases, the less calculation; the less they resemble them, the more calculation is required to divine whether we have before us an instance of "right time", etc. Intelligence marks the gap with great precision.

The trouble is: nobody lives enough. "For it is about our actions that we deliberate and inquire, and all our actions have a contingent character; hardly any of them are determined by necessity." (Rhetoric, I, 25) Unless we witness sufficient examples, and my contention is that concrete examples are too scattered to witness enough of them, we shall be defective. But what if we could study the common wisdom, directives, and proverbs in relaxation and leisure? What if we could examine them in conversations or in poems of conversation? Might that not improve our deliberations? If we do not have

these conversations that is not to say we shall become base. It raises the odds that we shall live rote, confined, safe, parochial lives within the metes and bounds of those rules we do grasp and possess, perhaps thinking ourselves "pious" on the strength of our limited exposure. (Cf., Euthyphro) Aristotle warns us of this trap when he notes that we might produce "something grammatical by chance or by following someone else's instructions. To be a grammarian, then we must both produce something grammatical and produce it in the way in which the grammarian produces it, i.e., expressing grammatical knowledge that is in us." (EN 1105a22-26)

Aristotle's distinction between craft knowledge and intelligence is relevant here, too. The intelligent person deliberates about "what is good and beneficial...what promotes living well in general....[and] we call people intelligent ...whenever they calculate well to promote some excellent end, in an area where there is no craft. Hence where [living well] as a whole is concerned, the deliberative person will also be intelligent." (EN 1140a26-30) Reason informs both production and action. When reason informs production, we call it "craft". (EN 1140a1-20) Craft has an end beyond itself, but the end of intelligent action is doing well itself. (EN 1140b5-7) "We acquire virtue just as we do craft": by practicing "the right activities." (EN 1103a33, 1104a23) Knowing the connection of proper speech to making friends (the lessons Socrates teaches for the benefit of Hippothales and Menexenus) and knowing that friendship is choiceworthy (the lesson Socrates teaches for the benefit of Lysis) dramatically blends craft and intelligence. These are not divided, static, steady states, but overlapping thoroughly meshed creative partners.

When Socrates seeks to teach Hippothales by a sample conversation, he is using craft to produce that sample. But inasmuch as he is deliberating about an end good and beneficial, friendship, Socrates is exercising his intelligence. But Fortune attends the circumstances of all of our activities. Fortune plays a part in the right time, place, people, means and end: Socrates happens to fall in with Hippothales. Menexenus is nowhere in

sight and Lysis hangs back. Menexenus is called away. Lysis flirts with Socrates. Lysis blunders. Socrates is charmed. Pedagogues are drunk and calling. Each of these is an interruption and opportunity the intelligent man, who longs for friends, will face. It is always "from his resources at any time that [the virtuous man] will do the finest actions, just as a good general will make the best use of his forces at war, and good shoemaker will produce the finest shoe from the hides given him." ( EN 1100b 35-1101a 5) From these particular personal shifting sea of conditions one must hit the mark of the right time, place, means, end, and persons to befriend.

What, then, constitute the right time, things, persons, means and ends if we take Lysis as an imitation serving us a sample of the exercise of the virtue "loving" and its activity we call "making friends"? If we purvey the five conditions of the Golden Mean against the circumstances, we might distill the recipe that an intelligent virtuous philosopher takes as commemorative of this contingent surrounding.

R. G. Hoerber pays careful attention to the dramatic details of the Lysis. He notes the setting and surround of the Lysis in words beneficial to my thesis. I think of Plato's treatment of the dramatic setting as the "kitchen" of friendship. Where is it? Hoerber says,

The dialogue opens by mentioning three distinct places- the Academy, the Lyceum, and a recently-constructed palaestra located near the wall of the city between two grooves. All three spots served as haunts for the youth, the middle-aged and the old men. All three age groups are represented in the Lysis...any such locale as those mentioned might serve naturally as the scene of a discussion on friendship, or other on the circumstances under which friendships develop; for these haunts were meeting places for males of all ages in their more jovial moments. ...In the description of the people at the new palaestra, moreover, Plato speaks of three separate groups- some were playing outside; others were amusing themselves at 'odd and even' in the interior; a third group gathers around Socrates (206e-207a) (Hoerber, "Plato's Lysis", *Phronesis*, 4 (1959), 15-28, p.17-18)

The kitchen of friendship as presented in Lysis offers a choice of places that men of the then-present day frequent. There the religious rituals, wrestling, and playing of games occur. We find Socrates on his hurried way from the Academy to the Lyceum. His is an accidental meeting with Hippothales and the others. Socrates deliberates before he agrees to enter the palaestra. Recall the series of questions he poses to Hippothales concerning where they are, who is inside, what they do, and so forth. The Academy and the Lyceum were easily the most notable gathering places for boys and men; when Socrates learns that the new palaestra sports surroundings similar to those in the Academy or Lyceum, why does he hesitate? And why did Plato decide to set the Lysis here rather than at one of the more traditional haunts?

I think Plato is subtly suggesting that we abandon the *status quo* of our routines to try new places. That it is a new palaestra points to the suggestion that it is new friends we will be making. A new, untried place may offer opportunities. But Socrates hesitates because one doesn't willy-nilly jump into the nearest fern-bar simply because it is open. Socrates wants to know his surroundings before he goes sashaying inside. He had his itinerary set before falling in with Hippothales.

One notes the shift from his impersonal questions to the personal one concerning love as the point at which Socrates seems prepared to entertain the prospect of going inside. The erotic images evoked by the description of the entrance to the building suggest that Socrates is entering the very gates of erotic action. One might do well to deliberate such entrances. He has a purpose and plan to instruct Hippothales before going inside. He is not going inside for kicks.

Inside the palaestra we find the flurry of all kinds of activity. Aristotle notes in his taxonomy of friendship the wide range of endeavors friends embark upon together. "Hence some friends drink together, others play dice, while others do gymnastics and go hunting, or *do philosophy*; they spend their days together on whichever pursuit in life they like most; for since they want to live with their friends, they share the actions in

which they find their common life" (EN 1172a3-7, my emphasis) We find most of these activities mentioned in the Lysis. Recall Socrates' two references to "hunting" in the dialogue. Even though one could not literally "hunt" inside a palaestra, symbolic hunting occurs in the questions and answers of the conversers. Once inside, the activity Aristotle would recognize as "doing philosophy" begins. Its equipment is a quiet corner.

The "right people" is more difficult to address because the scholars do not agree on the characters of the personages. Notwithstanding disagreement, we can all agree that the one trait the three youths have in common is their ability to listen. Such an ability is necessary with any conversation partner. As to their distinctive traits, we already know the dire straits that attend Hippothales' interest in the conversation. We have been told that Lysis is fond of listening and that Menexenus is a student of Ctesippus who enjoys conversation. From the mere appearance of Socrates and Ctesippus, Menexenus elects to drop out of the game he is playing to join them, and Lysis has been described as wanting to join, but lacking the same level of confidence. The three personages are living different lives; they need individualized ministrations from Socrates. Hippothales needs a sample, Menexenus needs to learn the difference between eristic and philosophical questioning, and Lysis needs the experience of philosophy if his intelligence is to be properly shaped. These seems then to be the cobbler's "hides" Socrates has to work with that afternoon.

Even if we grant that the "right end" is friendship, and even if we grant that it is fine and choiceworthy, we are going to face problems with the Aristotelian insistence on the "right means." It is the protagonist of the Lysis Socrates whose means we are addressing, for it is only to his recollection that we are privy. If he has hit the Golden Mean that afternoon, the "right means" needs must have been employed.

But when we hear from him what he did that day, we discover he employed several fairly remarkable "means". Each of these actions qualify as deliberate,

intentional, and intelligently chosen actions. The trouble lies in the language I will adopt to describe these actions with accuracy.

Reading the dialogue straight ahead gives us the following list of his means:

- 1) He throws over his intention to go "straight to the Lyceum". There is indecision, procrastination, flakiness, and inconstancy as to his previously adopted plans.
- 2) He is abrupt, nosy and tactless with Hippothales, embarrassing and shaming of him, intrusive inquiring into his emotional private life, and uninvited upbraiding of him in front of his friends and Ctesippus.
- 3) He becomes a conspirator in a plan that deceives Lysis and Menexenus as to his true purposes, which include instructing and furthering the aims of Hippothales in his seduction of Lysis. So far as we know, they never discover it.
- 4) He lies to the entire group to cover his conspiracy with Lysis to best Menexenus.
- 5) He fails to gain the definition they seek and has wasted the time of all concerned.

If we are to make some sense of this set of means, given that Socrates is the Platonic dramatic portrait of the man of practical wisdom, not to mention my thesis that his is the character we are encouraged to imitate in the acquisition of friends, it will be through the devices of right time, place, people, and ends that we evaluate the means he selects. "Right means" do not leap into our outstretched arms like vestal virgins. They have to be seduced like whores from alleyways on Lower Broad. We simply err if we think we can sieze these actions off the page without these other surroundings. That is an onlooker's view. In the recipe above, that viewpoint portrays a person who is anything but loving or lovable.

An onlooker's view supports each of these denunciations because such a view uncharitably ignores the character and thought beneath the actions Socrates takes. Action is ambiguous. [Author's note: J. L. Austin's Sense and Sensibilia muses over the "real" color of a fish which, in its element, is all blue and gold and lovely, but yanked into the air is mud brown. "Socrates lied" is our equivalent to yanking him from the watery depths. From those depths, however, he nurtures, improves, weaves the

threads to the end of friendship. "Yes , but by lying!" "Well, yes; I can see that the fish is mud gray, too. But is that the *real* color of the fish?" The onlooker's view would take the story of David and Goliath to be a recommendation to daily practice the sling-shot, rather than see that right time, person, end, luck and intelligence furnished the right means.]

Recall that vice is habitual and that the contingencies attending the unfolding events do not lend themselves to the conclusion that the deceits of Socrates are the habitual measures he employs to negotiate his day. Still, this is a weak defense. That the virtuous man lies at all is apt to leave a bitter taste in the mouth. Gregory Vlastos boldly denies that Socrates would cheat or lie to gain a dialectical advantage. He invents something he calls the rules of "contention" and "discussion" to do this. (Vlastos, Gregory. Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher. Cambridge Univ. P. Cambridge. 1991. p. 155, and note 92) I think it is obvious that Socrates lies, dissembles, pretends, and conspires in Lysis. I do not know how Vlastos' distinctions erase it. Rather than a search for truth, we have in the Lysis a search for friendship. Perhaps the rules governing "right means" are different here.

Another defense runs as follows: the accidents of the dialogue attest to a lack of design on his part. He "falls in" with Hippothales and the others in a quite accidental way. He is beseeched by both Hippothales and Lysis for help. He cannot help knowing that Hippothales is love. God told him much as God told Moses the Ten Commandments. To ignore revelations of this kind would require of him a pretense equal to the pretense he adopts to instruct the two youths. Socrates did it for God. I don't buy it. It rings of excuse. Excuse acknowledges the wrong done and seeks to mitigate blame. Excuse would confess that Socrates has not hit the mark. Excuse is not what we are after.

Third attempt: He cares about the emotional states of others. Had he gone merrily on his way would allow onlookers to characterize him as callous and unfeeling. Such is the ambiguity of naked action. Damned if you do, and damned if you don't. The

closing lines of the dialogue attest to Socrates' knowledge that the onlooker may well denounce the trio as having been ridiculous that afternoon. This knowledge tends to show the weight Socrates attaches to the opinions of others against the value he attaches to educating and fostering the virtues of the boys who obviously need him. That he does not value their judgment over the character formation of the lads testifies both to his concern for the individuals conversing with him and to his recognition of the proper weight to attach to the judgments of onlookers. One may have to lie, conspire, and appear ridiculous on certain occasions if one would make friends or protect others in their attempts to make friends. In any such dilemma, the wise man will run that risk for the rewards it may generate.

This sounds in justification. But the condemnation of lying, pretense, and conspiracy runs deep. That Socrates did not accomplish his instruction by truthful means, that he adopted conspiratorial aims and pretenses, appears to testify against any resolution of "right means"; but: how else could he have done what he did other than by guile? In matters of directing the surging emotion of Eros, perhaps guile is the tool that is appropriate. I suggest that before we condemn it, we ask what Aristotle might say. He might at least inquire whether the guile was selfish or altruistic. "For we define a friend as one who will always try, for your sake, to do what he takes to be good for you."

(Rhetoric, I1361b 35)

The Buddha once addressed the issue of lying in a way relevant to our problem. "Suppose a mother saw from the lawn that her children were absorbed by a game in the house, and that the house was on fire. Her children, however, are ignorant of the dangers of fire; ought she call out the children, 'Come out of the house, for it is on fire!'; or ought she call to them [our equivalent of] 'Hey kids, the ice-cream truck is here!' to get them to drop their games and come to her?"

Buddha would have the mother know her children, first, and tailor her words to accomplish the [right] end of saving their lives. If the words she speaks are not truthful,



but the children are unable to understand and appreciate the truth, then "telling the truth" does not fit the right time or place or circumstance or people or ends. Our means are instruments in service to these.

The fire makes the time right to call them outside; the fact that they are children absorbed by a game, unlikely to come to her makes this lie an attention breaker and hence the right means; the fact that they are her children makes them the right people; and the fact that it will save their lives, makes it the right end. Mother, lie your head off.

A denunciation of the conspiracies and lies of Socrates compares well to the denunciation of the mother's lie to her children. These denunciations issue from the onlookers. Because they know only the truth, but have not the love the mother bears her children, they insist that the good mother will never lie. But these onlookers are not in the house that is on fire. They do not love the children. They are on the street with the mother. Lacking the incidents of her standpoint, that these are her very own children, it is easy enough for them say, "Just truthfully call them out."

These different standpoints illumine the warnings in Nichomachean Ethics that "particular cases" require "the agents themselves [to] consider in each case what the opportune action is" (EN1104a5), for "just as Olympic prizes are not for the finest and strongest but for the contestants" (EN 1099a4), so those situated in the time, place, with the people, etc., must choose the "intermediate that is relative to [them]...[similar to the way] good craftsmen also, we say, focus on what is intermediate when they produce their product." (EN 1106a35,1106b13) In choosing to lie we tailor speech itself to the end "relative to us the intermediate [being] what is neither superfluous nor deficient; this is not one, and is not the same for everyone." (EN 1105b15) Like the mother's lie to her children, conspiracies and lies are the right means if Socrates undertakes them as a lover and protector of youth's future success in finding friends. His decisions to conspire are neither gratuitous nor unrelated to these conditions and goals. Each pretense and lie is speech shaped to further the friendships of youth. I contend that Socrates has decided

upon a mean relative to him with reference to the goals an intelligent person would employ; intelligent because he looking at the fine as an end, and his lies are neither excessive nor deficient given his material conditions and ingredients. (Cf., EN 1106b36-1107a5) Had he told the truth, his speech would have been deficient; had he continued his pretenses beyond what was called for, his speech would have been excessive. His means accomplished a beneficial result on behalf of these youths; like the mother, he hit the mean.

Socrates appreciates the urgency of the plight of those in love and would alleviate it by educating the sufferers. He would become the useful friend. Hard words to Hippothales and hard lessons to Menexenus may be necessary to work a beneficial change in them; Socrates is nosy; he does humble and check, embarrass and shame the other conversers. Is shaming an educative process? "Certain character traits are important for a good dialectical partner. One is shame. Shame is the condition of an interlocutor who admits that his real moral beliefs are at odds with his words or actions." (Teloh, H. Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues, U. Notre Dame P, 1986, p. 11) If shame and/or *aporiae* work to benefit, we are urged to befriend others in our use of it. That Socrates undertakes this means as a labor of love for another who is unable to perform the task himself not only absolves him of moral blame for conspiring and lying, it shows him to have been the useful friend.

There are Aristotelian reasons, however, to suggest that Socrates is not so much a friend to Hippothales and the boys as he is doing a simple kindness unrelated to friendship.

The definition of kindness in Rh. 2.7 is " a willingness to give 'assistance [hupourgia] toward someone in need' (1385a18), and 'is great if it is shown toward someone in great need, or in need of what is important or what is difficult to get, or someone who has need in a crisis, or if the helper is the only one or first one or the most important one' (1385a19-21). Accordingly, in acting out of kindness, our sympathy goes

out to an individual because of the circumstances, and not because of *who* the individual happens to be. The situation is different in friendship, when we act out of a specific concern for a *particular* person; because it is *that* person who is in need (and not another), what we can do and are willing to do, and what others count on us to do, is often greater." (Sherman, Nancy. "Aristotle on the Shared Life" ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar. Friendship: a Philosophic Reader. Cornell Univ. Press. Ithaca, NY. 1993. p, 101)

That Socrates refers to all three as "friend" tends to be the only textually supported way to respond to the above. For both of our descriptions, befriending vs. mere kindness, save the phenomena. Perhaps it might have been another youth, and not Hippothales that day, whom Socrates rescued. If so, his action does seem more akin to an impersonal kindness done and more outside of friendship, than within it.

Aristotle notes that the "good person must be self-lover, since he will both help himself and benefit others by doing fine actions." (EN 1169a10) If owing to his being a self-lover, Socrates finds that he befriends, not merely jumps to the rescue of, others, that would militate against his aid to the youths being merely an instance of kindness. What is motivating the self-lover, in the proper sense of that word, is his love. This would make the "impersonal act of kindness" based upon the circumstances alone impossible for one such as Socrates. Although helpful to my position, this solution seems a bit contrived and awkward.

I tend to read Aristotle as offering a broader view of the incidents of friendships of utility than the above. The friendship among cities is declared by Aristotle to be one of utility. (EN 1157a29) Aristotle remarks the disadvantage of a friendship of utility as owing to the fact that such friends are apt to "dissolve the friendship as soon as the advantage is removed; for they were never friends of each other, but of what was expedient for them." (EN 1157a15) If Aristotle will count treaties as making friends of cities, I feel a bit more sanguine in counting his relationship with Hippothales and the

others as beneficial in the same way. Friendships of utility need not dissolve. They are less stable; and this is Aristotle's concern.

Aristotle allows for relationships of all kinds to fall within the rubric of friendship. He says, "bad people as well [as good] to be friends to each other for pleasure or utility, for decent people to be friends to base people, and for someone with neither character to be a friend to someone with any character." (EN 1157a15-20) I think it safe to say that his budding friendship for the boys, insofar as Socrates benefits them, is an instance of friendship of utility. He may intercede on Hippothales behalf owing to his kindness; but far from uprooting friendship, it roots it. The plan to instruct Hippothales on the proper speech seems specially undertaken by Socrates to address *his* plight. I confess that others may read in his actions not friendship, but something more along the lines of pushing a stranger out of the way of an oncoming train. The stranger will feel befriended. Socrates will feel nothing personal at all. Such is the portrait Sherman might draw of Socrates' actions above.

Perhaps it is a matter of whose viewpoint we are to take as to whether Socrates has been a friend or merely done a kindness here. The threshold difference between them on the Aristotelian notion of friendship of utility is difficult to mark. I would argue that he has been a friend. A disposition to kindness involves empathy. His sensitivity to Hippothales occurs initially, marks the climax of the conversation with Lysis, and surfaces again at the end of discussion when Socrates notes his rapturous visage and his changing all sorts of colors. Why this continued interest in *him*, if his is disinterested kindness alone?

"Proof" by analogy: if an expert tree climber were ambling by my house and saw me, standing under the willow, crying for my stranded cat, and out of kindness alone agreed to retrieve my cat, wouldn't he simply shinny up the tree, grab the feline, shinny down, hand her over, and be gone? If, on the other hand, he berated me for letting her get out in the first place, and, as he climbed the shaky branch, he kept looking at my face,

noting my apprehensions, and if he did all in his power to avoid firing my fears, and if he gloated inside with and at me when he retrieved Muffy, then wouldn't I say: "Yes, it was kindness and more: this tree climber cared about *me*." ? Such is the kind evidence we have that Socrates is acting from friendship, from motives highly personal with respect to Hippothales and the boys, and not from a disinterested kindness alone. It is Socrates' watchfulness that fills his deeds with a personal component above mere kindness- assuming with Sherman that the Greeks distinguished the condition of befriending from kindness.

As to the charge he failed to find their definition and to having wasted the day, I submit that Plato is urging just this very kind of waste and failure. When the three conversers part ways, Socrates is calling to the boys that they have "not yet" found their definition. This "not yet" inscribes upon such "failures" both a temporary condition and a reason for meeting again. It is an invitation.

Friendships thrive on the possibilities of tomorrow as surely as they root in the shared enterprises of the past. By his "not yet", Socrates indicates his willingness and optimism with respect to their endeavors. He chooses to treat their failure as both a challenge and opportunity for future meetings and further discussions.

For onlookers who will carry away the reports, it is otherwise. They have not participated in the conversation; they have not wrung from the day the benefits of these "failures." They have watched, listened, and hung around waiting for results. In their reports they carry the disappointment they feel, no less than Socrates carries anticipation of future meetings with his young new "friends".

Aristotle notes that "narration should depict character; to which end you must know what makes it do so. One such thing is the indication of choice; the quality of purpose indicated determines the quality of character depicted and is itself determined by the end pursued. Thus it is that mathematical discourses depict no character; they have nothing to do with choice, for they represent nobody as pursuing any end. On the other

hand, the Socratic Dialogues do depict character. This end will also be gained by describing the manifestations of various types of character...." (Rhetoric, III, 1417a 17-21) The Lysis is imitating a philosopher in a concrete situation wherein he displays "the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue"; insofar as it shows us Socrates' feeling and acting "at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way...."(EN 1106b15-20), the Lysis shows us decisions and actions of "loving" in a virtuous man.

The problem attending the description of character is one of standpoint. We have to judge from the descriptions Socrates himself relates of himself whether he has hit the mark or not. For the mean, as Aristotle tells us, is the mean relative to "us", or in this case, to Socrates. The derogatory descriptions given above are the means as far as the onlooker's stance goes. But the conversationalists within the drama that day developed aspirations and empathy for one another because Socrates took the time to make himself of use in matters of conversation and *eros*. Onlookers did not face the whoosh and jerk of the exigencies attending the conversation, and thus do not appreciate them in quite the same way that Socrates did. It is easy to call wrong what he did if we are not apprised of the persons or ends for which he acted.

Once the conspiracies to improve the speech of others, undertaken for their benefit, have reached their conclusion, the conversation shifts, as do the relationships imitated. In the course of being useful, first to Hippothales, and then to Lysis and Menexenus, Socrates finds that he has acquired a new and unanticipated motive to stay in the palaestra. He has been charmed by Lysis' intelligence and aptitude for philosophy. That gives him pleasure, but it also presents to him an opportunity to engage and let us hope shape and heighten the pleasure of listening in this budding philosopher. Being a useful friend and pleasure friend overlap in Socrates.

The character of Socrates meshes with Aristotle's observation that the "excellent person is both pleasant and useful." (EN 1158a30)

Aristotle owns that "the cause of every friendship is good or pleasure, either unconditional or for the lover; and every friendship reflects some similarity. And all the features we have mentioned are found in this [rare] friendship because of [the nature of] the friends themselves...good people are also pleasant to each other. And friendship for utility also resembles it since good people are also useful to each other." (En 115615, 1157a1-4) The friendship that arises among people is tied to the character of the friends involved. The excellent person enjoys the opportunity to participate in the friendships of utility, the friendships of pleasure, and, if fortune should bestow upon him one lovable like himself, the rare friendship.

The point in the remembrance that Socrates asks Lysis to follow the steps of poets with him is the first time in the dialogue that Socrates has not had conspiracy or pretense in his way. The useful and beneficial favors have been duly conferred, and now, playing "Step-There" with the poets, Socrates is embarking the pleasure friendship in which the three will "do philosophy" together. This occupies the trio throughout the second half of remembrance. Aristotle could be speaking of Socrates when he says "the lover of learning activates his thought in thinking about objects of study" and such activity is a pleasure. (EN 1175a15) I take this to be the initial condition of one who would capture the elements of the contemplative life as described by Aristotle. This loving of learning is its *sine qua non*. "The cause of the friendship is the pleasure of the lover," as Aristotle says.

Thus his recollection of the dramatic past to his auditor concerning the actions he took on the day of first meeting divides in half. In the first half occurs Socrates' willingness to be of benefit to the youth and to befriend them by shaping and educating them in the proper kind of discourse; in the second half, having been charmed himself, arise the engagements and pursuits of the pleasure friendship, undertaken by doing philosophy. Both the useful friendship and the pleasure friendship attend the activity of conversation. Once the instrumentally effective conspiracies have been successfully completed, the pleasures of philosophic conversation take flight.

Aristotle distinguishes friendships of equality and inequality. These are status or role relations as seen between husbands and wives or rulers and ruled. It would be negligent not to concede the Lysis friendships to be among unequals if we grant that unequal friendships arise among an older person for a younger one. There is certainly no arguing this. (EN 1158b10) But this status carries the suggestion that in such an unequal friendship, the superior person attend to his charge. Socrates believes that youth needs educating and correction and other benefits from the elders if they would make friends either with each other or with a philosopher like Socrates. The Lysis addresses how superiors nurture their inferiors in friendships of unequal status.

The friendships enacted by Socrates for these boys are not imitations of the complete, rare, or virtuous friendship. Such friendships are "of good people similar in virtue" (EN 1156b5). I acknowledge these boys are not similar to Socrates in virtue, owing to the fact that they are green; that is, they are not yet possessed of habits which would count as virtues. Indeed, one of the tasks Socrates sets for himself is the education of these youth as to the proper speech in conversation. Acquiring such a habit of speech would, let us hope, channel *eros* and thereby foster the possibility of their eventual participation in the rare friendship.

In summary, the Lysis shows us the following: the first half of the dialogue endorses the instrumentalist view. The useful are friends. Socrates is the useful friend; he is benefiting the others in the dialogue. Socrates enacts this contention in both his conversation with Lysis, which is topically related to usefulness, as well as his chat with Menexenus. These conversations are double-layered, for by them Socrates is about the business of teaching Hippothales how to talk to his favorite, as well as teaching Lysis the art of humbling and checking when he humbles and checks Menexenus. Further, by the conversations of the first half of the dialogue, Socrates is kneading and preparing the characters of both Lysis and Menexenus. Friendship cannot flourish if either vanity, mushtalk, or the hard steely talk of an eristic guides the matter. In other words, he is



preparing the ingredients of friendship, the youths, for friendship. If one would cook up friendship, one needs to pay attention to the ingredients one has, that is, each person's concrete situation. Socrates is attentive.

The second half of the recollection works an interesting comment upon the efforts of Socrates. He finds himself "charmed" by Lysis. Socrates' efforts, then, to prepare the soil for friendship worked a double result. His *own* soul became prepared for the pleasure friendship from the improvement he tried to make in these boys. The three begin pursuing the topic of friendship for wholly other reasons at this point, non-instrumentally, and it is then we see the three becoming pleasure friends over their activity of "doing philosophy. Socrates draws his remarks with Lysis in mind during the second half of the dialogue. Pleasure friendship need not lose sight of usefulness.

Drawing up the first recipe for friendship from the remembrance of Socrates to his unseen listener against the Nichomachean Ethics counsels us to seek the Golden Mean in speech if we would have friends. By taking Socrates to be the Platonic exemplification of the man of practical wisdom, but one who is much like the present day, the first recipe for making friends sets out various decisions a virtuous man makes to make friends.

The decisions Socrates made to be a useful and/or pleasure friends make the following recipe: 1) when love is at stake, abandon your intentions; 2) when friendship dictates, embarrassing, humiliating, conspiring and plotting with others is okay; 3) ditto: lying; 4) pretend to be straightforward while dissembling; 5) confuse someone like Menexenus intentionally; 6) do not fear or cover up if a suspicion should arise that you have reached an agreement falsely: tell everyone even if it ruins their celebration; 7) know that the onlooker view is apt to be unfavorable, but go forward anyway, not caring too much about what the others may think; 8) warn your friends of the onlooker's view; 9) spend time talking and listening.

However strange these items seem as a Socratic recipe for friendship, the circumstances and personages countenance them as lying along the Golden Mean. The

Lysis is exhorting us to do the same in similar circumstances if we would tend the youth and make friends. "On Aristotle's view, in some vaguely marked out middle ground lies the active life of the virtuous person that deserves to be counted, for a human being, the happy and flourishing one; get very far outside it, on either side, and even though the virtues and their constant exercise remain central to the life someone might lead, such a life is nonetheless not a happy one." (Cooper, John M. "Aristotle On The Goods of Fortune" The Philosophical Review, XCIV, No. 2, (April 1985), p. 188) In the Lysis we find the imitation-philosopher somewhere in that middle zone of everyday life, engaging in conversation open and possible to the men of the present day, cobbling from the materials at hand an intelligent conversation geared for making friends. If this be vice, make the most of it.

[Author's note: We begin now to see the "virtue" of loving as having been exercised by Socrates in his many conversations with all kinds of people. Some of them ran away. Some stood by loyally. He recognised the importance of friendship to the happy life and longed for it. Even when he is goading or rebuking others, it may be for their benefit and issue from his virtue of "loving". (Cf. Apology)

This is not to say that Socrates agrees with Aristotle's view of virtue. Socrates collapsed all virtues into wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. It is only to suggest that Aristotle's views can be enriched and informed by the imitation in the Lysis of activities of Socrates. For both, however, doing something virtuous requires more than lucky results. One has to know what one is doing and why. Even if goal of friendship is not reached, that will not detract from the virtue having attended one's actions to bring it about.]

## CHAPTER V

### RECIPE II

In addition to the first recipe for acquiring friends, the Lysis simultaneously offers a very different, second recipe. To gather up the meanings here, we need to attend to the dramatic present in which Socrates is confessing and describing the accidents, interruptions, plots, plans, blunders and near-blunders in all their glowing detail to his auditor.

To measure how far distant this recipe is from the one we have assayed previously, recall the ease with which Mr. Price said of the Lysis: "The topic is friendship, the conclusion failure." That is true in its (minuscule) way of the conversations between Socrates and the two boys taking place within the dramatic past. *Their* topic was friendship, and the three conversers did fail to find and finalize *their* definition. But now, as Socrates is covering and canvassing that afternoon in the dramatic present, the "topic" is not friendship. No one is putting proposals forward, looking for flaws or weakness, or exploring counterexamples. Socrates is not engaged in a conversation similar to the one he had at the palaestra at all. This is a new moment in time occurring in the kitchen of friendship. The chef is wearing his apron and donning his oven mitt. He is talking with someone. But what is the "topic" of the conversation taking place in the dramatic present? In some sense the topic is Socrates himself.

But Socrates is an imitation of the philosopher in the Lysis. The imitation, then, seems to be of how the philosopher, Socrates, is making or securing a friendship with his auditor in the dramatic present by means of sharing a recollection like this one. The imitation is of the way a philosopher might recollect herself before another. The imitation in the dramatic present is Socrates' self-disclosure. Such disclosures are open

and possible to the reader; the Lysis exhorts us to share our past moments with others if we would have friends. Tell it; tell it to somebody.

In the dramatic present Socrates embarks upon a self-disclosing narrative in which we readers, along with his auditor, discover myriad things known only to him; things which did not appear to, and thus could not have been known by, anyone else at the palaestra. For example, we learn what nobody else knew that day when we discover Socrates was charmed by Lysis. We learn what nobody else knew when he swallowed and choked back his crowing from Hippothales and when he noted the silence of Lysis as he thought about the *proto philon*. We learn that he is sensitive to the reservoir of emotions gushing beneath a blush. And we discover that the conversation had so absorbed and enchanted him that the arrival of the drunken pedagogues seemed to him a close encounter of the third kind. We discover between the lines of the speeches comprising the remembrance of how Socrates and Lysis became friends, something crucially indicative of who is presently before us. Moreover, "that day" isn't exactly what unfolds from his recollection. Rather, by remembering, Socrates draws a picture of himself-with-others that shares himself with his auditor.

I speculated above that the frame for the narration occurs upon a question posed by the auditor to Socrates along the lines of "How did you become friends with Lysis?" As part of the frame Socrates has made the decision to recall his first meeting. The motive for embarking upon this kind of remembrance seems neither calculated to benefit or improve the auditor, nor primarily to spark the pleasures of dialectical inquiry as occurred for Socrates in the palaestra among those conversers. While the quality or tone coloring his remembering seems to bring Socrates pleasure, the pleasures of sharing a remembrance have different temporal dimensions and immediacies than the pleasure of playing knuckbones or wrestling. Socrates needs no palaestra, no conspiracies, no utilities, no pressing need to correct speech in another in order to remember and share that day. There is leisure attending the remembrance. There is time to remember and savor

the past. Aristotle counts such unfettered leisure as necessary to happiness. (EN 1177b5-20) "There were two things the Greek of the Classical period prized above all others. One was *kleos*, fame...[t]he other thing they prized was *scholē*, leisure: freedom from the drudgery of work, time to stroll in the columned porticos of the city and discuss politics, points of law, or the latest tragedy, to attend the law courts where suits were under judgment or the assembly where questions of policy, even of peace or war, were under discussion, to frequent the gymnasium, keep the body in shape, and the same time admire the beauty of young men who might well be listening to a snub-nosed, barefoot eccentric called Socrates" pondering questions of *eros* and *philia*. (Knox, Bernard M. The Oldest Dead White European Males. W. W. Norton and Co., Inc. N. Y. (1993) , p. 48) Or time to enjoy with another his remembrance of the day he spent pondering these questions. For reasons that appear below, I think it is not implausible to think this the kind of contemplative conversation one might have with a "rare" friend to use Aristotle's idiom. (EN 1156b25) What do we know of rare friendships?

Aristotle tells us such friendships are rare because virtuous people are rare. Even should two good men chance to run into one another, Aristotle warns us that "they need time to grow accustomed to gain the other's confidence, [and they will not be friends] unless they are lovable, and know this. For though the wish for friendship comes quickly, friendship does not." (EN 1156b25-33) Socrates shows in the course of his recollection that he can be useful to others and that he can conduct, enjoy and make pleasant philosophic pursuits. He reveals himself as one who cares about the speech of others and its effects. He is now showing, or at least proposing by means of the remembrance itself, that he is lovable, not simply "loving"; he is making the gesture by sharing the recollection that he is one in whom confidence can be placed. If this is a tenable suggestion, then the Lysis imitates one moment of how one converses "to gain the confidence" of a rare friend.

If we try to read the imitation occurring in the dramatic present as subject to the five conditions of Aristotle's Golden Mean as we have before, then in one sense we are going to have problems. We do not have a setting for the dramatic present, thus we do not know anything about the "right time" for such a conversation. Neither do we know the auditor, for he does not speak, but only listens as Socrates talks; thus we do not know whether Socrates is embarking on this remembrance toward "the right person." We can assume Socrates' "right end" to be friendship with the auditor, and the proposed "right means" imitated here is remembering and telling a story of his making friends that occurred in the past. But these other markers are absent.

Still, certain startling traits need to be noted as among those the remembrance-conversation imitates. The first we should note is that this is a philosopher's conversation, but its dialectic is on the slant. That dialectic appears as a crucial part of the remembrance is important, for in recounting that for his auditor, Socrates reveals the kind of conversations that intrigue, excite, and enthrall him. He shows that subjects such as *eros* and *philia* and *epithumia* are concerns great enough to reshape his intentions to hurry to the Lyceum and pressing enough to keep him at the palaestra all day. But the auditor is not expected to interject his thoughts; nor is he asked for his position regarding the three main proposals traversed by the trio that day. In the recovery of the remembrance the auditor comes to see the love of dialectic the philosopher possesses without having to say a single word. He does not have to commit to anything. Socrates' imitation shows that a philosopher can engage in a different kind of discourse than dialectic with others without jeopardising his claim to the name. There are different ways of being together than the day at the palaestra suggests. Self-revealing is a way to be together.

In speech of this kind Socrates unashamedly puts himself before the auditor and trusts this auditor with who he is. He is acting to make "[t]he enormous bond of mutual trust between such friends...[which] is cemented by equal self-disclosure and, for that

very reason, is a sign of the very special regard that each has for the other." (Thomas, Laurence. "Friendship and Other Loves" Friendship: A Philosophical Reader. ed. Badhwar, Neerha K. Cornell University P. Ithaca, N. Y. 1993. p, 49)

Bonds. Confidence. Trust. And always Aristotle's warnings about our needing time to create them. But somebody at some time *has to go first*. Someone simply has to fling the first thread of what will become those bonds. Alas, there is no direct mention by Aristotle of who goes first, with whom, when, or how. Like the lucky moment of first meeting, replete with its contingency and accidental surroundings, it is Plato who imitates who goes first in this business of self-disclosure: the philosopher, Socrates.

In searching the contours of the remembrance I discovered this recipe as imitative of Socrates:

1) The philosopher will remember and relish his past dialectical encounters and tell them to someone. Aristotle notes that the good person "finds it pleasant to spend time with himself, and so wishes to do it. For his memories of what he has done are agreeable, and his expectation for the future are good." ( EN 1166a18-21) Socrates finds the memory of the palaestra agreeable and the remembrance itself contains optimism in the closing "not yet" farewell to the boys. He shares that memory with his auditor. The auditor listens. The "supremely happy man will need friends of this sort, since his purpose is to contemplate worthy actions and *actions that are his own*, and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both these qualities." (EN 1170a 1-5, my emphasis) To contemplate a worthy action of my own, I drag it into the light by remembering it with and before another. How else is it to come into view? The rare friend in his turn will bring his own worthy actions to light, for shared savoring with his friend.

Many take Aristotle's encomia of a "life of contemplation" too narrowly, too ascetically. The contemplation of our pasts has at least this much in common with the contemplation of geometry: the past is as inalterable as the 180 degrees in a triangle. We

contemplate no less upon something eternal and fixed when we share the memory of our actions with another than we do when we contemplate theorems.

2) The philosopher will risk the disapprobation and/or rejection by the other. Socrates does just this in his candid and cheerful admissions of his having entered into conspiracies and lying to protect the ends of those conspiracies. I do not sense a micron of apology or reservation in this oral recollection. Socrates is not ashamed of himself. He does not regret the afternoon. Aristotle tells us those full of self-loathing, base people, are full of regret. (EN 1166b25) It is almost as if Socrates is saying, "Well, this is me, after all; I did all of this and enjoyed it to boot."

3) The philosopher will own and enjoy the remembrance of his past actions and decisions and take responsibility for them. Socrates recounts the events of the palaestra-conversation in a manner that brings them forth and ratifies them. Aristotle suggests that "... memory of something fine is pleasant" for the benefactor of others. Socrates believes himself to have been a benefactor, and his remembrance suggests that. (EN 1168a20)

4) The philosopher does not allow the criticism "ridiculous" which an onlooker might hurl at him to detour or derail him. Aristotle announces that "...the decent person obeys his [own] understanding." (EN 1169a18) This is a mark of integrity and self-respect. Socrates has the self-friendship that Aristotle counts as a mark of the virtuous person. (EN 1166a10-25) It costs.

5) The remembrance echoes the events of the dramatic past in its exhortation to spend time talking. This is the same ingredient we found in the first recipe, of course.

The imitation-remembrance undertaken by Socrates in the dramatic present is a deliberate, risky, self-exposure that he is willing to entertain for the sake of finding a friend before whom he can reveal himself. It is by means of his self-revealing that the auditor discovers the terms upon which Socrates both owns and offers himself as a friend. In recalling and relating one's past endeavors and escapades, complete with their idiosyncratic twists and turns, decisions and indecisions, one offers up one's life and



something of one's present self to another in the hope of meeting affirmation and understanding that largely matches one's self-understanding. Naturally, if one lacks a decent self-image, or finds one's past actions shameful or embarrassing, one will hardly be motivated to make such an offer of self. One does not want to remember oneself or one's life. One must have a sense of self worth sharing before one can find "another myself." Aristotle says as much when he insists that the rare friendship "resembles the friendship one bears oneself." (EN 1166b)

Despite the fact that it is only Socrates who speaks in the dramatic present, Plato bequeaths to us more than one side of this bonding activity than we might realize. I am reminded of Milton's "He, too, serves who only stands and waits." Plato shows one trait of the auditor that needs must be met for self-disclosure to occur. If one would be the rare friend, one listens to the other's stories and indeed to the other's account of his life. The imitation is not of Socrates' recital of his day to the wind, but to someone who is listening, much as we are reading. We do not discover whether Socrates' trust was merited. We do not know how the remembrance affected the auditor. We nevertheless discover in the imitation one quality this auditor has indicative of his potentiality for the rare friendship. He listened. If he savors and enjoys the dialectic-on-the-slant, and if his pleasure increases as Socrates' tale unfolds, he may find himself participating in and experiencing the pleasures proper to and reminiscent of contemplative activity.

Now, what can hearing the story of how Socrates met Lysis, or Harry met Sally, or Dick met Liz be to someone who listens to it? It can be gossip; good for a laugh and thus pleasurable from that focal distance. But if it is Liz who is telling me, or Sally who is telling me, or Socrates who is telling me, and if I divine both the virtue in his action and the aptness of his decisions, the tale immediately loses the odor of gossip and acquires the aroma of learning that someone before me is lovable. If the two are already friends, the details of the story affirm anew the basis of their friendship. If they are not already friends, one may discover in his very narration that here stands a person who

cared for these youths, cared for their futures, tried like the devil to correct and effect the proper condition in them to foster friendship, and got himself thoroughly and deliberately entangled in plots and lies and conspiracies as webbed as ducks' feet. It is humorous and endearing all at once; and so is he. If we consider the way it might sound to the auditor who is the potential rare friend, we read the receipt of the tale as portending such a response. Of course, it is otherwise if the auditor hears of these lies and plots, thinking, "Uh-oh. This old goat is a liar."

Plato does not give us the auditor's response. But then again, he doesn't have to. The seed corn of building the rare friendship between virtuous men remains the self-disclosure. Like mustard seeds, the gift of telling-oneself may fall on rocks or upon land too barren to support the friendship. Still, such seeds must be scattered if one would have any hope of harvest at all. The philosopher is willing to fling wide these seeds in hope of that harvest. It is "Aristotle's central conviction that what determines the character of person's life is what *he does*. On the one hand, a virtuous person who suffers...[disappointment] acted knowing both that his choice of action was the, or one of the, best available in the circumstances, and human beings never do completely control the outcomes of their actions, since nature is such that unpredictable irregularities and accidental results are simply always possible. Since he has done the best he or anyone in the circumstances could do, he should not count his own actions as in any way defective just because they did not lead to the wished-for outcomes." (Cooper, John M. "Aristotle On The Goods of Fortune", *The Philosophical Review*. XCIV, No, 2, 173-196, (April 1985), p. 195) When Socrates recalls for his auditor the day in the palaestra, he braves the onlooker's view in his effort to court friendship, again. Failure here will not deter him tomorrow. The virtue of loving assures of that much.

This brings us to the acknowledgment of a kind of circularity attending virtue theory. Aristotle often recurs to the excellent man as the model we must use in all close questions of virtue and goodness. In some sense this person becomes "the criterion for

right action....The beginner can appeal to it for guidance; and the virtuous person can not merely come out with a judgment, but can explain it. He can explain it, however, only to other virtuous people, or to beginners who are prepared to accept his judgments as giving them the right examples." (Annas, Julia. The Morality of Happiness. Oxford Univ. Press. 1993. p. 110) If the auditor jumps to the onlooker's conclusion, and there is nothing barring him from that, Socrates will fail to make his friend. But if the auditor, like Socrates, views the activities of life as opportunities to exercise our intelligence, our temperance, our courage, and all of our virtues to the end of making and securing our friendships and improving our contacts with others; if he views virtue itself as a "developing an intellectual disposition, increasing your understanding of what you are doing and why" (Annas, Julia. The Morality of Happiness. Oxford Univ. P. 1993. p 114), then the onlooker view will vanish; the auditor will glimpse in Socrates' remembrance the congenial intensity of one who is lovable: and, lo and behold, here he stands. "The casual, even unexpected, discovery of pleasure, profit, or moral qualities may elicit the [auditor's] responses that lead to the establishment of a friendship, without there being any premeditation or planning on on either side. It may well be only in the clear light of hindsight that one could say that the desire for [friends] was working to bring these people together. Aristotle's theory does not imply any stronger connection than these motives and the formation of the corresponding types of friendship." (Cooper, John M. "Aristotle On The Forms Of Friendship", Review of Metaphysics, vol. 30, 619-648, Sept.1976-June 1977, p. 645)

Thus the temporal interplays between the dramatic past and the dramatic present move the reader from an imitation of conversations more usual in ordinary friendships of utility and pleasure, instances which the Lysis seems to reveal straightway, to the imitation of a conversation whose dynamics seem more suitable to the rare friendship, which, if it occurs in this dialogue at all, occurs on the slant in the dramatic present as Socrates reveals himself to another. His enjoyment of his memory of the day at the

palaestra imitates that fine and friendly self-relation Aristotle requires of those who would have rare friendship. The sharing of this memory by Socrates is natural evidence that he is related to the friend as he is to himself, for "his friend is another himself." (1166a30-4)

The auditor may decide that Socrates is ridiculous at best and dangerous or vicious at worst. Socrates may be casting pearls of himself before one who, like the onlooker, cannot apprehend the lovableness of his character after all. This risk of rejection is one who would be, or make, or find a rare friend takes; risking such self-disclosure is emblematic of being a "self-lover"; it is the badge of "self-friendship", and as such it is the bridge from the pleasure friendship to the rare friendship. It is the self-lover, and the self-sufficient man who can risk this self-disclosure, owing to his sense of having done well, and it is the self-sufficient man who will risk this disclosure and find, if it be available, "another myself." That friend, being virtuous himself, is one who will appreciate the disclosures from the standpoint of the offeror and make the same kinds of self-disclosures concerning his own past and himself. The risks here are of a kind endorsed by Plato's poem.

"As virtuous agents live in harmony with themselves and delight in their own being" and that a self-lover is "a serene person who has internalized the values and norms of the moral life and, as a consequence, is untroubled by the discomforts of remorse or regret" and freed "from the sway of their appetite and false conceptions" they are prepared, as it were, for rare friendship. (Stern-Gillet, 100, 101) If the rare friendship thrives and flowers upon conversation, I think Plato's imitation provides us a glimpse of a self-lover, who is indeed lovable, negotiating a conversation to the end of rare friendship. What the auditor hears and how he assesses the personage before him is beyond the control of Socrates just as it is outside his control in such conversations as occurred in the palaestra that day. He may perceive Socrates as someone not virtuous. If he does, then

Socrates will not have succeeded in winning his confidence. There is no necessity that such confidence be won in an hour or day. It takes time.

Not only in the Lysis, but in most of the Platonic corpus, we are shown an imitation of a man who is using what time he has in the pursuit of conversation. The virtue of "loving" propels him to seek friends, and it is his own self-sufficiency, the possession of virtue, that inform his activities. Self-sufficient men will devote as much time as required to the task of living well.

Aristotle is clear that "...what we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife and in general friends and fellow-citizens, since a human being is political animal." (EN 1097b8-11. Cf., too, 1169b16-19) The self-sufficiency of the virtuous man increases the prospect of the stability of his happiness. If "we suppose that happiness is enduring and definitely not prone to fluctuate" we must avoid "representing the happy person as a kind of chameleon, insecurely based." (EN 1100b3-8) Aristotle describes the happiness in a life of virtue as more enduring and stable than either the lives of pleasure or honor afford. Such happiness as attends the life of virtue "keeps the character [it] has throughout [a] life." (EN 1100b18) Such a life is contrasted against pleasure-seeking and honor-mongering lives because it removes one, so far as a human being can be removed, from dependence upon the fleeting accidents of health and vigor attending youth on the one hand and the shifting esteem of the crowd attending political life on the other. (EN 1095b1, 25-26) Aristotle would secure the happiness we have against outside contingencies so far as he is able. That is one reason he doesn't denounce these other pursuits, for he knows that they do provide happiness; rather, he warns that they are subject to rapid and sudden reversal, and that we would not simply do better, but be happier, if we knew the sources of happiness issued from within us, as opposed to depending upon pleasures chained to physicality or hitched to the applause of others. From the cultivation of good habits and dispositions we make for ourselves hides that

enable us to " bear strokes of fortune suitably, and from [our] resources at any time will do the finest actions, just as a good general will make the best use of his forces in war, and a good shoemaker will produce the finest shoe from the hides given him, and similarly for all craftsmen." (EN 1101a1-5) But self-sufficiency in Aristotle is tangled in the requirements of *human* flourishing. Having external goods, like friends, are part and parcel of that human flourishing Aristotle calls *eudaimonia*.

If "the human good turns out to be the soul's activity that expresses virtue" (EN 1098a18), then there is always the chance that an action, taken in isolation, may only appear to "express" virtue or vice. While "virtue is concerned with feelings and actions" that are intermediate, Aristotle states that "virtue is (a) a state that decides, (b) [consisting] in a mean, (c) the mean relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency." (EN 1106b37-1107a1-4)

Aristotle's treatment of friendship suggests that it is the repository for other virtues. The exercise of bravery, justice, magnanimity, temperance, require the presence of others for their very exercise and completion. The "rich people and holders of powerful positions, even more than other people seem to need friends. For how would one benefit from such prosperity if one had no opportunity for beneficence, which is most often displayed, and most highly praised, in relation to friends? And how would one guard and protect prosperity without friends, when it is all the more precarious the greater it is. In poverty also, and in the other misfortunes, people think friends are the only refuge."(EN 1155a 5-13) Further, being just requires someone upon whom to confer justice. (EN 1155a28) The most stable life is deemed by Aristotle to be a life of contemplation. But what is "contemplation"? Is it relational? I think the *Lysis* shows the virtue of loving in a good man plumbs the life of contemplation through self-disclosing conversations with another.

Some scholars worry that without "some independent reason for thinking that the good man will need or want to form friendships in the first place, we are not entitled to assume that he will have the sort of attitude toward any other person which will enable him to get this pleasure and, in consequence, desire this close association." (Cooper, John M. "Friendship and Good in Aristotle". The Philosophical Review. vol. 86, Jan-Oct., June 1977, 290-313, p. 294) In response to that concern, other scholars argue that the good man requires self-knowledge and that this cannot be had without good company; that, like a mirror, the other reflects back to the self its goodness. (Cf. Stern Gillet's Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship, pp. 53-57, and 140-143) Their reply is that friends form the self-knowledge, self-loving, and self-sufficiency in the good man.

Both groups of scholars need correction. Aristotle's view of the virtuous man includes the virtue of loving. He thinks of friendship as moral habit close to justice. As the just man will need others, the magnanimous man will need others, so, too, will the loving man need them. Insofar as he acquires justice or loving as a virtue, the self-sufficient man comes to a steady character; it is the state of steadfastness that makes for serenity and calm in the face of challenge and disaster. That is the value of self-sufficiency. The friend does not give it to us. We may never find him. The virtuous man creates the virtue of loving in himself by his actions with others. At EN1170a4-11 Aristotle warns against solitary pursuits as "hard" and more likely to fall into passivity than would a life of "living together", which we know is conversation. Thus, the self-sufficient man is urged to seek companions, to be loving, not in order to learn from the friend who he is, but rather to share his experience, to traverse the most lush terrain of his virtuous activities. "Only by merging one's activities and interests with those of others can the inherent fragility of any human being's interest be overcome...the flourishing person will have a special need to share these activities, if his own interests in life are to be securely and deeply anchored." (Cooper, John M. "Friendship and good In Aristotle". The Philosophical Review. vol. 8, Jan-Oct July 1977, 290-315, p. 308, 309) Thus,

insofar as the internal landscape of the soul possesses the virtue of loving, the self-sufficient man will be seeking companions with whom to extend and round out his flourishing. He will know himself already good, already loving, and already a self-friend to the extent that he heeds and practices this virtue. He may never find the friend. That will not, of itself, discredit his attempt or otherwise becloud his "self-sufficiency." Tomorrow his work is cut out for him. He needs no "independent reason" to want friends. The very virtue of loving supplies him that desire. Loving is not a bar to self-sufficiency. However settled the traits of the self-sufficient soul be, their exercise will carry a Socratic longing for friends. Show me some one who needs no one, and I will show you are person defective in virtue.

The "motif of the friend as a mirror, which is indeed implicit in the Nichomachean argument, is not to be interpreted as meaning that on Aristotle's view a flourishing person treats his friend as a mere instrument by which to enhance his own self-esteem." (Cooper, John M. *Philosophical Review*. vol 86. Jan-Oct July 1986, p. 314) Nor is it the case that by loving another we come to love ourselves. Rather, by the virtue of loving, I sculpt the opportunity that my whole soul may acquire a second body, "another myself." That is why we feel the suffering and pain of our friends acutely. It is why a rare friend feels an attack against his friend as one calling for the same self-defense maneuvers he would employ to defend himself. Indeed, because he is my other myself, the distinction between defending and protecting him and protecting myself blurs. On the other end of fortune's spectrum, my friend's success and happiness pours into my cup, too. His fine deeds and actions replenish my soul.

As to the position taken by scholars in reply to the worry above, they confuse the external and internal construct Aristotle expressly devises to explore the issue of self-sufficiency in the first place. *Self*-sufficiencies are internal conditions of the soul having source in the virtues of character and thought. They are those "sufficiencies" least dependent on outside factors such as good birth, friends, money, and not being hideously



ugly. But that is not to say that they have no dependence at all on other factors. If friends are suddenly introduced as agents or vehicles of "self-sufficing", Aristotle's whole point in drawing the distinction of internal and external vanishes, as well as his exhortation to build up our supplies of self-sufficiency where we can against the day that our store of external goods suffer a market decline. If we do this, then losses, even grave ones, will be bearable. Our characters are made by us in our activities. To fashion a good character is to make something stable, (stable, not impregnable) that will see us through the loss of beauty, friends, money, and positions of honor.

That Socrates' self-disclosure is the only one provided, is no bar to our glimpsing his qualifications as a self-friend. Aristotle is quite firm about this trait's necessity in the rare friendship. The friendly feelings that Socrates has for himself, his lack of regrets (EN 1166a29), the agreeableness and pleasure he takes in his memories so conveyed (EN 1166a25) make him a prime candidate for the status of self-lover for whom the rare friendship is possible. Lysis indicates the presence of these qualities in the personage relating such a remembrance. David Bolotin notes the "very reporting of this friendly talk indicates Socrates' aversion to friendship based on secrecy or on the exclusion of all outsiders." (Bolotin, David. Plato's Dialogue on Friendship. Cornell Univ. Press. 1979. p, 69)

I disagree then with those who think that "virtuous persons love their friends in and for themselves." (Stern-Gillet, Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship, St. Univ. of NY Press, 1995, p.66) That would make *my* virtue depend on how I love someone, rather than how I love dependent upon his being lovable, virtuous. Virtuous persons love their virtuous friends in and for themselves. They certainly do not love those who are not lovable in and for themselves. For as Aristotle notes, there may be nothing whatever in them to love. Period. (EN 1166b25) For "what is bad is not lovable, and must not be loved, for we ought neither to love what is bad nor to become similar to a bad person." (EN 1165b15) The virtue of "loving" is not a scatter shot aimed at just any passer-by. It,

too, is informed, like the other virtues, by decision and intelligence. It says something about Socrates' estimate of the man to whom he is speaking that Socrates relates the events of the paelastra at all. It takes time, sharing pecks of salt, and conversation to discover if one before us is lovable. That is one reason we needn't hear anything at all from the auditor. It is his call to make. He knows the whole story, whereas the onlookers at the palaestra did not. By giving him this, Socrates has shown his good will. He will have to wait to see if that good will be reciprocated. (1155b35-6)

Socrates is often characterized as someone who will talk to anybody. I myself portrayed him this way in an previous chapter. The virtue of loving seeks a friend. How then can I argue that his is not a bird-shot activity? There are many tasks and good things that inform the happy life. The virtue of intelligence seeks more broadly when it is seeking how the Earth came to be. These do not always coincide in life's encounters with others.

I turn now to the issue of how the Lysis informs our conceptions of the contemplative life in Book X of Nichomachean Ethics.

If we stretch the three kinds of life sketched by Aristotle, the life of gratification, the life of political service and honors, and the life of contemplation (EN 1095b5) attending to the reversals to which they are heir alongside the three kinds of friendships, namely, utility, pleasure and rare, attending to the reversals to which they are heir, we will find the greatest amount of stability in the happiness afforded by each configuration resides in a life of contemplation spent with rare friends whose virtues are themselves stable and enduring. Thus the self-sufficient man will seek both the life of contemplation, for it is not as fully at the mercy of contingent events as the other two, and the rare friendship, if he would have the small measure of "enduring" happiness available to human life. Aristotle is trying to preserve "something proper to man and not easily taken from him." (EN 1095b26) The utility friendship is subject to disruption from charges of injustice and will in any case depart when the benefit is rendered (EN 1162b5,

and 1156a24); and the pleasure friendship is unreliable owing to its capriciousness, which shifts and changes daily, especially in youth when it is most erotic (EN 1156b1-5); but the rare friendship is stable, owing to the habits/virtues of the parties involved. In his effort to recommend a life- the happiness of which will be hardier, less prone to the vicissitudes of the other two- Aristotle is surely right.

The trouble with the rare friendship is its rarity. What is one who is virtuous to do if he cannot find another with whom to forge these bonds of trust and friendship? He is stable, and good, and all those fine things, but what if the only friendships he makes are pleasure or utility friendships? I think his being loving propels him to "contemplate" with prospective friends by unearthing himself before them in the hope they will discover his lovableness..

Scholars disagree on the nature of the contemplative life. Some conceive it a kind of solitary, ascetic, study. Others grant that it is these, and hold out for a divided life; the happy man will contemplate alone for a few hours a day, then run down the hill to the agora where he hones all those other relational virtues so they don't get rusty. Some argue that "[t]he ideal of ascetic life was close at hand in Plato's writings and represented the major alternative conception of the self-sufficient good." They try to minimize an acknowledged asceticism in Aristotle by arguing that on his conception, "happiness must include the leisure for contemplation, and the good person must find time for its incomparable rewards...conjoined with [worldly virtues] in a life which remains essentially political and communal." (Sherman, Nancy. "Aristotle on Shared Life". ed. Neera Kapur Badhwar. Friendship: A Philosophical Reader. Cornell Univ. Press. Ithaca, NY. 1993, p. 94) I disagree.

I think the life of contemplation described in Book X of Nicomachean Ethics is a life best lived among others who are lovable; whose lives of study and contemplation are shared among others of similar virtue as contrasted with lives of surfing or running

for office. Wrestling some small space of independence, leisure, unharried by life's many contingencies is uppermost in Aristotle's mind.

Conversation is one activity the life of study and contemplation embraces as achieving that kind of independence. If one finds that he has no "another myself", he will still have achieved a level of independence and self-sufficiency that those seeking honor or pleasure will not have found. The contemplative life is not in its best form lived exclusively in the absence of another myself, but it is one that a philosopher may have to live. Aristotle admits as much himself saying that he supposes the wise man could enjoy a godlike contemplation, *sans* action, but even here it is only his concession to the wise man's intellectual powers of attention and concentration. "No doubt he will study better with his fellows." Man is not a god. (EN1177a30-1177b3)

I think it is a mistake to read Aristotle as endorsing the contemplative life as informed by asceticism. Naturally, there will be study. But if conversation is also contemplative, if "leisure" and "living together" include the activity of conversation, and if contemplation flourishes in the company of friends, there is no need to stress solitariness as necessary, nor even to acknowledge and try to fit any thread of it into the social fabric of happiness as conceived by Aristotle. For all the images of self-sufficiency and independence that Aristotle draws of the contemplative man, he says point blank that such a man will need friends to engage in contemplation in the best and most fruitful way. (EN 1177b1)

Because I read the Lysis as simultaneously imitating a communal activity among conversers, as well as offering an imitation of just what Aristotle means by the self-sufficient, lovable, loving philosopher engaged in an activity of the "contemplative life", in longing for another myself, I do not view the two writers as offering asceticism which opposes or qualifies their views on the interpersonal and relational aspects of *eudaimonia*. Platonic ascetism may appear in other dialogues, but it is not apparent in Lysis.

This completes my reading of the second recipe as provided by the Lysis on issues germane to Aristotle's remarks on the rare friendship and the incidents of the contemplative life. The remembrance of one's past deeds and beneficial actions undertaken for the sake of *eros* and friendship is a contemplative activity.

To sum up this rather difficult argument, I offer the following summary. The contemplative life as Aristotle conceives it is the best life for man because it is less hurried and urgent and problem oriented than the life of pleasure or honor. Such a life is not solitary, but rather shared among people who "live together" because the solitary life is hard and prone to fall into passivity. The pastime of the contemplative life is remembrance and philosophical conversation. Conversations that would issue in rare friendships have to be self-disclosing to the extent that the auditor must be able to apprehend and appreciate the other's goodness, his loveliness, in order to begin to trust and have confidence in him. Relating events of my past philosophical conversations shows my penchant for learning and study and draws an unmistakable picture of how I enjoy myself with others. Such a disclosure is a risky gift of myself to another. In the narration of my deeds and decisions the auditor decides if I am lovable or not. If he possesses the virtue of loving, and if he apprehends me as lovable, the seeds of trust and confidence will begin to sprout. If not, then not *yet*. For the self-lover is disclosing his happy memories and optimism for the future. He will, because he is exercising the virtue of loving, risk again. Hence, the contemplative life embraces the relational rare friendship. These are the twin peaks of *eudaimonia*.

In the dramatic present of the Lysis, we are witnessing an activity of self-disclosure, by the narration of the philosopher, which reveals him to be a contemplative person, both virtuous within the Aristotelean framework of the Golden Mean insofar the palaestra conversation goes, and "loving" insofar as recounting that day for his auditor goes. The badge and incidents of self-friendship seem to bubble up from the self-disclosure, inviting the trust and confidence of the auditor. That the auditor listens is the

only clue to his character, but an important one if friendship is to develop. Whether the auditor will perceive in Socrates virtue, or something akin to the "ridiculous" or worse, is unknowable. The dramatic point underscores the Aristotean view that friendship has to have time to develop. We are privy in the Lysis to a glimpse of how the philosopher sows its seed for future harvest.

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Imagine the surprise the geneticists might experience being told that the DNA on their slide held instructions for a behemoth with triple rows of teeth, weighing forty tons, standing six stories tall. The taxonomy of friendship, like the genome, is not phenotypically explicit. The Lysis informs the detail and phenotype of Aristotle's three kinds of friendship. I leave it to the reader to mull the question of whether the rare friendship is one he would undertake knowing the kind of deliberate unmasking it requires and the risks involved in that unmasking. It is not simply that friendships of utility and pleasure are easier to pursue. It is the near impossible condition of being both self-friend and loving that makes it so difficult; one must be loving enough to keep trying, and self-friend enough to obey our own understanding. It is no wonder that these friendships are rare.

Some philosophers argue that Aristotle didn't really intend to make these friendships rare. They say we could be rare friends, virtue friends, if we simply found some character trait in another to admire even if he were "obtuse, or not very industrious, or somewhat self-indulgent." (Cooper, John. "Aristotle On The Forms of Friendship" Review of Metaphysics. vol 30. Sept 1976-June 1977, 619-648, p. 627.) They also argue that "shared activity" might include someone's writing scholarly articles or dissertations if the scholar involved knew he was participating in "the shared activity of advancing the discovery of truth in the subject in question." (Cf., Cooper's "Friendship And The Good In Aristotle", Philosophical Review. vol. 86. Jan-Oct, June 1977, 290-315, p. 305)

It may be the case that "advancing the discovery of truth" is a "shared" activity. Ends differ. Truth and friendship may collide as we have seen. Socrates' conspiracies suggest as much. The sharing of findings is not the same sharing as a sharing of self.

Sharing my past is a sharing of *self* with another. This is the activity of contemplation sanctioned by Aristotle which Plato's poem enacts as both virtuous and important if we would have the rare friendship. If the Lysis is read with Aristotle in mind, publishing articles and writing dissertations are not a shared activity however much these may do for truth. Conversation is the "shared" activity advancing the cause of friendship. In tandem with my self-disclosure, I may find another myself. They are inseparable. Rare means "rare."

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

I do know how the endeavors of this paper will be received. The thesis that the Lysis offers an imitation of conversations and friendships underway through the activity of conversation; the notion that conversation has a texture and fabric amenable to treatment by the Golden Mean seems a fairly innocuous one to explore. Because the Lysis has often been treated a sort of step-child in the corpus of the Platonic philosophy of friendship, owing to the popularity of the Phaedrus and the Symposium, and because the treatment of the Platonic dialogues as poems is rare, I thought it an interesting project to undertake. Perhaps such readings will furnish new material relevant to the study of Aristotle's ethics. Perhaps it will point to a new way to read Plato- to read for what is happening besides what is being said straight away in the dialogue. Perhaps both. In philosophy, as in other activities and disciplines, "What is useful does not remain the same, but is different at different times." (EN 1156a23)

More than this, the effort has been to say something about friendship, its soil and ingredients. The "pasture" we graze is the actual palaestra or office or beach or bar available to us. That we desire friends is an emotional state by any name we wish to use- *eros*, *philia*, *epithumia*- a longing that arises in early childhood and continues for most of a person's life.

The activities of friends include everything from playing dice to conversation. It is conversation that the Lysis applauds as a proper means to friendship, but as with all deliberate actions, conversations need the shape and form proper to friendship. We shape our possibilities for friendship through conversations.



Most communitarians and feminists today seem to think that friendship is a matter of adopting the same slogans or participating in the same practices; that if we gather on the same field and graze it, we shall become friends. Aristotle expressly disavows this procedure as one proper to human flourishing by insisting that it is the sharing of thoughts and conversation that bind people together as enduring friends. Plato's Lysis imitates some of the concerns that attend the friendship conversation. The texture of that conversation is layered, multiple in ways that communitarians and feminists seem to neglect in their call for unity and affection. Aristotle's warning that there may be "nothing lovable" in us receives short shrift from those who see friendship as a simple product made whenever enough people gather to build houses for Habitat for Humanity or join the sisterhood in its political goals. Conversation, not conversion, makes friends.

Socrates dramatically illustrates the care and attention to the individual that needs must be taken before friendship of the most simple kind, utility, can flourish. He shows that the souls of those we would make our friends have to be prepared carefully in youth. He shows the accidents and the risks attending the enterprise from onlookers. He intimates by his going forward in face of those risks that friendship is worth these risks. Finally, he shows in the way he recalls his own past that friendship is worth the effort though it be interrupted and cut short by events beyond one's control.

If friendships supervene upon conversations taken up for various purposes and ends, then the conversation, rightly engaged, supplies us with one of the cheapest, most serviceable vehicles to explore the making of friends: a veritable Toyota. Aristotle endorses it; Plato imitates it; we need to learn how to build it, drive, and repair it that we might get the most mileage from it; one of the things we need to do is practice the art of conversation. The imitation Lysis shows us a way.