

THE STRUCTURE
OF PLATO'S *LYSIS*

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1. Introduction: Tips on How to Read a Platonic Dialogue

It is all very well agreeing that Plato wrote dialogues, but there are ramifications to this which need to be taken into account when attempting to understand what a Platonic dialogue is about. Even someone who insists that Plato must be speaking for himself in a dialogue if we are to understand his philosophy should accept that Plato does not officially appear in his own dialogues. It is therefore methodologically proper to attempt to understand the characters who do appear in the dialogue first, and if that attempt fails, only then assume that one or other character is Plato's spokesman, and failing that, that random sentences here and there in various dialogues are, when fit together in the right order, what Plato actually meant.

1. 1. The Drama Dramatizes

If a group of people walk through a courtyard into a changing room, we may assume that boys in the courtyard would have noticed them. This does not need to be said. Indeed, even a subsequent description of one of the boys entering the changing room as if by chance need not be taken at face value if the reality of the situation suggests otherwise. The various actions are described and must be visualized in order to see the order of cause and effect. The connection between cause and effect need not be made explicitly in the dialogue, and indeed some misdirection often seems to be preferred, especially by Socrates. Why misdirection, sophistry, and other fallacies are so common in Platonic dialogues is a point to which we shall return in a later section.

1. 2. The Narrator Narrates

When a dialogue consists of a narrative, we must assume that the narrator is talking to himself and is quite insane, or that he is talking to an audience, even if that audience says nothing throughout the narration. He is not talking to us, or at least, if we follow proper methodology, we should assume only that the narrator, having been determined to be insane, is the one talking to people from millennia in the future. Socrates the sane narrator, the first option we should explore when analysing a dialogue, would be talking to a contemporary audience, unless we find that such a hypothesis fails due to Plato's incompetence as a dramatist. If Socrates the Sane is indeed talking to a contemporary audience, and the audience does not kill Socrates midway or walk off in disgust, as is evidently not

the case if Socrates continues talking until the end, we may infer that he is telling them a story to their taste. Socrates the narrator has full control over the narrative. He may emphasize, de-emphasize, invent, and omit whatever he wishes in the interests of a coherent narrative. The narrated situation is dramatically real and necessarily consistent in its own terms, no matter how surreal it might seem.

1. 3. The Character Characterizes

It is often objected that the motivations of characters cannot be determined if nothing about their motivations is said explicitly. Saying that an *erastēs* (“lover”) wants to be with his *erōmenos* (“loved one”) is presumably a justified assumption due to the explicit labels imposed upon them, although I would prefer to judge from his actions. Assessing motivation from action, however, is deemed to be psychologism, treating the fictional characters as if they had a life of their own. I would suggest the radical proposition that someone who is portrayed as talking with a friend is intended by the dramatist to be assumed to have the ability to see, feel, touch and smell, in addition to the necessary ability of hearing, and it is up to us to work out why they are talking to each other. It seems to me healthier than the alternative hypothesis that they are intended to be mindless zombies somehow coming up with the dramatist’s words. They, not the dramatist, are the people talking in the dialogue. Surely the dramatist would feel he had failed if his readers thought any differently. I apologize for psychologizing the dramatist, who has no feelings unless they are explicitly stated.

1. 4. The Spectators Spectate

Onlookers adorn many a Platonic dialogue of the early and middle periods. They often stand around, doing and saying nothing, and may consequently become invisible to interpreters. It is my firm conviction, however, that even silent people hear. When they are not simply admiring the more handsome of the interlocutors, they may even be listening to what the participants say, but it is not for us to decide what they are doing without evidence.

Thus the silence of the spectators imposes an obvious limitation upon the interpreter. Their presence is evidence; their unreported reactions are not. We cannot know merely from their silence whether they approve, disapprove, understand, misunderstand, admire, or ridicule what they witness, although staying to the end without leaving indicates a degree of interest in the proceedings. This does

not make them irrelevant. What is said or done before onlookers is done publicly, and the presence of an audience may therefore be important evidence for understanding the behaviour of the speaking characters without our having to invent the response of the spectators.

It sometimes happens in a dialogue that an audience accompanying one principal character follows that character to another place and thereafter becomes invisible. Their disappearance from the narration is no more evidence of their physical disappearance than the disappearance of any other character who has not been said to leave. If these people are irrelevant to the drama, it is difficult to explain why the dramatist bothered to establish their presence in the first place, particularly when we have already been told that the audience of the main conversation was present at an earlier one.

Their presence is particularly significant where the conversation is competitive. An eristic victory is necessarily public in character. The point is not merely to induce an opponent to say something absurd, but to have this absurdity ridiculed by an audience. More accurately, to have the person himself ridiculed. The loser is *katagelastos* (a “laughingstock”). We need not know what any particular spectator thinks in order to distinguish such a public performance from a private conversation. The spectators spectate. Anything more specific requires evidence.

1. 5. The Dialogue Dialogues

What is said in a dialogue contributes first and foremost to understanding the character or characters in the dialogue given that without them there is no dialogue. It might be said in response that without the dramatist there is no dialogue, which justifies regarding the dialogue as evidence for the thinking of Plato himself rather than the characters. Such a comparison between characters and dramatist presents most urgently the contrast between things said and things dramatized. The dramatist uses the characters to present a state of affairs; without the dramatist there would be no presented state of affairs. However, the state of affairs created by the dramatist is none other than the character or characters in a certain environment, and these are the elements without which the state of affairs cannot be understood. Finally, what is said is also a dramatization of what this or that dramatized person would say, in those circumstances, to one or other interlocutor. It is up to us to work out why what is said is actually said, without resorting to anachronistic biases to tell us if Plato said this seriously or ironically. I must emphasize once again that methodologically, we must first

attempt to understand the dialogue as a dialogue. If that attempt fails, only then may we begin to hypothesize that Plato is not the great dramatist people have assumed him to be. Only in the last resort may we cherry pick our favourite sentences and call them Plato.

1. 6. The Dialectician Dialects

There is a tendency, thankfully not too widespread, to assume that errors in a Platonic dialogue need to be corrected in order to arrive at a coherent philosophy. Such an approach would require completely rewriting a dialogue such as *Lysis*, which is full of misdirection, factual errors, sophisms, equivocations, and other such fallacious reasoning. An alternative approach to such philosophical wreckage is to ask simply why the characters say what they say to each other without immediately assuming that Plato is taking the first baby steps in philosophy towards the fully developed behemoth it is today. To take just one possibility, it might be found that Socrates' interlocutors have fundamentally flawed worldviews affecting their behaviour while Socrates adapts his speech to fit their preconceived notions for some unwritten reason. I suggest this, since it is Socrates who produces much of the nonsense, while his interlocutors tend to agree to it. To expand on this possible line of reasoning explaining the apparent philosophical disaster of a dialogue, if the interlocutors' preconceived notions are themselves part of the problem, simply explaining the problem to the interlocutors in language which they would readily understand and accept would hardly solve it. At this impasse, Socrates might instead use their own opinions and expectations to draw out the ramifications of their views in an attempt to make them change. He might also surprise and irritate them along the way, in an attempt to spark some activity in their critical faculty. What appears to be philosophical wreckage may then turn out to be evidence of Socrates applying a brand of dialectic throughout the dialogue, geared not to imparting knowledge, but to activating dialectical thinking in his interlocutors (dialectic is nothing more than the ability and willingness to compare and contrast everything said and done in a *dialogos*, a conversation, in order to sift through opinions and reject those which are inconsistent with others which appear to have more bearing on reality). The same possibility must be considered regarding his unknown audience receiving the dialogue entire. Of course, attributing any similar motive to Plato would be tantamount to psychologism, and we have no

evidence to show that readers of the dialogue would begin thinking any more dialectically than before any reading had commenced.

1. 7. The Philosopher Philosophizes

It is often assumed that Plato was a philosopher. This is usually based on traditional testimony rather than Plato's dialogues. If the various philosophical pronouncements of his characters are taken at face value as Plato's own, or even cherry picked to death, they appear to present us with a wildly imaginative and restless individual who was anything but sane. The Perfect Sun, the Divided Cave, the Forms of the Ideas, the poetic banishment of poets, and other such absurdities all conspire against the notion that Plato loved the truth or indeed had more than a feeble grasp on reality. The philosophers' reaction to this has been to defend Plato (why?) by declaring that he meant something other than what he wrote, much like theologians defending divine scriptures. Here at least is where we can agree. Plato did indeed mean something other than what he wrote, since what he wrote represents what his characters said, and not necessarily his own seriously held beliefs.

We would then reasonably ask why Plato bothered to write such nonsensical dialogues if we are not to impose our own superior philosophy upon them in order to save him. Here we again part company. It is methodologically appropriate to ask why Plato wrote dialogues which sound so nonsensical and to ask where the sense might be located. If it is not in the nonsense, then, perhaps it is in the characters spouting the nonsense. Indeed, Plato's characters invariably turn out to be consistent in their worldviews, expectations, and limitations. One may then suspect that the philosophical content lies not merely in the dialectical exercise which is the dialogue, but dogmatically in the conceptual structure which Plato has constructed through his characters. If the characters have some main feature in common but differ amongst themselves while also being extremely consistent, it may be the case that they are intended to represent different aspects of a central idea. Plato's philosophizing would then consist not in stating that central idea through one of his characters, but in building the entire dramatic structure through which its various aspects and appearances are displayed. The reader would be expected to apply dialectical thinking to a high degree and consistently in order to discover the central idea thus displayed in all its aspects, mainly through its various appearances. If the characters do indeed represent for the most part appearances of various

types, this itself would lead to the dialogue becoming a hall of mirrors. Alternatively, Plato can be a slogan on a T-shirt.

2. The Framing Narrative

2. 1. Distinguishing the Narratives

Lysis is traditionally regarded as a dialogue about friendship, albeit an aporetic one, lacking a dogmatic conclusion. There is good reason for this assessment. The main argument of the dialogue does indeed appear to concern *philia* (“friendship”), and Socrates does lead the conversation into an aporia, since he produces a series of arguments apparently revealing what *philia* is not, while providing no corresponding account of what it is. From this point of view, it may be argued that the dialogue is not really about *philia* at all, although the persistent emphasis on *philia* throughout much of the dialogue leaves open the possibility that it is. One factor militating against the possibility that the dialogue is simply about *philia*, however, is the intrusion into the *philia* narrative of a different narrative concerning *erōs* (“lust”). This has traditionally encouraged the assumption that Plato regards *erōs* as a form of *philia*, but a careful examination of the two narratives suggests that there is no *prima facie* reason to regard them as conceptually related.

The dialogue takes the form of a story Socrates is telling an unspecified audience. The dialogue is of course written by Plato for the benefit of the reader, but it is Plato’s Socrates who is presented as the narrator (we know this since, in the narrative, he identifies himself with the narrated Socrates). Although the participants in the narrated conversation may also be regarded, in a sense, as an audience for the narrated Socrates, I shall, for convenience, reserve the term “the audience” for the unspecified audience to whom Socrates narrates the story.

Socrates’ choice of narrative and the audience’s apparent willingness to listen to it to the end, without interruption, both suggest that the narrative is tailored to the audience’s interests. The story evidently holds the audience’s attention until the surprise at the very end, at which point the dialogue abruptly stops. We may therefore infer, at least initially, that the narrating Socrates presents a story which is of interest to his audience. What interests them, and what expectations they may have of the story, must be determined from the narrative itself.

The narrated Socrates, by contrast, interacts with the various characters within the story itself. These characters do not necessarily share the interests, assumptions, or expectations of the audience to whom the narrative is being told.

The dialogue must therefore be read on two levels simultaneously: as an account of Socrates' dealings with the characters he describes, and as a performance by the narrating Socrates for the audience. We may consequently expect the framing narrative to colour or sugar-coat the presentation of the narrated conversation through the choice of vocabulary, the emphasis placed upon particular details, and especially through Socratic asides to which the participants in the earlier conversation were not privy.

The narrative is constructed in such a way that the audience may regard the account as a suggestively entertaining yet informative object lesson in the field of *erōs*.

2. 2. The Hippothales Story

Hippothales is about sixteen years old, and he is obsessed with Lysis, a boy of about twelve. In conventional Greek terms, Hippothales is an active *erastēs*, albeit what we might call a distant admirer, while Lysis is a passive *erōmenos*, only by virtue of Hippothales lusting after him, and by no means participating in Hippothales' *erōs*; he is far from eager to be the target of an older boy's desires. The one-sided relationship is erotic, but *erōs* does not pertain to sexual appetite alone. As Hippothales illustrates, *erōs* may involve sexual attraction, admiration, infatuation bordering on madness, possessiveness, idealization, and the desire to secure the affection of another. Since no single English term encompasses all these connotations, I shall simply transliterate the terms *erōs*, *erastēs*, and *erōmenos* rather than translate them.

Little by little, Socrates reveals how he encountered Hippothales, how he discovered that Hippothales was obsessed with Lysis, how Hippothales was pursuing Lysis in the wrong way, and how he, Socrates, went on to demonstrate the supposedly correct manner of treating the boy. The account even ends with a slight frisson, as Socrates allows himself to appear to have won over Lysis for himself to the detriment of Hippothales. Whatever might be the philosophical significance of such

a turn of events, it serves admirably to maintain the interest of an audience attracted by the erotic framework of the story.

2. 3. The Effect of the Framing Narrative on the Narrated Conversation

Given the erotic framing of the narrative, we might expect the conversation itself to be permeated by references to *erōs*. In fact, the ostensibly philosophical discussion contains remarkably few such references. One might object that Socrates' conversation with Lysis is undertaken primarily in order to demonstrate to Hippothales how one should speak to the object of one's desire. Yet most of the discussion in the palaestra is conducted not with Lysis but with his best friend, Menexenus. Moreover, the explicit subject of the conversation is not *erōs* but *philia*. This suggests that the Hippothales episode functions as a pretext for exposing an audience attracted by the *erōs* narrative to a discussion of *philia*. Such a discussion must nevertheless continue to hold the audience's attention. This seems to have been achieved by marking off sections of the conversation with prominent reminders of Hippothales and his infatuation. The effect is to make the discussion appear continuously relevant to *erōs*, even though, considered in isolation, it is overtly concerned with *philia* rather than *erōs*.

The Hippothales story holds centre stage at the very beginning of the dialogue (203b–206e), before the conversation with the younger boys has begun. This is not only logical from the point of view of establishing the pretext, but also the most efficient way of supplying the audience with the background information about Hippothales' *erōs* which did not begin that day, without allowing the material to distract from the discussion of *philia* once it begins. The narrated Socrates participates in the set-up by expressing an interest which the framing narrative encourages in the audience, as when he says he would hear with pleasure where they are entering, and who the handsome (boy) is (204b1). Socrates even appears to say things of value to the audience, as when he observes that a hunter who puffs up his prey and thereby risks losing it is ridiculous (205e4–206a1). At the end of the first conversation with Lysis, conducted in the absence of Menexenus (207d2–211a1), Socrates returns to this point. He presents the preceding argument as having cut Lysis down to size and remarks that he had almost forgotten himself and was on the point of telling Hippothales that this was how one should

speak to one's darling. He pretends, however, that when he saw the agitated state of Hippothales, he was reminded not to give the game away to Lysis (210e1–211a1).

Once Menexenus returns, Lysis begs Socrates to argue with his friend just as he has done with him, as if to cut him down to size as well, thus indirectly confirming Socrates' erotic hunting technique. Socrates does not in fact repeat the earlier argument. Instead, he begins from the premise that Menexenus and Lysis have each acquired the other as a friend, and at such a young age (212a1–4), whereas Socrates, despite his age, remains without such an acquisition. Pretending to seek advice from Menexenus, as if Menexenus is an expert in friendship due to his relationship with Lysis, Socrates asks him about the nature of friendship itself. After a brief exchange of questions and answers, Socrates concludes that friends are neither those involved in a one-sided relationship, whether active or passive, nor those involved in a reciprocal relationship. This leads him to suggest that they may have been asking the wrong question (213c5–d2).

At this point Lysis bursts back into the conversation. This could, in itself, be no more than a dramatic device marking the end of one line of argument and the beginning of another. Socrates, however, draws the attention of his present audience to the fact that Lysis blushes (213d3), apparently embarrassed by his own eagerness and concentration on the discussion. Socrates then remarks that he was pleased by Lysis' "philosophy" (213d7). The effect is to render a rather austere piece of argumentation more palatable for his current audience by coating it with a touch of eroticism. When Hippothales had blushed at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates had given it a different interpretation, based on his own expertise in *erōs* (204b5). As usual, Socrates observes a phenomenon and provides an interpretation. The phenomenon should be regarded as significant, since it is mentioned at all, but Socrates' interpretation need not be taken at face value. In the case of Lysis blushing, we shall have to wait until our analysis of Lysis. At the moment, we may appreciate that his blushing will be of interest to the audience, but it may actually be motivated by something other than his status as an *erōmenos*.

The subsequent arguments are concerned with *philia*, and explore such questions as whether the friend, or the friendly, pertains to the same, the different, the good, or the neither good nor bad. A little later, at 221d3, Socrates suggests that desire (*epithumia*) is the cause of friendship and develops this idea through the claim that desire is directed towards that which has been taken away, implying that the desired object is in some sense originally one's own (*oikeion*). He then applies this line of

reasoning to Lysis and Menexenus, who are assumed to desire one another. The effect of this application is to make the *oikeion* appear to be not only the desired (the thing lacked) but, wrongly, the desirer (the person lacking the thing) as well. This move seems to be intentional, since it enables Socrates to conclude that one who desires, a verb which Socrates deliberately and explicitly then replaces with “lusts” (*erāi*), belongs (is *oikeios*) to the *erōmenos* (221e7–222a2). This is as if to say that the lust object originally had, and now lacks, a luster. Of course, a lust object lacking a luster would not be a lust object. Furthermore, this dubious argument pertaining to *erōs* has been entirely tacked on to a series of admittedly no less dubious arguments which at least were purportedly about *philia*, further strengthening the impression that *erōs* is alien to *philia*.

Socrates continues the erotic framing by claiming that Menexenus responded enthusiastically, whereas Lysis remained silent (222a4). Socrates’ audience would relish imagining why. Socrates proceeds to obtain the boys’ agreement that the *erōmenos* should love (*philei*) the *erastēs*, which Socrates qualifies as at least the genuine rather than the pretended *erastēs*, as if this in some way would make the idea more appealing to Lysis. It is only in this conclusion that Socrates suggests some contingent relationship between *philia* and *erōs*: the *erastēs* “lusts” (*erāi*) the *erōmenos*, but the *erōmenos* is expected to “love” (*philei*) the *erastēs*. To crown it all, Socrates then notes Hippothales’ ecstatic reaction, observing that, upon hearing this, he changed all manner of colours (222b2).

Thus we see that the main conversation with the boys is largely unrelated to the subject of *erōs*, but is made to appear concerned throughout with *erōs* by means of well-placed asides and the gratuitous substitution of *erōs* for *epithumia* at the end. The effect is to create the impression that Socrates has been arguing all along towards the conclusion that Lysis should feel affection for Hippothales, who is presented, by means of the preceding sophistic argument, as *oikeios* to Lysis.

Plato could have ended the dialogue at this point had his aim been merely to demonstrate how the interest of an audience might be exploited in order to engage its attention in another subject. There is, however, a concluding episode after the conversation, somewhat shorter than the opening episode preceding the conversation. We recall that the dialogue begins with Socrates promising to demonstrate to Hippothales how he might successfully catch his prey, and by the end of the conversation that promise appears to have been fulfilled. The concluding episode reveals, however, that the successful hunter appears to have been Socrates. It is Socrates, not Hippothales, who secures a few words with Lysis and Menexenus as the party breaks up and leaves the palaestra. Hippothales

disappears from the narrative altogether. The effect should by this point be to produce at least a vague unease in Socrates' audience.

The *philia* discussion is bookended by the *erōs* narrative, but the bookends are unequal, both in length and in content.

2. 4. The Effect on the Audience

As we have just seen, Socrates is narrating an overtly erotic account of a purportedly chance encounter with boys of various ages. The principal thread running through the account is the manner in which he helped Hippothales correct his approach to pursuing the object of his *erōs*, Lysis. Socrates' audience would not only appreciate the erotic story, but might also believe that Socrates was providing a practical demonstration of how an *erastēs* might successfully win over an *erōmenos*. The Socratic aim for most of the dialogue, we may infer, is to engage an audience primarily concerned with *erōs* in a discussion concerning *philia*, for a reason as yet unfathomable to us.

The final move by Socrates, namely the apparently intimate aside to Lysis and Menexenus as they were leaving the palaestra, should have given pause to anyone who believed that Socrates was helping Hippothales. If the narrative is understood as an object lesson in how to succeed in *erōs*, the lesson ends in a strangely disquieting manner. Socrates makes himself appear less concerned with advancing Hippothales' suit than with displaying his own ability to win over the boys. Socrates does arguably demonstrate how to succeed in *erōs*; however, it is not Hippothales, or vicariously the audience, who succeeds, but Socrates himself (it is not the case, of course, that Socrates actually does make off with the boys; it would only appear so to Hippothales). As we shall see, the thwarting of expectations parallels what Socrates achieves with his interlocutors within the narrated conversation, since the avowed friends should be similarly dissatisfied with the aporetic outcome of their search for *philia*. Could the central theme of the dialogue have less to do with *erōs* or *philia* than with Socrates' attempt to disturb settled assumptions, whether erotic or intellectual? While the whole erotic framework appears to exist merely to hook the audience into paying attention to an examination of *philia*, would we be correct in assuming that the narrated conversation is actually a serious examination of *philia*?

3. The Narrated Conversation on *Philia*

3. 1. On the Way to *Philia*

The *philia* conversation is presented to the audience listening to Socrates' narrative as a demonstration in catching one's lust-object. It is framed by the presentation of the problem at the beginning, namely that Hippothales has no idea how to go about wooing Lysis, and at the end by the unsettling manner in which Socrates would appear to Hippothales and to the audience to have caught Lysis for himself. The *philia* conversation itself, for the most part, is intrinsically unerotic. Its presentation as an exercise in successful seduction nevertheless serves to engage the interest of his current audience. The audience has therefore been manipulated into paying close attention to an essentially non-erotic discussion because of its erotic promise.

The dialogue begins innocently enough, with Socrates twice emphasizing within the space of a few lines that he was walking directly from Academy to Lyceum, outside the walls of Athens. Since Socrates has complete control over his narrative, the second mention of his itinerary, a gratuitous reply to Hippothales' gratuitous question, 'Whither and whence?', appears designed to draw the audience's attention to the route which Socrates himself presents as entirely unremarkable. Modern readers may instinctively associate the Academy and the Lyceum with Plato and Aristotle, but such an association would be entirely anachronistic. Academy and Lyceum were merely two of the three extensive public grounds outside Athens, the former to the north and the latter to the east, upon which gymnasium complexes had been erected in stone after the Persian destruction of 480. The city walls had been rebuilt, the Long Walls constructed, the Piraeus developed into a major harbour, and the gymnasia transformed from open exercise grounds into substantial centres of youthful activity. By the middle of the fifth century, the gymnasia naturally attracted sophists and private teachers, whose livelihood depended upon the sons of wealthy families. Socrates just as naturally found himself haunting the same grounds, when not annoying Athenian citizens in the agora and other public places. That Socrates should have been walking from Academy, or indeed to Lyceum, is therefore not surprising. That he should have been making his way in one go from one centre of youthful activity to another some distance away, when the two served much the same purpose, is more curious, especially

in light of his decision to reach Lyceum by negotiating the path beneath the city walls rather than taking the main road through the city.

Socrates also plays the innocent with regard to a building which happens to lie on the route he has chosen outside the city walls. It is evidently a building one cannot fail to see when leaving the city through the gate by the Spring of Panops, itself an installation of which Socrates is perfectly aware, and one he seems to assume his audience also knows. The unfamiliar building turns out to be a recently constructed palaestra. Socrates is not surprised to discover this, but he does present himself as not having recognized the building. His immediate attention is directed instead toward the crowd of youths gathered just off his path. The first youth he mentions is Hippothales, son of Hieronymus, and the second just so happens to be Ctesippus. These are precisely the two characters required for the story with Lysis to progress. Also required for the story to progress is the mysterious building. Socrates is told that it is a recently opened wrestling school (*palaistra*). He portrays himself as not knowing that the palaestra is 'of Miccus', a man whom Hippothales describes as a companion (*hetairos*) and praiser (*epainētēs*) of Socrates. Socrates expresses admiration for the man, calling him 'not worthless' and 'a capable sophist', although he does not acknowledge any close acquaintance with him. Given that Socrates never interacts with Miccus, and that nothing in either the erotic framing narrative or the subsequent conversation on *philia* requires the identity of the owner of the palaestra, the exchange appears curiously elaborate. We may therefore suspect that Socrates already knew that the building was a palaestra and that Miccus taught there, and perhaps even that the Hermaea would be celebrated there, as elsewhere in the city, on that day.

All of this careful set-up is for the benefit of Socrates' audience. Since he eventually mentions individuals as though they require no introduction, we may suppose that he expects his audience to recognize both the people and the setting before he appears to do so himself. Furthermore, at least within the confines of this drama, an Athenian audience, particularly one sharing the conventional fascination with *erōs*, would appreciate the significance of a crowd of well-born youths gathering outside the city walls near the Spring of Panops. The recently established palaestra of Miccus is already a meeting place for the handsome sons of wealthy families, and no audience interested in erotica would be ignorant of that fact, if the drama is to have a consistent background. By affecting ignorance of what lies before him, Socrates allows his audience to enjoy the feeling of being one step ahead of the narrator. They understand the destination and its attractions while poor, ugly Socrates

appears amusingly oblivious. His feigned innocence flatters the audience's supposed knowledge, making his apparent naivety all the more engaging and inviting them to follow him into the conversation with a sense of smug anticipation.

Socrates imposes the erotic framing immediately upon the dialogue by theatrically claiming a divine ability to recognize *erastai* and *erōmenoi* ("lusters" and "ones lusted after" or "lust-objects"), thereby treating Hippothales' attachment to a boy as obvious from the outset. Socrates then takes the scenic route, as it were, through an elaborate and erotically charged conversation with Hippothales and Ctesippus, towards the *philia* conversation, which is being set up as if to serve the erotic interests of Hippothales.

Although Ctesippus makes fun of Hippothales over his obsession with Lysis, he nevertheless plays a central role in facilitating the demonstration Socrates promises to give Hippothales on how to treat one's darling properly, with a view to catching the prize rather than chasing the quarry away. Ctesippus is the cousin of Menexenus, and Lysis is, according to Hippothales, "above all people a companion to Menexenus" (206d4). Through these rather tenuous links, Socrates is all but guaranteed a conversation with Lysis, which indeed turns out to be the case. It is remarkable what can be achieved when one is in full control of the narrative.

We may admire the scenery later on in our analysis of Ctesippus and Hippothales, but let us now prepare for the conversation on *philia*. Socratic misdirection continues even in the dressing room of the palaestra. Ctesippus and Socrates sit down, with space between them for two boys. The others who followed them in now stand around with no one attempting to sit down, although there are currently no boys sitting between Ctesippus and Socrates. Menexenus just so happens to enter the dressing room and sits down between Ctesippus and Socrates. Lysis was already in the dressing room and now decides to join. Hippothales, it would seem, is invisible to Lysis from all angles, as Lysis approaches, and as he sits down. There must be quite a crowd of onlookers. Hippothales had implied while they were outside that his companions each had their own favourite among the boys in the palaestra, but little in the subsequent staging suggests that this is so, unless they are all waiting for the arrival of Menexenus. Lysis, we recall, was already in the dressing room, but if he has admirers, they are acting very coy. We may also note that by the city gate, Hippothales had stood out among a crowd of youths, but that now the very same crowd of youths is being used to conceal him. In a way, the crowd act as facilitators, and Ctesippus is their prime representative.

I suggest that Socrates intended his audience to notice the oddly convenient but highly unrealistic manoeuvring of characters in the set-up for the erotic demonstration. No philosophical background would have been required, apart from the ability to think critically about what is being described.

3. 2. Setting the Bait

Lysis is already in the changing room, standing with other onlookers watching some boys play knucklebones in the corner opposite to where the newcomers congregate. As expected, he does not approach Ctesippus and Socrates, although, if we are to believe Socrates, he is obviously eager to join their conversation. As usual, there is a discrepancy between Socrates' actual description of the scene and his interpretation of it. We need to keep in mind at all times that Socrates is not merely recounting events, but supplying his unknown audience with clues while simultaneously offering a partial or even misleading interpretation of those clues. The erotic framework is obvious, and Socrates does not appear to be challenging his audience's preconceptions about it. The misdirections concern something else. Why Socrates should want his audience to become puzzled by his apparent inconsistencies is a point to which we shall have to return.

Lysis is emphatically not participating in the game of knucklebones being played by some of his peers in the corner, but stands among older spectators. The age groups are mixed because of the festivities taking place that day, suggesting that Lysis is not shy, but rather aware of social propriety. It may be this awareness of propriety which prevents him from approaching Ctesippus and Socrates. Socrates' own vague reckoning that Lysis was hesitant may therefore be considered accurate and not misleading, so far as it goes. Lysis knows who Ctesippus is, given that Ctesippus is the cousin of Menexenus (Hippothales had even made this point during their planning stage), making simple shyness a less attractive explanation.

Lysis may be contrasted with Menexenus, who was playing out in the courtyard and is still playing as he enters the changing room. Menexenus sees his cousin and sits down next to him. We are led to believe by Socrates that this is perfectly appropriate. We may suspect that the *paedagogi*, seeing the large gathering of older boys, might have had a different view, but they are otherwise

engaged with keeping an eye on the younger siblings of Menexenus and Lysis out in the courtyard, as we learn at the end of the dialogue. Socrates would have his audience believe that Lysis comes over because the presence of his friend legitimizes his approach. It is, however, difficult to believe that Lysis simply wished to be with his friend, given their very different modes of passing the time until the arrival of Socrates. Plato's Socrates has already provided his audience with the clues needed for another interpretation.

3. 3. Bettering a Friend

Socrates portrays himself as managing to talk to both boys briefly (207b8-d4) before Menexenus is called away to perform some ritual. In this brief but significant passage it is established that the boys routinely compete and attempt to get the better of each other. The audience may not notice this point if they are paying more attention to the way Socrates quickly turns the conversation towards the erotic (207b8-c7):

And I, looking at Menexenus, said, "O son of Demophon, which of you is older?"

"We dispute", he said.

"So it would also be quarrelled which is nobler", I said.

"Quite so", he said.

"And in the same way, which is more *kalos*."

Then they both laughed.

Socrates breaks the ice with a standard noncommittal question pertaining to their age, although we may appreciate with hindsight that he is already steering the conversation towards revealing their competitiveness. Socrates could have asked how old they were, but instead asks which of them is older. Their disagreement is presented not as a momentary inability to settle a trivial matter, but as a protracted contest over seniority.

Since the narrator Socrates has chosen to begin the conversation with an example of the boys' competitiveness, it is no surprise that the narrated Socrates continues with another question specifically exploring the extent of this competitiveness, this time on the subject of their nobility. He

uses a verb cognate with *eris*, strife. Nobility is a general term relating to one's family background and its reputation. Both age and nobility are measurable criteria of social status.

Next comes beauty. As the boys' reaction to the third question indicates, the subject of beauty is out of place. Socrates may have added it here in order to satisfy his audience's expectation that he would demonstrate for Hippothales' benefit how to talk to one's darling. The laughter of the boys suggests that they are surprised by the question. If so, they evidently compete not over their relative beauty but rather over social status.

Socrates rather forces the answer to his fourth question, by asking it as if the subject is obviously not the sort of thing friends would argue about (207c7-9):

"I won't ask," I said, "which of you is wealthier; for you are both friends, aren't you?"

"Quite so," they both said.

Whether they argue about wealth or not, it would appear that Socrates' expectation that friends would not argue about wealth is the reason that they reply that they do not. It is not immediately apparent, however, why friends should not quarrel over their relative wealth. After all, they do compete over their relative seniority and social status. The fourth question seems to me to be less about wealth, and more about introducing the notion that the boys are friends at all. This is the first mention of friends. It appears conspicuously in the dual form, together with verbs in the dual form as well (I indicate the dual in my translations by adding "both"). The dual form was dropping out of Attic usage throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, and Plato does not use it consistently when Socrates refers to the actions of a pair.

Plato and his Socrates appear to be indulging in some sleight of hand. Socrates does not first establish from the boys' behaviour that they are friends. Rather, he has them agree that they are indeed friends, and invites his audience to interpret everything that follows accordingly. Such an assumption, so long as it is held, will colour one's interpretation of the boys' behaviour. In other words, this becomes part of the framing narrative. The reason, for example, why Lysis does not approach Socrates until Menexenus sits down might now be attributed to his attachment to Menexenus, without even considering the possibility that Lysis might instead be conforming to social convention, which tended to discourage a boy from approaching an unfamiliar adult on his own. Socrates has seen to it, however, that friendship should not be seen as the reason why Lysis is drawn

to sit between Menexenus and Socrates, given that Lysis and Menexenus have displayed no such bonds of friendship until their positioning on the bench between Ctesippus and Socrates. The narrator has gone out of his way to position Lysis in the dressing room with other onlookers watching boys playing in the corner, while Menexenus is placed outside in the courtyard, playing in another game. The scenario lent itself naturally to a dramatization of the friendship of the two boys in a competitive game of knucklebones, but such a friendship is evidently not what Socrates intends to dramatize.

It may be argued that the boys must be friends because they do not object to being assumed to be friends. Furthermore, the whole reason for enlisting the help of Ctesippus in the first place was to use his cousin Menexenus as bait to attract Lysis. Interestingly, however, even during the planning stage, Menexenus and Lysis are not referred to as friends. Rather, Hippothales thinks Lysis is familiar (*sunēthēs*) with Ctesippus because of Menexenus, and Lysis is, most especially of all people, a companion (*hetairos*) to Menexenus (206d4). However, by modern standards, such a close association might be deemed sufficient to regard the boys as friends. Even so, in a dialogue about friendship, the fact that Lysis and Menexenus are not immediately referred to as mutual friends, while Socrates now imputes friendship into a relationship he has been exposing as competitive, should put us on our guard.

It would seem that when the boys reply so affirmatively to Socrates' question about wealth, they are responding not so much to the question whether they argue over who is wealthier, but rather to the assumption that they are indeed friends. It may well be the case that they do not argue over wealth, but not for the reason Socrates gives, that friends share their belongings. Even if friends do share their belongings, there is no immediately obvious reason why they would not compete over their family's relative wealth, given their competitiveness over social status. Despite the apparent attitude of Socrates and the boys, then, we should conclude that simply being friends is not the reason why they do not use wealth in the competition over status.

Their age will not suffice to explain why they do not argue over their relative wealth. They already argue over other measures of social status which we might find precocious. I would suggest that drawing attention to the wealth at the heart of high social status would detract from the reputation an aristocrat would be attempting to establish as someone better than people motivated by pleasure and the money-making required to pursue pleasure. To distance oneself further from such inferiors, an aristocrat would show disdain for such vulgarity while remaining on full display as wealthy

individuals with excessive time to waste in polite disputation. Arguing with a similarly wealthy individual over other criteria of social status would enhance the perception of aristocratic distinction. Wealth, then, is merely the medium enabling that competition. Drawing attention to the medium of wealth would detract from the image of noble status. Socrates' suggestion that the boys do not compete over wealth because they are friends is a fig leaf to cover, and indeed beautify, the mechanism actually at work.

Menexenus is now called away. Socrates claims that he was in the process of asking the boys which of them was more just and more expert (*sophos*). This is another way of telling the audience that he did not ask them this question; indeed, the very formulation, 'I was in the process of asking', draws attention to the fact that the question exists only for the audience, not for the dramatic participants. Why, then, does Socrates introduce this further point of comparison?

Justice and expertise are peculiarly implausible subjects by which to compare two young boys. They are also hardly matters over which boys of their age would naturally compete. By introducing these elevated qualities, Socrates may instead be inviting his audience to reconsider the appropriateness of the qualities over which the boys do compete. What do boys of twelve really know of seniority and nobility? Moreover, are justice and expertise themselves suitable subjects for competition, especially now that Socrates has explained the absence of competition over wealth by appealing to friendship? If friendship excludes rivalry over wealth, should it not also exclude rivalry over justice and expertise? And, by extension, should friends compete over seniority and nobility either?

The question therefore serves no dramatic purpose within the narrated conversation. Rather, it functions as another interpretative prompt directed exclusively at Socrates' audience, encouraging them to examine not merely the boys' competitiveness but the very kinds of distinction over which aristocratic youths are expected to compete. The audience, while still being entertained by the apparently erotic narrative, is already being fed ideas designed to create discomfort if not outright puzzlement.

The summoning of Menexenus raises a number of questions, not all of which need have been intended by Plato, or by Plato's Socrates, but unfortunately Plato did not leave us a manual on what exactly to ask. We need to find out for ourselves as we proceed which questions are relevant to understanding the dialogue, and which might be red herrings of our own making. To begin with, Lysis

is ignored by Miccus, unless he has already performed whatever ceremony remains to be completed. In any case, Lysis and Menexenus are not dramatized as inseparable companions who participate in every activity together.

There is a further difficulty. Socrates has carefully described the palaestra, with the younger boys playing knuckle-bones while others look on, in such a way as to suggest that the ceremonial aspect of the festival has already concluded. Yet Menexenus is now unexpectedly summoned away. It is Socrates himself, the narrator who has created the impression of a post-ceremonial scene, who suggests that Menexenus must have been called by the *paidotribēs* to perform some rite. Assuming that Plato does not expect us to conclude that Socrates is simply fabricating the conversation, why was Menexenus actually summoned? His absence is evidently brief, for he soon returns.

The narrator first creates the impression that the festivities have reached a more relaxed, post-ceremonial stage and then asks his audience to accept an explanation which sits uneasily with that description. We may also note that it is the *paidotribēs*, not the *sophistēs* Miccus, who summons Menexenus, and Miccus remains inexplicably non-existent on this festive open-day at the palaestra. These details would surely have prompted questions from an audience possessing even a modicum of critical thought, suggesting that Socrates had intended to provoke precisely such questions. As for the effect of removing Menexenus, it would seem to be to allow the conversation with Lysis to take place. A cleaner drama could easily have accommodated such a conversation without requiring a deliberately specious explanation for the temporary absence of Menexenus.

3. 4. The Conversation with Lysis (207d5-211a1)

Now Socrates has Lysis to himself, albeit surrounded by onlookers, it is the perfect opportunity to demonstrate to Hippothales how an *erastēs* should speak to his *erōmenos* if he wishes to attract rather than repel his quarry. We might therefore expect Socrates to speak about *erōs*, or at the very least *philia*. He does indeed begin with the latter, but in a surprising context that would seem to undermine rather than advance Hippothales' designs. He asks Lysis whether his father loves him very much, and whether his mother does as well.

Parental love is hardly what Hippothales had in mind. It is, however, one form of love, and Hippothales will have to trust that Socrates will expand the field to include the erotic. We too might expect Plato to use *philia* as an umbrella term embracing a variety of relationships. Imagine our disappointment, then, when the discussion seems to abandon the subject of love altogether.

Immediately after this unpromising opening gambit, Hippothales should wonder at the seemingly irrelevant questions Socrates now asks about *eudaimonia*, authority, restrictions due to incompetence, permissions due to competence, and mastery of *technai* (207d–210d). It is only at the very end of the conversation with Lysis that Socrates returns to the subject of love, appearing to recall his obligation to demonstrate to Hippothales how to speak to one's beloved. Lysis had originally suggested that he was restricted in what he was allowed to do because of his age. Through a series of leading questions, Socrates gradually shifts the focus until Lysis accepts that everyone will do everything in their power to prevent an incompetent person from engaging in a *technē*, to the extent that even his own parents restrict him (210b–c), not because of his age but because of his incompetence. Lysis is thus misled to conclude that he is loved only when he is competent. I say that he is misled, since he had originally believed, and plausibly so, that his parents love him very much. Given that he is incompetent in most fields, he could be forgiven for thinking that his parents love him hardly at all.

As for Hippothales, the argument would seem to be achieving the opposite of what Socrates had claimed he would demonstrate, what with having Lysis being deemed by the Great King himself competent to serve him, the sort of puffing up Socrates had rebuked Hippothales for doing.

It is effectively only now that Socrates performs a *tour de force* to satisfy Hippothales. The argument relies on a wordplay in Greek. The upshot is that Lysis appears to be suitably chastened and put in his place, where he had in fact been all along. He had originally accepted that he was restricted because of his age; now he accepts that he is restricted because he lacks sense (it should have been competence were wordplay not essential here). For that reason, he ought not to be big-headed, though there had never been any indication that he had been.

It is at this point (210e) that Socrates waxes lyrical over what he might have said to Hippothales had he not collected himself at the last moment. He now makes explicit what his poor argument was supposedly intended to demonstrate: that one should humble one's beloved in conversation. It seems to have worked its magic. Lysis is as compliant and docile as ever, but now,

apparently, this is because Socrates has addressed him as an *erastēs* ought to address an *erōmenos*. Seeing Hippothales so worked up by the demonstration, Socrates restrains himself from saying aloud what he merely tells his audience, so as not to give Hippothales away to Lysis. In doing so, he allows the audience to feel that they understand the situation better than Hippothales himself, and they are left with the impression that this discussion not only had something to do with *erōs* but, if repeated, would increase a lover's chances of success. We should keep in mind, however, that the conversation itself had little to do with *philia*, let alone *erōs*.

3. 5. Bettering a Friend - Eristically

Menexenus not only leaves at an opportune moment, but also returns with no fuss and sits back down beside Lysis for the next phase of the conversation (211a1-2). The rivalry between the boys has already been established (§3.3 above). A competent dramatist would now be expected to display that rivalry in action, and this is indeed what we find. By now we also expect Socrates to pay lip-service to the erotic framing. He obliges by describing what Lysis does next as “very like a child and *philikōs*” (“like a friend”? “lovingly”? - 211a3). Lysis whispers to Socrates so that Menexenus cannot hear. It is an intimate moment, shared only by the audience.

Lysis asks Socrates to repeat to Menexenus what he has been saying to him. Instead of pointing out that he has merely been asking a series of leading questions, Socrates tells Lysis to repeat it himself, but without explaining what he should do if Menexenus answers differently. He does not encourage Lysis to question Menexenus there and then. As though the problem were simply one of remembering what had been said, Lysis is advised to question Socrates again the next time they meet. For now, Socrates is prepared to do what Lysis asks, which is to conduct a different conversation with Menexenus while Lysis listens, until it is time for them to go home (211b5).

Socrates finally comes close to admitting that he has been asking questions rather than presenting a position easily remembered by Lysis, when he claims that he will have a difficult time with Menexenus, who is good at eristics. Eristics, like dialectic, consists of asking questions, albeit for very different outcomes. While dialectic aims at improving critical thinking and understanding,

eristics is designed to confound an opponent by subverting logic; the eristician has won when the opponent is ridiculed by the audience.

When Socrates asks Lysis whether he wants him to become ridiculous, Lysis appears to treat Socrates as a superior eristician. He explains that he wants Menexenus to be punished. We may infer, as one possibility, that Menexenus has previously got the better of Lysis in verbal debate, a field in which Lysis evidently does not excel. Socrates, however, places the blame not upon Lysis' inability (although, for Hippothales' benefit, this is what we might have expected), but upon the outstanding ability of Menexenus, who is said to have been taught eristics by Ctesippus, himself still a young man.

We may conclude that the dialogue *Euthydemus* is already available to be read by the same people currently reading *Lysis*. Such readers would recall that in the earlier dialogue, Ctesippus is portrayed as readily acquiring the eristic techniques employed by the elderly brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who themselves had taken up the art only late in life. Plato's point would seem to be that eristic is predictable, superficial, anti-rational, and ultimately unproductive: precisely the sort of technique that an intelligent twelve-year-old could quickly learn and employ against a social peer.

It would be absurd to suppose that Menexenus could present any real challenge to Socrates, but this does not mean that Socrates is an expert eristician. As a dialectician, Socrates regularly exposes eristic techniques and often uses them, albeit not for the goal of eristics, which is to humiliate the opponent by eliciting scorn and ridicule from the audience against the opponent.

Although Socrates points out that Menexenus has a great teacher of eristics in Ctesippus, Lysis says that that does not matter, and Socrates must engage in dialogue with him, to which Socrates yields, by saying that dialogue must be engaged in. Plato has Socrates use two forms of the verb which is cognate with dialectic. This is not an indication that the following conversation is to be dialectical, but rather that Lysis simply regards eristics as a form of conversation.

The most striking feature of the conversation following this intimate exchange between Socrates and Lysis is that no effort is made by Socrates or Menexenus to engage in eristics. It is true that Socrates asks questions, but they are not of the quick-victory binary type so typical in eristics, although binary thinking does emerge during the arguments. Lysis had asked Socrates to punish Menexenus, which in the context implies an eristic exchange leading to the ridiculing of Menexenus, yet Menexenus is far from ridiculed. Having primed his audience for an eristic debate, Socrates

receives no reaction when those expectations are thwarted. This lack of response is reflected within the narrated conversation itself by Lysis, who likewise fails to react.

Socrates has Ctesippus enter the conversation only after Socrates has already agreed to converse with Menexenus. The purpose of the interruption as a narrative device would seem to be to emphasize that Socrates and Lysis have been engaged in an intimate private exchange, and to reflect the somewhat hedonistic consumption of the Socratic narrative by the audience. Ctesippus addresses Socrates and Lysis in the dual, referring to their private conversation as a feast in which he too would like to share.

3. 6. The Conversation with Lysis and Menexenus (211d6-222e7)

The discussion purportedly concerning *philia* breaks down into a series of interrogations conducted with Menexenus, with Lysis, or with both boys together. At the end of the discussion (222e1-7), Socrates summarizes the conclusions supposedly established: friends are neither those who are loved, nor those who love, nor those who are similar, nor those who are dissimilar, nor those who are good, nor *oikeioi*, nor any of the other candidates considered in the course of the conversation. The conclusions need not have been so overwhelmingly negative had the boys not responded as they had.

Socrates begins the first round with Menexenus (211d6-213c9) by claiming that everyone desires a particular possession, itself already a tenuous claim. Most people desire more than one thing. Certainly, the high-status items Socrates reels off are all desired by the well-adjusted aristocrat. The claim, however, allows Socrates to describe himself as equally obsessed by one thing. He is a *philetairos*, a lover of companions. He will go on to talk about the acquisition of *philoí*, which raises the question why he did not use the word *philophilos*, a lover of friends, when the opportunity allowed. The word may not yet have been invented, but that would not explain why Plato seems to have coined *philetairos* instead. I would suggest in defence of the term used that the terms for friend and companion are treated as fairly interchangeable in Greek usage, and in a dialogue on *philia*, this fact needed to be dramatized. This suggestion is, however, speculative. Whatever the case may be, the possession of other things does not excite Socrates, as he emphasizes, but he is “erotically” disposed

towards the acquisition of *philoī*, preferring a good *philos* to any other type of possession. Thus he envies the boys who, at such a young age, already possess each other. The boys are portrayed here and elsewhere in the dialogue as *philoī* and *hetairoī*, while Socrates portrays himself here, presumably for the erotic framework, as an *erastēs* of *philoī* and *hetairoī*. It is not necessarily the case that the three terms are interchangeable, but Socrates evidently expects his audience to accept the connection between them. It is because of the supposed experience of Menexenus as a *philos* that Socrates claims to wish to ask him in what way one becomes a *philos* (211e7-212a6).

3. 6. 1. M1 - Active or Passive? (211d6-213c9)

The first interrogation with Menexenus I shall call M1. The question is whether the *philos* is the one who loves or the one who is loved (the verb for loving is cognate with *philos*), or whether it makes no difference. Menexenus responds that it makes no difference. That is to say, a friend both loves and is loved, and this seems to be a common assumption even today. Menexenus seems to have had in mind Socrates' portrayal of the two boys as possessing each other as *philoī*. In such a case, it would be natural to regard a *philos* as both the one loving and the one loved.

Socrates may have been aware of this, since he immediately asks about unrequited love. Is it not the case, he asks, that the one loving is not always loved in return, and is sometimes even hated? This, he observes, is what often happens to *erastai* (lusters), who are hated by their darlings (212b8). Interestingly, Menexenus emphatically agrees that this is so. Socrates would now be able to ask the somewhat more eristic binary question whether it is the one loving or the one loved who is the *philos*, omitting the third, non-eristic option of the opening question, namely that the *philos* might be both. Instead, he introduces the opposite non-eristic option, that neither is the *philos*, and it is this which Menexenus chooses (212c4-d1). It would seem that Menexenus has a dim view of *erastai*.

Menexenus has thus been manipulated into declaring that both the one loving and the one loved are *philoī* through reference to his own relationship with Lysis, but then into choosing the option that neither is a *philos* in the context of a relationship between a hated *erastēs* and an *erōmenos*. Deprived of context, it looks as though Menexenus is contradicting himself. Socrates misconstrues the two cases as inconsistent, arguing as if the first case held that both were *philoī* if only one of the two loved, while the second maintained that neither was a *philos* if not both of them loved. Thus the same premise, that only one of the two loves, is misconstrued by Socrates as leading

to two opposite outcomes. So far as it goes, this is an excellent eristic conclusion, but Socrates fails to deliver the ridicule which should accompany such a refutation.

Socrates nevertheless pushes the absurdity further without explicitly stating that Menexenus is a fool. He concludes that there can be no animal-lover or object-lover, since the animal or object does not love in return; by the same reasoning, there is not even a *philosophos*, since *sophia* does not love back (212d4-8). Even if the object does not love in return, however, it may still be *philon* (“dear”) to the one loving, unless the poet whom Socrates now quotes is lying (212e2-3). Thus Socrates manipulates Menexenus into agreeing with what appears to be the opposite of what has just been said, since Menexenus is not one to contradict an authority figure such as a poet. Socrates now reinforces this position by observing that children, even if they hate their parents, are nevertheless most *philo*i to those parents who love them. This appears to lead to the conclusion that the *philos* (now understood as “friend” rather than “dear”) is the one who is loved. Binary logic, so popular with the Many and eristicians alike, then uses this conclusion to eliminate the possibility that the *philos* is also the one who loves.

It may be worth pausing here to appreciate the wordplay which recurs throughout much of the following discussion. Socrates uses *philos* with the dative (“dear to”) and *philos* with the genitive (“a friend of”) without drawing attention to his sliding from one to the other. When *philos* means “dear”, it is an adjective, and may be understood as describing a person who is loved (or, in the neuter, a thing which is loved). When *philos* means “friend”, it is a noun, and there is ambiguity surrounding the status of this “friend” as either the one loving or the one loved.

The adjective *philos* appears originally to have described what is one’s own, what belongs or is closely attached to oneself, rather than specifically what is loved; its ultimate etymology remains uncertain. The verb *philein*, formed from *philos*, already in Homer expresses affection and favourable treatment, while *philos* itself already has in Homer the senses “dear” and, when applied substantively to a person, “friend”. The related noun *philotēs* likewise belongs originally to the sphere of social attachment and relationship rather than simply subjective affection. Another term gaining prominence toward the end of the dialogue is *oikeios*. Transparently derived from *oikos* (“household”), it develops from “belonging to the household” through “one’s own” to the wider senses “familiar”, “intimate”, “appropriate”, or “naturally belonging”. Thus *philos* and *oikeios*, despite their different origins and

Classical uses, occupy overlapping semantic territory centred upon belonging, attachment, and what is regarded as one's own.¹

Socrates himself invites further consideration of the distinction between adjective and substantive by introducing at 213a a new but parallel argument involving the apparent opposite of *philos*, namely *echthros*. As an adjective, *echthros* means “hostile”, while as a substantive it comes to mean “a personal enemy”. By analogy with *philos*, it might be asked whether the *echthros* is the one hating or the one hated, although the adjectival usage points naturally to the active rather than the passive sense. Socrates leads a remarkably passive Menexenus from the previous debatable conclusion that the *philos* is the one loved rather than the one loving to the much more dissonant conclusion that the *echthros* is the one hated rather than the one hating. This enables Socrates to conclude that many are loved by their personal enemies and hated by their friends, an obvious irrationality (*alogia*), as Socrates himself observes, and Menexenus hesitantly assents to this as he has done to all the preceding contradictory conclusions (213a6-b5).

From 212b2 onwards, Socrates also switches from the masculine to the neuter (e.g. from *ho philōn*, “the person loving”, to *to philoun*, “the thing loving”), as if to make the conversation more abstract and give it the appearance of philosophical precision. The ensuing discussion employs the construction “The [participle] is *philos/echthros* of the [participle]”. When used adjectivally, *philos* and *echthros* naturally govern the dative (“hostile to”, “dear to”), but here, as substantives, they take the genitive (“friend of”, “enemy of”), and in the genitive, the form of the participle is ambiguously masculine and neuter. As I have already argued, the substantives are ambiguous with regard to voice (active or passive), and Socrates is evidently once more exploiting this ambiguity to compound the bewilderment he appears to be attempting to generate.

Socrates ends this part of the conversation not with an eristic character assassination of Menexenus, but with *aporia*. Although Socrates does not use the word, it is implied by Menexenus' final response, “I do not quite *euporō*” (213c9), that is, “I cannot find a way through”. In the parlance of Socrates' interlocutors in the Platonic dialogues, this tends to signify the inability to provide a new

1. On the history of *philos* and the *phil-* family, see Chantraine, *DELG*, s.v. φίλος, 1204–6; Beekes, *EDG* II, 1573–74; and, for the older social and institutional significance of *philotēs*, Benveniste, *Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* [English Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society]. On *oikeios*, see LSJ s.v. οἰκεῖος.

answer. Menexenus is unable to provide an answer because Socrates appears to have exhausted every answer possible. Returning to the masculine, and in the plural at that, Socrates asks with a flourish what they are to regard as *philoí* if they are not the ones loving, the ones loved, or the ones both loving and loved.

Menexenus is evidently as much a victim as the Many in general of the principle exploited by eristics, and by Socrates here, that something cannot be one thing and its opposite at the same time. In fact, the adjective *philos* (governing the dative), meaning “dear (to)”, denotes the person (or thing) loved, while the substantive *philos* (governing the genitive), meaning “a friend (of)”, is in common parlance indifferently both the one loving and the one loved (see the first paragraph of this subsection, where Menexenus says exactly this about *philos*). If we are to learn anything from the conversation so far, it is that Socrates is not laying out the facts about *philos*, nor even asking reasonable questions about *philos*. Instead, he is allowing, if not actually encouraging, Menexenus to make mistake after mistake. He does not point out the mistakes, but merely compounds the confusion. A good eristician would only have needed to laugh at Menexenus to finish the job of humiliation and win the debate. Socrates does not act like an eristician in this, the defining aim of eristics. For this reason he cannot be considered an eristician, but only someone who is well versed in eristic techniques.

3. 6. 2. L1 - Same or Different? (213d1-216a3)

The first interrogation with Lysis in this second movement I shall call L1. Before considering the question, it may be worth pointing out that Lysis bursts into the conversation between Menexenus and Socrates just as Socrates declares that they seem to have been searching in completely the wrong way. Lysis says that it does not seem so to him, blushing as he does so. Socrates offers an explanation for this, but we should by now be on our guard against his explanations. In any case, we shall be considering the character of Lysis later. At this point, we are still evaluating the philosophical worth of the arguments.

The most generous interpretation of Lysis’ denial is that he is agreeing with Socrates that they have been searching not correctly. This at least is how Socrates appears to interpret the interruption: “Lysis, I think you are speaking truly, that if we had been investigating correctly, we should never have gone so far astray” (213e1-3). Even if Lysis had intended to say that he thought the investigation was being conducted incorrectly, he had not stated the inference which Socrates puts into his mouth.

One might be forgiven for thinking that Socrates is exploiting Lysis' interruption. We might also then recall that Socrates is in full control of the narrative, and that he may have placed the interruption here himself in order to proceed with a new interrogation, neatly distinguished from the previous interrogation by a change in interlocutor.

Socrates appeals to the authority of "the poets" whom he likens to "fathers of *sophia* and leaders". I understand the simile to mean "like fathers-leaders of *sophia*". The leaders come after "of *sophia*" in order to allow "fathers" too to be qualified by *sophia*. Had Socrates ordered the words "like fathers and leaders of *sophia*", Lysis may have understood him to be referring to leaders of *sophia*, and fathers, who are equally authoritative. As it is, Lysis may still understand Socrates to be saying "like fathers" before hearing "of *sophia*", while "leaders" may still be understood as politically authoritative in their own right, rather than as leaders of *sophia*. In short, Lysis may be more impressed by the two authority figures of father and leader, than by their governing *sophia*. Knowing what we already know of Plato's dramatic character Lysis from the earlier conversation, in which he is restrained by his parents while he remains incompetent in various *technai*, we might be supposed to consider the possibility that he interprets "fathers of *sophia*" loosely as "parents" who possess the superior competence which entitles them to exercise authority over him (until Lysis betters his mother, father, neighbours, Athenian fellow-citizens, etc., and becomes indispensable to them).

To add to the pressure on Lysis to accept the position he is about to present, Socrates exclaims that the poets say in no shabby way what friends "happen to be"; they claim, he says, that god himself makes them friends, leading them to each other (214a1-4). Socrates quotes a line of Homer (*Od.* 17.218), without attribution, as what poets approximately say. The line itself is accurately quoted: "god always leads the similar man to the similar man" (αἰεὶ τοὶ τὸν ὁμοῖον ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τὸν ὁμοῖον), but in Homer, this line is said by the goatherd Melanthius who utters this sneering remark when he sees the swineherd Eumaeus with Odysseus disguised as a beggar. The previous Homeric line actually has Melanthius saying "a bad man leads a bad man" (a different word for "lead" is used here). Socrates is clearly misconstruing a famous line to make a point about friendship which is not to be found in the passage from which this line is quoted. Could Plato have had in mind the similar mistreatment meted out to lines from his own dialogues, evidently from his own time until today? That question is irrelevant in an analysis of the course of this dialogue. What does matter is that Lysis fails to react even to this blatant subversion of authority.

We might also wonder why no one else interrupts at this point, if only to show that they know Homer. Socrates may have hoped that his present audience would object, but it would seem that the attempted seduction of a young boy is of more interest than picking holes in literary references. My own reader might object that there is no reason why Lysis or the present audience should recognize the line as Homeric, let alone notice that it has been taken out of context and abused, to which I would reply that this is one of the most famous episodes in one of the most famous poems, frequently recited in Athens as elsewhere in the Greek-speaking world, and learned parrot-fashion by cultured aristocrats from a young age. Since Lysis does not react, Socrates forces him to react by asking him explicitly if he has heard these words (214b1). Naturally, Lysis has heard them, but he has evidently failed to understand their significance in the context, much like contemporary readers of Plato quoting isolated sentences from his dialogues.

Socrates pushes on to the next authority figures, the “most *sophoi*”, who claim that the like (neuter) is necessarily *philon* to the like (neuter). Again, he obliges Lysis to answer whether he has encountered their writings, and Lysis affirms that he has. These writings are written *sungrammata*, not the oral utterances *epē* of Homer. They concern nature and the whole (b5). Socrates is clearly referring to at least one of the *phusikoi*, misnamed in the modern era as Presocratics, and one in particular springs to mind in this context, namely Empedocles. While Socrates may be referring to other “men of nature” as well, we are restricted to the sources we now have, but Empedocles closely fits what Socrates is describing: a physical theory of “the whole” in which the four elements - fire, air, water, earth - mixed together through the power of Philotēs (“Love” - attractive force) and separated through the power of Neikos (“Strife” - separative force). In his account of sensation, like is sensed by like (the reader is kindly referred to my analysis of *Meno* for other details of this system).

It is, of course, not the case that these “most *sophoi*” claimed that “the like” was *philon* to “the like”. To take Empedocles as an example, the like is joined or melded to the like by an external force, and the context is the behaviour of the elements, not of human beings. At best, we might note that the attractive power itself has something to do with *philia*, but the emphasis in Socrates' imminent argument falls on the two parties to a friendship rather than on the friendship itself.

Lysis, like any other educated Greek of the time, may have been well-versed in the poetry of Homer, but for a young boy to be familiar with the poetry of Empedocles may be far-fetched. He had the opportunity to say that he was unfamiliar with him. While there is no reason to disbelieve his

assent to having heard the line from Homer, there is no evidence for the physical claim that the like is *philon* to like, and even someone who had read Empedocles would have questioned it. Socrates misinterprets both authorities, but they share a significant feature not picked up by anyone present, that like is drawn to like, if at all, by an external power, whether this be god (in Homer) or Love (in Empedocles, if it is indeed Empedocles who is alluded to). An educated reader of Plato's dialogue, aware of the background of both authorities and consequently prepared for a discussion of an external force, might therefore be surprised, unlike Lysis, to be faced with an argument completely ignoring the external force while concentrating instead on the relations between the two parties themselves.

Having established to Lysis' satisfaction what the authorities seem to have said, Socrates now turns to a criticism of them, although in reality he is criticizing not them but his own formulation of their views. He asks Lysis whether the authorities speak well, to which Lysis replies, "Perhaps", a learned or instinctive reaction allowing one to avoid expressing an opinion while appearing to have one. Socrates construes the hesitation as an admission of ignorance, and goes on to press Lysis to reveal the object of his supposed ignorance: perhaps half has been well said, or perhaps the whole, but we do not understand it (214b7–8). For the first time in the dialogue, Socrates explicitly distinguishes between understanding what an authority has said and merely agreeing that this is what the authority has said. Naturally, Lysis does not respond.

Socrates takes up the examination by noting that bad people who come together, albeit being the same, do not become friends but enemies. This is perfectly consistent with the Homeric passage, in which nothing is implied about friendship, but merely that two bad people have come together. It may or may not be significant that the word for "bad" in the Homeric line which Socrates does not quote is *kakos*, the Homeric term, indeed, for "bad", but also for members of the non-heroic common people, while here he uses a simile, *ponēros*, "worthless", as opposed to a worthy member of the aristocracy. The reason given for the worthless becoming enemies is the assumption that they will wrong one another. The verb used (*adikei*) is cognate with *dikē* ("justice"). The agreement of Plato's Lysis may be intended to indicate either a wish to remain on the good side of Socrates, or a deep-seated prejudice against the lower classes, or, of course, both. Only a holistic assessment of the boy's responses may determine the exact reason (b8-c4).

The conclusion that bad people coming together are not *philoī* is presented by Socrates as demonstrating the half not well said by the *sophoi* in their claim that the similar are *philoī*. Lysis accepts this as true (c4-6). It bears repeating that the *sophoi* said no such thing in the first place.

What, then, would have been the half that the *sophoi* got right? Let us construct what Socrates ought to have said at this point. Surely, that the *sophoi* were right in maintaining that the good are *philoī* to the good. In other words, the claim that the like are *philoī* to the like is correct with regard to the good, but not with regard to the bad. The *sophoi*, then, would be half-right, and Lysis would have been correct in his hesitation. This is what we might have expected Socrates to say.

Socrates, however, goes much further in saving the *sophoi* from themselves, or rather, from his own misconstrual of them. He claims that they were speaking in riddles when they said that the like are *philoī* to the like. The good really are similar to one another, but the bad, being utterly disordered, cannot be similar even to other bad people. Thus the claim that the like are *philoī* to the like refers only to the good, who, it turns out, are the only ones meant by “the like” (c6-e1).

Socrates now claims to find a problem with this. The good are self-sufficient and do not need others to help them. One is fond (*agapāi*) of someone helpful, and the good, therefore, cannot be fond of anyone, being self-sufficient. If one is not fond, then one does not love (*philei*), and is therefore not a *philos* (214e2–215b3). Socrates then introduces another equivocation, to which Lysis readily assents: *philoī* need to value one another highly, which would seem impossible when the good are of no use to one another because of their self-sufficiency (b3–c2). Socrates has not imposed this conclusion on Lysis, but has drawn it out of him. In the earlier conversation with Lysis alone, Socrates had already discovered the extent to which Lysis regards acceptance by others (his parents, neighbours, fellow-citizens, the Great King) as predicated on his superiority in the various *technai*. He himself would become, as it were, *agapētos* to others if only they would recognize his usefulness.

The argument appears to develop a fresh objection, but it seems to me to follow naturally from Lysis’ conception of friendship as based on utility. If utility is indeed the criterion for friendship, it is only logical that the best friends would be an expert and a dunce, or a technician and someone in need of such a technician, or, though this is not something Lysis would agree with, a parent and a son. The argument, then, is that, far from the like being *philoī* of the like, the unlike are *philoī* of the unlike. This is indeed what we find, although Socrates presents it merely as the opposite of what has been claimed so far.

Suggesting that they have been entirely deceived, Socrates once again appeals to, and misconstrues, an authority. This time he cites a famous line from Hesiod, concerning rivalry among practitioners of the same profession, to claim that the like are most warlike towards the like, and the good most warlike towards the good. The purpose of this move is simply to appear to dispose of the previous claim which Socrates had attributed to “the most *sophoi*”, leaving the way open for an alternative advanced by other *sophoi*. Lysis is evidently happy to abandon one authority, provided there is another to clutch at (c3-d1).

Socrates portrays Hesiod’s description of professional rivalry as bordering on hostility. This allows the opposite relation of unlike to unlike, also supposedly discussed by Hesiod, to appear full of *agapē* and *philia* (in marked contrast to Lysis’ conception of utilitarian social acceptance). Furthermore, the relationships which Socrates claims Hesiod is discussing are far from reciprocal. For the sake of assistance, the poor man is compelled to be *philos* to the rich man, the weak man to the strong man, the sick man to the physician, and, in general, the ignorant man is fond of, and loves, the one who knows (215d4–7). The stronger man is implicitly portrayed as valuing the weaker, since *philos* with the dative has the passive sense “dear to”, that is, dear to someone who loves him. Yet Socrates concludes by portraying the weaker man as loving the stronger. Confusion abounds in this passage.

Socrates had earlier moved from *sophoi* in epic poetry (actually Homer) to *sophoi* in written works (actually *phusikoi*, and most probably the poet Empedocles) apparently advocating the attraction of like to like; he now moves from Hesiod to *phusikoi* advocating the attraction of opposites, but attributes it all to Hesiod. Despite the lack of proper attribution, there is a clear bridge between the Hesiodic quoted lines and the more scientific argument in a reformulation of the apparently Hesiodic claim: far from the like thing (neuter singular) being *philon* to the like thing, the most opposite is the most *philon* to the most opposite (215e1–4). The formulation is now appropriately scientific, before the new argument has even been broached. Hesiod is subsequently portrayed as having taught that opposites desire one another: the dry the moist, the cold the hot, the bitter the sweet, the sharp the blunt, the empty fulfilment, and the full emptying. The reason given is that each opposite is nourishment for its opposite, whereas like would derive no benefit from like. Socrates and the boys seem not to take into account a phalanx of extremely similar hoplites, to take but one example, who derive considerable benefit from one another. The argument remains centred,

despite the context of physics, on the relationship between two people: if they are similar, they cannot contribute anything new to one another. This is a utilitarian line of argument, similar to the one used earlier to prove that the (self-sufficient) good could not be *philo*i to the good. Socrates makes sure to praise Hesiod as clever, remarking that he “spoke well”, before asking both boys whether they agree (215e4–216a3).

3. 6. 3. M2 - The Eristic Middle (216a3-218b5)

Although Socrates addresses both boys, it is only Menexenus who answers, while Lysis takes another rest. We recall that he had asked Socrates to beat Menexenus in debate until it was time to go home, and it was his own fault that he re-entered the conversation. The change in speaker should signal, as it has done so far, a new approach to the question of *philia*, but Socrates continues the previous line of argument for a little longer.

Socrates first ascertains that Menexenus really does assent to the most opposite being most *philon* (most “dear”) to the most opposite. The formulation itself sounds eristic, since verbal debates are best won through positing questions which require the opponent to choose one extreme or its opposite. Since the truth usually lies in the eristically excluded middle, the opponent is bound to be refuted and made to appear ridiculous to the audience. It needs to be said, of course, that Socrates is not asking Menexenus to choose between opposites, but whether he assents to extreme opposites being in some way *phila*, whatever that might mean.

Thanks to Socrates and Lysis, Menexenus is associated in this dialogue with eristics. Despite Menexenus’ evident lack of ability as an eristician, Socrates appears to take the trouble to distance him from eristicians by referring to some other people who would pick on them both. He is referring to a well-tried eristic technique: disparagement of the opposition before the debate has even begun. Socrates exclaims that know-it-all *antilogikoi* will happily pounce on them and their claim. However, Socrates himself is not referring to this eristic technique eristically, for the purpose of ridiculing and thereby defeating his opponent. He actually manages to refute the claim, by means of the *antilogikoi*, without humiliating Menexenus himself since he is not the target, thus allowing them to proceed to another line of questioning. It is interesting that the transition to a new topic does occur with a new speaker, but not immediately. The refutation of the claim that opposites are *phila* for some reason could not be done while Lysis was the speaker.

The refutation is quite simple, requiring only a counterexample which replaces physical attributes such as hot and cold with moral attributes such as just and unjust. Moral opposites are clearly not *phila* to each other. The first example is the most amusing, as the *antilogikoi* sarcastically ask whether *to philon* is *philon* to *to echthron* (the friendly is dear to the hostile), or *to echthron* is *philon* to *to philon* (the hostile is dear to the friendly). The lack of any distinction between the substantival and adjectival uses of *philon* makes this question satisfyingly confusing. The other pairs of opposites used in this interrogation (all neuter singular, of course) are *to dikaion* – *to adikon*, *to sōphron* – *to akolaston*, and *to agathon* – *to kakon* (the just – the unjust, the self-controlled – the undisciplined, and the good – the bad, respectively). It is interesting that these should turn up in a dialogue about *philia*.

It is notable that the subsequent refutation of the entire argument concerning the like and the unlike (or opposite, as it has now become) is not placed in the mouths of the *antilogikoi*. Instead, Socrates himself effectively delivers the verdict: “So neither is the like *philon* to the like nor the opposite to the opposite.” “It does not seem so” (216b8–9). Menexenus appears quite happy to play along. Socrates, of course, cannot bring the argument to an eristic conclusion by adding a triumphant comment on the stupidity of his opponent. This may well have helped Menexenus, who has already experienced Socrates’ softer approach in M1 and L1, feel comfortable enough to accompany him on the journey to another *aporia*.

It is only now, at 216c1, that the new argument begins, and where we might have expected Menexenus to replace Lysis as Socrates’ interlocutor. The new proposition is that none of the terms so far proposed is *philon*; rather, what is neither good nor bad is *philon* of the good. Menexenus is justified in asking what Socrates means (216c4).

Let us first consider what might have been a reasonable proposition following the rejection of all the extremes as possible *phila*. The problem with eristic propositions, or, from the point of view of eristicians, their great value, is that the opponent is faced with a choice between two extremes, both of which are incorrect and easily refutable. The correct answer, if there is one, lies between the two extremes, but this middle position is routinely excluded from the available options in eristic debate.

Since the extremes have now been shown to be untenable, and if Socrates were to abandon the eristic binary opposition in an honest pursuit of the truth, he might have suggested that what is *philon* lies between them. At first blush, this is what he appears to be saying. The claim that what is neither

good nor bad is *philon* might be taken to mean that something intermediate between good and bad is *philon*, just as warm is intermediate between hot and cold. The neither good nor bad would by analogy be the morally or competently moderately good. The not good and not bad makes it very clear that this is not a mixture of the two. It could not be, because the two entities in the proposition must be distinct in eristic thought, and the good is already what this other entity is the *philon* of. The eristic formulation has the extra bonus of producing yet another layer of confusion for the rest of the argument.

Note that Socrates has returned to using *philon* substantively (with the genitive). The term *philon* is the predicate in his proposition, and as such, may be understood as “the *philon*”, although even “a *philon*” is sufficient for the main point: one entity is the *philon* of another. The neither-good-nor-bad is the *philon* of the good.

In answer to Menexenus’ question, Socrates professes to be dizzy from the *aporia*, and adds some philosophically unnecessary remarks which appear to me to be present only as an erotic sop to his audience, whose attention might be expected to be flagging by now. The Greek is formulated in such a way that it may be understood as referring either to a handsome boy or to the Fine itself. Socrates describes this *kalos* or *kalon* (the accusative being *kalon* in both cases) as slippery with oil and difficult to catch.

Socrates immediately equates *kalon* with *agathon* (fine with good), to which Menexenus assents. In Greek usage, the two terms are treated as coextensive (Plato in *Hippias Major* dramatizes the reason for this: the Good is the Fitting, and the Fine is the Apparently Fitting). The question we should ask here is not why Menexenus agrees to the slide from fine to good, but why Socrates makes it. So far as I can tell, Socrates eroticizes and prettifies his account of the *philon* of the Good for the benefit of his present audience. He repeats the new proposition with the pairing of the fine and the good, but thereafter refers only to the good. He leaves his audience eager for further crumbs of eroticism.

The impression that Socrates is treating his eristic middle as a third entity alongside the two extremes is confirmed by his explicit designation of the three as kinds (*genē*), to which Menexenus assents (216d6–7). We only know about the third kind that it is not the other two; it has no intrinsic characteristic, as opposed to a true middle, although a true middle would not be another kind. Having established these three kinds, Socrates rejects all the previous permutations regarding what might be

philon (“dear”!) to what (good to good, bad to bad, good to bad, and bad to good), in order to arrive at the possible relations of the eristic middle to the three kinds. These are that the neither-good-nor-bad might be a *philon* (“friend”!) either of the good or of something like itself, since it would not be *philon* (“dear”!) to the bad (216d7–e5). Although such shifts are normal by now, we should still note the confusion between “dear to” and “a friend of”.

An interesting point to note here is that it has only recently been established that the same is not *philon* to the same, which immediately eliminates one of the two remaining possibilities (the neither-nor to the neither-nor). Menexenus, however, has not yet made the connection, nor will he; Socrates will have to do it for him immediately, at e5-7. As for the eristic middle being a *philon* of the good, there has been no official refutation of the different being *philon* to the different. Socrates had surreptitiously narrowed the formulation to refer only to opposites. That is, it has been agreed that the opposite is not *philon* to the opposite, while nothing has been said about the different being *philon* to the different. We may now see the purpose of that move. It allows the eristic middle, although different from the good, to be *philon* to the good.

The last remaining possibility, that the neither-good-nor-bad is *philon* to the good, is now put under the microscope. Although Menexenus agrees that this is necessarily the only remaining possibility, Socrates, apparently dissatisfied, proceeds to test it by means of an example. Incidentally, Socrates now addresses both boys, as if to signal that the new argument has finally been decided. Menexenus nevertheless remains the interlocutor, having effectively taken over the previous argument before it had properly run its course.

Apparently taking his cue from the notion of a self-sufficient good person requiring nothing, Socrates now suggests examining a healthy body, but temporarily abandons the body in order to speak of a healthy person instead, observing that a healthy person is not *philos* to a physician because of health (217a4–7). This would indeed seem to be the case, since a physician makes his living from sick people and therefore values them because they pay for his services. Socrates goes on to make this very point, that the sick person, because of illness, [is *philos* to the physician], and Menexenus agrees as if this is obvious.

Socrates now labels disease as a bad thing, which seems innocuous (the label, not the disease) until we recall that the bad is one of the three kinds of entities, of which only the neither-good-nor-bad is *philon*, and specifically *philon* to the good. Anyone still managing to think straight by this stage

would now be wondering what Socrates is going to label as good, and as neither-good-nor-bad. Surely the healthy body will be good. This is not to be. The medical art itself (not even the physician) is the thing which is both good and beneficial. The body, *qua* body, is the thing which is neither-good-nor-bad (217b1–3). Socrates now makes the outrageous claim (b3-4) that a body (not a person) is forced because of disease to welcome and love (*philein*) medicine (not a physician). Medicine, disease, and body have now been assigned respectively to the three kinds Socrates has distinguished. It is as if he is exemplifying the formulation that the neither-good-nor-bad loves the good because of the bad. Socrates actually proceeds to spell out the formula using the three kinds, but his version diverges slightly from the expected formulation: the neither-bad-nor-good is *philon* of the good because of the presence of the bad (217b4–6). Socrates has replaced the verb *philein* with *philon* used substantively, meaning “friend”. Whereas the sick person had earlier been *philos* (dear) to the physician, the direction of attraction has now reversed: the body *tout court* loves, and is the *philon* (friend) of, medicine because of the presence of disease.

Because the bad cannot be *philon* of the good, Socrates now claims that it is clear that the body cannot be bad so long as it desires the good; but he also needs to claim that the body desires the good only because of the bad in it (b6-c2). Menexenus is being asked to accept (or indeed reject) the absurd conclusion that the diseased body must be regarded as only a body having disease, since a diseased body, being bad, would not desire medicine to remove the disease.

Socrates now produces a relatively long argument purportedly supporting the notion that a body having a feature is not the same as a body characterized by that feature. Hair dyed white is to be regarded as not-white hair having whiteness which makes it appear white, as opposed to the genuinely white hair of old age. Weak as this argument already is, it also suffers from failing to provide an analogy for the body having disease, as opposed to a diseased body. Whereas the apparent whiteness of the hair is accounted for by two causes, dye and old age, the apparent disease of the body is accounted for by only one, namely the disease itself. The transition from a body having disease to a diseased body is therefore left unexplained (217c3–218a1).

The argumentation is dreadful, but it is artfully so. Socrates has skilfully arranged all the logical wreckage just so, for the terrible logic of the eristically formulated arguments to work impeccably, in some places using movements which began in M1 and at the time were inexplicable.

At the beginning and end of this argument on whiteness we find *philia* associated with desire. At 217b6-c2 Socrates observes that the body cannot yet be bad because, once bad, it would no longer desire and be a *philon* (“friend”) of the good, adding for good measure that they had already claimed that a bad thing cannot be *philon* (“dear”) to a good thing. At 217e6-218a2 Socrates claims that the presence of a bad thing makes the neither-bad-nor-good desire a good thing, but when the presence of the bad makes the neither-bad-nor-good itself bad, it deprives the now bad of both the desire and *philia* of the good, since a bad thing is not *philon* to a good thing. The confusion between active and passive *phila* is almost exactly replicated, but desire is associated explicitly only with the substantial use of *philon*. The *philon* (friend) desires; only by inference might we speculate that the *philon* (dear) is desired.

M2 is concluded with what may be considered either a greater absurdity, or a masterful manipulation toward the greater good (218a2-b5). Socrates observes that by the same underlying logic, if expertise is good and ignorance is bad, then neither the ignorant nor the expert desires expertise. The only people to “philosophize” must be the neither-ignorant-nor-expert. These, by the same logic, must be people who have ignorance but have not yet become ignorant, and they desire expertise not in order to acquire expertise but to remove ignorance.

3. 6. 4. ML1 - Erotic Interlude; the Hunter (218b6-c5)

Socrates signals the final conclusion of M2 and transition to a new argument through a change of interlocutor. He addresses both boys with the dual, and they both respond with the dual. He triumphantly declares that they have discovered what is and is not the *philon*, with regard both to the soul and to the body, namely, that the neither-bad-nor-good is, because of the presence of a bad thing, (the) *philon* of the good. If we may squeeze M2 a little more, this *philon* is the friend of the good who desires the good merely to remove the bad.

The boys are in agreement, and Socrates claims he is delighted. He gratuitously adds, evidently as a sop to his expectant audience, that his delight is like that of a hunter who has caught his prey and is affectionately holding it. The prey his audience would naturally think of are the boys, or at least Lysis, whose method of capture Socrates had promised to demonstrate to Hippothales. Socrates does what he can to draw such an erotically motivated audience into his drier discussion of *philia*, but it is

doubtful whether the erotically motivated would be as delighted as Socrates seems to be at the capture of a definition of *philon*.

Suddenly Socrates claims to have had a most unexpected suspicion that they have become rich only in a dream. The effect on all his audiences would be to feel that the captured prey has been snatched away, or indeed was never there in the first place. This deprivation foreshadows the sense of loss of one's own (real or imagined), which will loom large later in the dialogue.

The problem Socrates claims now to have is whether things agreed upon need be true. While such a concern is irrelevant in eristics, it is a matter of consequence in dialectic. The boys have demonstrated in the previous arguments that they regard anything agreed to as necessarily true. It follows that they would be surprised to hear Socrates casting doubt on the conclusion they have all just agreed is the case. This is not the first time in the conversation that Socrates goes out of his way to make the point that any conclusion needs to be examined, although he never states this dialectic principle explicitly.

3. 6. 5. M3.1 - Without bad, no phila towards the truly philon (218d1-220e5)

The new argument itself is signalled by the interlocutor becoming Menexenus alone, for the third time (M3). Menexenus seems astonished that there should be any doubts at this point. Socrates explains that he fears they may have encountered *logoi* concerning the *philon* which are like fraudulent fellows. A marginal gloss explaining that the *logoi* are therefore false appears to have entered the manuscript tradition, but it is rightly omitted by modern editors. The *logoi* are not merely false but imposters, as though they were the auxiliary hunters who had reported the successful capture of their prey (whether Lysis or the *philon*) when they had not in fact done so. Socrates blames his *logoi*, rather than himself, for the premature celebration of victory in his hunt. Socrates thus allows the hunt to continue, but with new *logoi*.

Socrates now asks a series of questions to which Menexenus agrees. Had he answered differently, the course of the argument would have differed accordingly. Socrates may be manipulating, but he is not coercing Menexenus into accepting a particular line of reasoning. Here, then, is an outline of the argument.

A *philos* is *philos* to someone ("dear to someone"), for the sake of someone/something (the genitive may be masculine or neuter) and because of something. The thing-for-the-sake-of-which is

now presented as a *pragma*, a state of affairs, and as itself *philon*. Socrates returns to the previous example of a sick person being the *philos* (friend) of a physician. He had earlier been this, but then also *philos* (dear) to the physician, the sort of confusion we have come to expect. Now Menexenus agrees that the sick person is a *philos* (friend) of the physician because of disease, a bad thing, and for the sake of health, a good thing (218d7-e6).

Socrates now reintroduces the body, neither good nor bad, and the medical art itself, a good thing, added to health which has already been established as a good thing as well. Whether the extra elements cause clarification or obfuscation, the consistent premise agreed to by Menexenus is that good and *philon* are somehow connected. As it happens, there is confusion within the subsequent chain of relationships because of the usual ambiguity between active and passive *philon*. The body, because of disease, is *philon* of (and therefore an active friend of) the medical art (the sick person had once been *philos* [dear] to the physician), and the medical art has taken up the *philia* (has made an active choice) for the sake of health. Health is established to be not only a good thing, but now itself also *philon*, for no apparent reason other than the general assumption that *philia* and good are connected. Leaving aside the strangeness of a *technē* making its own decisions, the active choice to adopt *philia* requires the art to be a friend of the body, not passively be dear to the body. The medical art may be understood to be a *philon* of the body only in the context of *philia* and the good being connected. It is as if to say that the medical art is of benefit to the body. Health, too, is easily misconstrued as of benefit to the body (health is actually the good functioning of the body). With the example now in place, Socrates blinds Menexenus with science, changing all the examples back into the abstract entities, good, bad (and hostile), and indifferent things: the neither-bad-nor-good, because of the bad and hostile, is *philon* of the good for the sake of the good-and-*philon*. We may now appreciate yet another confusion, that the body is considered *philon* of the good, but is not itself beneficial; it expects to derive benefit from this relationship.

At 219b5 Socrates again addresses both boys, as if to signal a new argument, but he only suggests that they pay attention to (i.e., cross examine) what has been said lest they all be deceived. The address to both boys is short, and Menexenus continues as the interlocutor in this travesty of a cross-examination.

At the outset, Socrates points out that they should not have agreed to a *philon* being a *philon* of a *philon*, since it has been long dismissed that like is *philon* of like. The boys do not dwell on this, but

we should reflect that Socrates is now saying that the body cannot be *philon* of the medical art, since the medical art has itself become *philon*. It was Socrates who confusingly made the medical art *philon*, and we may now see one reason why: he did so in order to provide the boys with an obvious objection, one which they nevertheless fail to notice. Having pointed the objection out, Socrates allows it to slide, as if it is perfectly acceptable that like is *philon* of like. He nevertheless proposes that they examine what has been said, which would have had a point if the intention had been to check whether the abstract formulation had been correctly derived from the concrete examples. If, for example, it were found that either the body or the medical art was not *philon*, the argument would no longer need to be rejected on the grounds that like is not *philon* of like.

The examination begins at 219c1. In a series of questions to which Menexenus assents, Socrates constructs a state of affairs which appears to resemble the earlier one, but there are some significant differences. It is therefore worth following the interrogation stage by stage. The very first exchange reveals that this is not a dialectical cross-examination of the previous argument. Socrates notes that they claim the medical art to be *philon*, and Menexenus agrees. It is as if Socrates is making sure that they still agree upon what has already been agreed, on the assumption that what is agreed upon is true. Had Socrates asked why they considered the medical art *philon*, he may have revealed, with or without the help of Menexenus, that they assumed a good thing always to be *philon*.

The medical art is *philon* for the sake of health. Socrates now asks whether it follows that health is also *philon*, and Menexenus is only too happy to agree (πάνν γε). Again, no attempt is made to understand why this should be so. The obvious explanation is that health, like the medical art, is considered a good thing, and as we all know, what is good is *philon*. Socrates' steadfastness in the face of adversity is impressive.

If health too is *philon*, then it too is for the sake of something, as Menexenus is far too quick to agree to. Again, neither he nor even Socrates asks why something *philon* should automatically be *philon* for the sake of something else. Menexenus next agrees to the notion that the something else is itself also a *philon*, and therefore itself *philon* for the sake of something else, and so on *ad infinitum*, or at least there would have been an infinite regress had it not been for the spectacular *deus ex machina* Socrates now pulls out of his hat, were he to wear one. There must be, quite arbitrarily by this point, a *philon* which is not for the sake of another *philon*. This is the first *philon* for whose sake all the other things are *phila*. Why is this first *philon* different from the others? The answer is fairly

obvious. It is the passive *philon* used adjectivally, the “dear” thing. The things which are *phila* for the sake of this dear one are active *phila* in the substantival sense (“friends”). The dialogue has been assuming *philon* to be associated with the good (and *echthron* with the bad), and this section is no exception. The *phila* are being understood as pragmatically good, i.e., beneficial, as opposed to the *prōton philon* which is the dear one, the good in all other ways accruing to it value, such as aesthetic or social.

Socrates now produces an argument (219d5–220a6) intended to demonstrate, albeit not in so many words, that pragmatic *phila* are merely contingent, whereas the passively valued *philon* is constant and therefore the true *philon*. He posits a son who is the most prized possession of his father and is therefore unconditionally and constantly *philos*. Only when the son is poisoned by hemlock do other things suddenly become *phila*: wine, understood as a remedy against the poison, and consequently the cup containing the wine, become temporarily *phila* for as long as the emergency lasts. Through explicit phrases, Socrates ensures that his audience understands *phila* both as “dear” to the father and as “beneficial” directly or indirectly to the son. The ambiguity allows *philon* simultaneously to denote what is loved and what is beneficial. Great confusion is the inevitable result of the failure to distinguish between the passive, constant, intrinsic *philon* and the active, temporary, instrumental *philon*. The confusion is not of Socrates' doing, but is actually to be found in the Greek language and, as Plato now dramatizes, in Greek thought. Socrates has been leading up to this point throughout the conversation, which began simply enough with the ambiguity between the active and passive senses of *philon*. Plato evidently intended not only to dramatize the confusion, but also to assist the dialectical reader in coming to grips with it.

Socrates concludes that the only really *philon* is that towards which all these so-called “friendships” have their ends (220a6–b3). The beneficial friendships have been demoted to the greater glory of the beloved son. We should pause for a moment to ask what Socrates might have hoped Menexenus would ask himself. It seems fairly obvious that someone who has agreed to all the nonsense so far should wonder how one attracts the attention of one's own parents. As it stands, parents react only in order to remove something bad from their son. We do not know about the parents of Menexenus, but we do know that the parents of Lysis, at least, are concerned with teaching him *technai* or, in the terminology now being used, with removing his ignorance of *technai*.

The next link in this convoluted chain of reasoning is the identification of the really *philon* with the good: Socrates suggests, and Menexenus agrees, that “the good is *philon*” (220b6–7). Strangely, the subject is now “the good”, with *philon* as the predicate, even though the discussion has hitherto been concerned with the nature of *philon*. We have already argued that passive *philon* (“dear”) may be identified with the valued good, while active *philon* (“friend”) corresponds to the pragmatic good, the beneficial. Whether the good itself may be identified with *philon*, however, has not yet been established. What is *philon* does indeed seem to be good, provided that the pair of terms are understood either both actively or both passively.

Socrates next returns to the three kinds: the bad, the good, the neither bad nor good, in order to state that because of the bad, “we are fond of, and love” the good, and that the good is a remedy for the bad which is a disease (d2-3). There is no need of a remedy when there is no disease. Thus we, who are neither bad nor good (“we” seem to be bodies in this particular argument), love the good (the remedy), only because of the bad (disease). The good for the sake of itself has no use. Thus far the argument. We should, however, wonder why Socrates is concentrating on an active good, having just identified *philon* with the passive good (that which is dear is the valued good). The answer is that the misidentification (transferring *philon* from the dear son to the beneficial *pharmakon* by calling the good *philon* without specifying which good) allows him to argue that the good (the actively beneficial) is *philon* (the passively dear!) only because of the bad, which he now calls *echthron* (“hostile”).

Socrates attempts to provoke Menexenus out of his chronic acquiescence by concluding with an absurd remark which nevertheless follows from the argument so far: that *philon* is for the sake of something hostile, since we have no *philon* were the hostile to depart (220e4–5). The attempt is successful, as Menexenus finally, albeit politely, demurs. It is possible, however, that Menexenus has not engaged with the argument, but simply cannot agree with something no one in the audience would accept; he would also not look good if he identifies himself with that *philon*.

3. 6. 6. M3.2 - 220e6-221e4 Preparation for the oikeion argument

Now Socrates appeals to Zeus (I know how he feels) and asks whether, if the bad were to be destroyed, there would no longer be hunger, thirst, or other such things, or whether they would still exist, but no longer be bad. The boys evidently do not respond, and Socrates himself dismisses the

question as absurd, albeit for a wrong reason. His explanation is that we do not know what will or will not exist in such circumstances. Yet the hypothetical is, in fact, a fruitful one, since it immediately undermines the previous conclusion that *philon* exists for the sake of something hostile (that is, something bad). If hunger, thirst, and similar things could persist without the bad, then the concept of *philon* must once again be examined independently of the bad. During his specious explanation, Socrates has surreptitiously identified hunger and thirst as desires, and desire comes to dominate the remainder of the argument. We might therefore expect him to present *philon* as something that desires. We should bear in mind, however, from the outset that the first *philon* was actually the passive “dear” thing. The question Socrates ought to be asking is why other things become ephemerally *phila* in the service of the first *philon*, if not in order to remove some bad thing.

Instead, Socrates effectively goes off at a tangent to argue something quite different. He begins with the uncontroversial observation that, although we do not know whether things will or will not exist in the future, we do know what they are in the present. This truism serves as a bridge to his new point: not only that hunger and thirst are desires, but that they are themselves neutral, being capable of being harmful, beneficial, or neither (221a6–b3). The inclusion of the harmful, incidentally, does not follow at all if the bad has truly been eliminated from consideration. Another point to note is that at b7–8 Socrates provides a sentence which confirms that desire, lust, and love are regarded by the Many as interchangeable: “Is it possible for one who desires and lusts not to love that which he desires and lusts?” Menexenus thinks not.

Socrates nevertheless continues to pretend that he is considering the hypothetical that there is no bad. In the previous argument, when the bad was still admitted, things such as the wine and the cup became *phila* only because they were seen by the father as assisting in the removal of the bad, in this case the hemlock, from his beloved son, the “first *philon*”. The wine and the cup were *phila* only because of the bad. Now, however, Socrates portrays the removal of the bad as the removal of the cause of the *philon*. In doing so, he conflates the “first *philon*” with the things which become only temporarily *phila* for the sake of removing the bad (221c2–5).

Socrates now recalls, out of context, that it had been agreed that the neither-bad-nor-good loved the good because of the bad. We should remember, however, that this conclusion arose from the example of the body loving the medical art because of the presence of disease, not from that of the father loving the wine and the cup because of the hemlock taken by his beloved son. The two

examples have different structures. In the latter, there are two distinct ways in which something is loved: the son is loved for his own sake, whereas the wine and the cup are loved only for the benefit they are expected to confer. In the former example, by contrast, there is only one reason for loving, namely the expected benefit. By conflating the two examples, Socrates makes it appear that the bad had been agreed to be the cause of loving in the first example and of being loved in the second. He now continues that, since the bad is no longer available as a possible explanation within the hypothetical, there must be another cause of loving and being loved (221c5–d2).

Socrates is now able to bring the argument to a close by identifying the cause of *philia* with desiring. We may appreciate that *philia* is now made to stand both for loving and being loved: the very first question Socrates had asked in M1 was whether the *philos* was the one who loved or the one who was loved. He has thus effectively returned to the answer Menexenus had originally given, namely that *philos* or *philia* may be both active and passive. As for desire being the cause of friendship, even if it were true, it would explain nothing, since desiring and lusting have merely been agreed to be coextensive with loving.

Socrates now dismisses the previous account of the *philon* as nonsense, likening it to a long poem (221d5–6). He evidently does so because the boys have made no move to criticize it themselves. Given their concern not to appear ridiculous before others, they would presumably be content simply to adopt the new account and abandon the old one to its fate, as though they had played no part in its construction. Lysis, who has been silent for much of the discussion, will pay dearly for acquiescing in the new account.

The slippery slope begins with Socrates recalling that desire is for that which is lacking (221d1–2). We may suppose that this follows from his identification of hunger and thirst with desire: hunger is a desire for food, and thirst a desire for drink, where food and drink are lacking. Socrates immediately adds, however, that what is lacking is something which has been taken away (221e2–3), which is not the case with food and drink, the only examples of deprivation he has given so far. It is then but a short step to calling what has been taken away “the proper” or “one’s own” (*to oikeion*), which Socrates identifies as the object of desire, lust, and *philia* (221e3–4). While the bad has been removed from the explanation of *philia*, deficiency, or lack, has taken its place. Earlier it was the presence of bad which needed to be removed; now it is the absence of good which needs to be

restored. Now, what is lacking is to be regarded as positively good and as naturally appropriate to the desirer. Interestingly, this last point is addressed explicitly to Menexenus and Lysis.

3. 6. 7. ML2 - 221e5-222d8 - The Lusted One Must Love the Luster

The upshot of the *oikeion* argument will be that the *erōmenos* should love (*philein*) the *erastēs*. This not only provides the pay-off for the erotically motivated audience but also reinforces the notion that *philia* and *erōs* are somehow connected. Whereas the first attempt to engage both boys in conversation, during the hunter interlude, soon gave way to Menexenus taking over (M3), this time Socrates has both boys responding together, at least according to his own report. Only near the end does Lysis evidently realise where the argument is leading.

The first reason for addressing both boys is to elicit from them assent to their being somehow *oikeioi* to each other. Even were they to be inseparable friends, however, which they are not, they would still not be of the same household, organically attached to each other, or each the property of the other. Yet they appear to be good precisely because they appear to be good friends, and maintaining that appearance requires them to assent to their being *oikeioi* to each other. Clearly, Socrates adds the rider "*oikeioi* in some way" precisely to lower the threshold for assent to a point which is central to his subsequent argument.

Socrates now asks a question to which Menexenus responds with enthusiasm, whereas Lysis does not react at all (221e6–222a4). He seems to be disturbed by the suggestion that one who lusts would not desire, lust after, or love another unless he were *oikeios* in some way to the object of his lust. His silence at least suggests that Lysis is finally paying attention and applying the details of the argument to his own situation. This is not to say that he is following the course of the argument as a whole. He fails to notice any of the Socratic missteps that he ought to have noticed, but remains alert to any suggestion that might threaten his own standing. In the meantime, Socrates has transformed the *oikeion* of the previous stage, the missing object towards which desire is directed, into the active *oikeios* who desires, without offering any justification or explanation.

Socrates presses the point (222a5–6) by suggesting that the naturally *oikeion* (neuter) has necessarily appeared to them to love, which is manifestly not the case. Menexenus agrees rather less enthusiastically ("It seems"), allowing Socrates to draw the non sequitur that a genuine *erastēs*, rather than an imposter, must necessarily be loved by his darling (222a6–7). One might have expected Lysis

to remain silent, but both boys assent, albeit reluctantly. The reason is evidently to allow the audience to appreciate that Socrates has finally caught Lysis. The boy is now amenable, so it would seem, to being the darling of a genuine *erastēs* who “loves” him, and he appears to have agreed to “love” such an *erastēs* in return. Socrates immediately describes Hippothales’ reaction: pleasure causes him to flush with delight (222b1–2).

It is difficult to see how the sophistic argument concerning the *oikeion*, treated first as passive and then as active, is to be taken seriously as contributing to a definition of *philia*, if indeed *philia* is the idea of the dialogue. Much clearer, at this stage, is the dramatic necessity of such an argument in dovetailing the *philia* conversation back into the erotic framework.

The audience is not allowed to bask in erotic euphoria for long. Socrates immediately explains to his audience, though not to the boys, that he wishes to reexamine the argument. To the boys he says that: (1) if the *oikeion* differs in some way from the similar, they might yet have something to say about what a *philos* or *philon* is; but (2) if the same thing happens to be both *oikeion* and similar, it would be difficult to reject the earlier argument that the similar **is not** useless to the similar insofar as it is similar, yet it is also mistaken to agree that what **is** useless is *philon*. This is not merely convoluted but preposterous as a purported reexamination of the argument, if only because the two horns of the dilemma prove ultimately to be almost indistinguishable.

The principal obstacle Socrates presents himself as facing is the conclusion that the similar is not *philon* to the similar. This conclusion is simply assumed throughout the reexamination, without further argument, as the basis of both horns of the dilemma. The boys continue to accept it for the familiar reason that the similar is useless to the similar. Yet this conclusion had originally depended upon a chain of reasoning which Socrates no longer mentions: the similar had been identified with the good, the good had been declared self-sufficient, and it was only because of this self-sufficiency that another similar good thing could be of no benefit to it.

The first horn merely leaves open the possibility that, if the *oikeion* differs from the similar, it may prove to be *philon*. Socrates offers no reason why this should be so. The second horn offers an illusory alternative. If the same thing happens to be both *oikeion* and similar, it would not be *philon* by virtue of its similarity, since similarity has already been declared explanatorily impotent, but it might be *philon* by virtue of being *oikeion*.

The dilemma consequently collapses. If the *oikeion* differs from the similar, it still has to be explained why it is *philon*. If it is identical with the similar, it likewise has to be explained why it is *philon* in virtue of being *oikeion* rather than similar. In neither case has the argument progressed beyond the bare suggestion that the *oikeion* may somehow be *philon*. Socrates claims that they might now have something to say about what a *philos* or *philon* is. In reality, they have acquired nothing more than a new candidate, together with no explanation of why it should succeed where every previous candidate has failed.

We may note in passing the curious use of “the similar” in the first horn. Socrates asks what follows if the *oikeion* differs from the similar, thereby treating “the similar” as something capable of being compared with another property. The expression has shifted from describing a relation between similar things to functioning almost as the name of a category, another symptom of the conceptual instability which characterizes the closing stages of the argument. What is similar to what has ceased to matter; “the similar” now enters the argument chiefly as something distinct from, or identical with, the *oikeion*, while carrying with it the already established conclusion that it cannot be *philon*.

Having looked briefly at the structure of the argument and the non-existent dilemma, let us now turn to the connection Socrates makes, in the second horn of his dilemma, between this argument and the “previous argument”. One of Socrates’ most consistent ways of testing his interlocutors’ ability to follow an argument is to “remind” them of something which did not, in fact, occur earlier in the conversation. They routinely “remember” what was never said, or simply do not react at all.

In the second horn of the dilemma, then, it is claimed that the previous argument has shown that the similar is not useless to the similar, but Socrates adds that it is also mistaken to agree that what is useless is *philon*. The proposition that what is useless is not *philon* derives from the similarity argument (L1), where the chain of reasoning is: that the good cannot derive benefit from anything else because it is self-sufficient; consequently, two goods are useless to each other and cannot be *phila*; but, the two goods being similar, what is similar, being useless to what is similar, is not *philon*. The first statement in the second horn, however, flatly contradicts the conclusion of the similarity argument, and therefore cannot be derived from it. Nowhere in the preceding conversation is the similar explicitly stated to be not useless to the similar. The eristic mindset of the Many would naturally understand “not useless” as its opposite, namely “useful”.

The similar may be regarded as useful to the similar in this current conversation if the proposition harks back to the argument concerning the first *philon* and the ephemeral *phila* (M3), where the *phila* are said to be beneficial in removing the bad from the *philon*. Removing the bad is not strictly beneficial, and the *phila* sound similar to the *philon* but are categorically distinct. The whole argument has by now become so tied up in knots that it would require a *deus ex machina* to resolve the issue, or at the very least, end the conversation.

Socrates begins the dénouement with a comment on their current situation. He suggests that they are, as it were, drunk through the agency of the *logos* (222c2). That is to say, the *logos* itself has made them, as it were, drunk. We may understand Socrates to mean that the argumentation has been confusing, to say the least, and that they have become dizzy from all the contradictions and false conclusions. There may, however, be a more far-reaching significance to this alcoholic simile, but I prefer to address that interpretation later, so as not to interrupt the flow of the present survey of the conversation.

The very exchange in which Socrates refers to the mental state of himself and the boys exemplifies the boys' lack of confusion: "Do you wish, then, since we are as if drunk through the agency of the *logos*, that we concede and claim that the *oikeion* is something other than the similar?" "Quite so!" (222c1-3). The confident reply betrays no puzzlement despite Socrates' claim. It is not indicated which of the boys makes this response, although Socrates has just addressed both, and the next response is explicitly by both of them. Confident replies are usually the province of Menexenus. Socrates' question is confused. Accepting that the *oikeion* is something other than the similar when the similar has already been rejected only means that the *oikeion* may be *philon*, but not necessarily. Socrates' elimination of the only other candidate, the similar, insinuates that by this very process of elimination, the *oikeion* must be the *philon*. No explicit justification for this identification has been given.

Socrates now proposes (222c3) that the good be what is *oikeion* for all, and the bad be what is alien (*allotrion*). He continues, however, before any answer is forthcoming, to suggest as an alternative that the good is *oikeion* to the good, the bad to the bad, and the neither good nor bad to the neither good nor bad. Even someone with minimal rational engagement would notice that this is tantamount to saying, in the context of this argument, that the similar is *philon* to the similar. Even this escapes the notice of the boys, who instead simply agree. We might wonder whether they are

even listening to the words but simply responding to the tone of Socrates' voice, but we might also speculate that they do hear the sentence as bad people sticking together, good people sticking together, and the neutral others apparently also sticking together. The sentiment, then, would sound right to them, regardless of any bothersome argument to the contrary.

Socrates points out, perhaps with an exasperation more theatrical than real, that they have once again fallen into the first *logoi* they rejected. We would agree with him, since it was long ago agreed that the similar is not *philon* to the similar. He, however, does not recall the similarity argument but adduces a new claim: that the unjust is no less *philos* (dear) to the unjust, and the bad to the bad, than the good to the good (the just to the just is not mentioned). "So it seems", he said, and I presume that this again is the more attention-seeking Menexenus rather than the retiring Lysis (d5). Socrates is emphasizing a perceived absurdity which is regarded as a refutation in eristics, that something is no less so than its opposite, although there is no opposition as such in the bad person being dear to the bad as the good person is dear to the good. It was only the prejudice of Lysis in the similarity argument (L1) which had removed the notion of the bad being dear to the bad without examination. The obvious point, again missed by the boys, is that they have returned to the refuted conclusion that the same is dear to the same.

Socrates makes what appears to be one last attempt to elicit an objection to a proposition which cannot stand in light of the similarity argument: if they were to say that the good and the *oikeion* are the same thing, only the good man would be *philos* to the good man. Presumably Menexenus, the confident boy, blithely replies, "Absolutely" (d5–7). As Socrates immediately points out, "we thought that we ourselves had refuted this too", adding, "Don't you remember?", to which both the boys say "We remember". They are a hopeless case, at least so far as this dialogue is concerned.

3. 7. *In Vino Veritas* (222e1-223b8)

The end of the conversation would also be the end of a typical early dialogue. Here, however, Socrates' narration to an unknown audience allows the dialogue to continue beyond the end of the conversation with the main interlocutors. This continuation is not for the benefit of the boys, but for the unknown audience.

Socrates first draws attention to the boys' cavalier attitude. He asks what "we" are to do with the *logos*, and immediately answers the question himself with "Clearly, nothing" (222e1). He is portraying the argument as useless, and as such it is not *philon* (something of value) to them. We should recall that the *logos* has been a product not only of Socrates' outrageous argumentation, but also of the responses of the boys. The *logos* has not been used particularly well, to say the least.

Socrates makes a show of listing some of the possible answers to the question of *philon* which have been refuted throughout the conversation, in order to conclude that he has no other answer. As if to emphasize that such a methodology is more eristic than dialectic, Socrates likens himself to one of the *sophoi* in the lawcourts who bring up all the purportedly absurd conclusions in one go, increasing the sense of absurdity by the very accumulation of so many of them. If none of these answers, or any of the others which he claims he cannot remember since there are so many, is *philon*, then he has nothing else to say. He is treating the supply of answers as finite, as if there can be no other once all these are dismissed. Amusingly, among all the answers dismissed are those he can no longer recall because there have been so many of them.

A quick look at the list of answers which Socrates does recall is informative. Apparently, *philon* is not any of the following: the people being loved; the people loving; the similar people; the dissimilar people; the good people; one's own people (*oikeioi*). Socrates provides two groups of opposites, followed by two types whose opposites are so obviously not something *philon* that they are not mentioned at all, namely, the bad people and the alien people. The most ridiculous claim here is that the people associated in some way with *philia*, whether loving or loved, are in no way associated with what is *philon*. The problem was deciding whether *philon* pertained to giving or receiving *philia*, and to reject both alternatives must surely indicate that the problem is badly formulated rather than that *philia* has nothing to do with what is *philon*. The binary nature of the list is well concealed by the generous inclusion of six members of four pairs of opposites, and the exclusion of the opposites of the last two terms, together with the gratuitous reference to many other types. This intricately subtle presentation of the eristic nature of the conversation does not seem aimed at the boys, or at Hippothales, but at the "jurymen" in the "courtroom" in the palaestra, or indeed in the broader audience listening to Socrates' narrative or Plato's dialogue.

If the reader were in any doubt that the conversation with the boys was over, Socrates tells his unknown audience that he was intending to activate someone else from among the older people

(223a1–2). The use of the verb *kinein* (“to move, activate”) is worth taking a moment to consider. Socrates does not teach in the normal sophistic sense of the word. He attempts to activate his interlocutors. I shall proceed in the analysis with this Socratic intention in mind. It would certainly help to explain the nonsense we have had to endure. Socrates provokes, irritates, and in general moves his audience. To what end remains unexamined. It sounds as though Socrates is signalling that he has ended his attempt to activate the boys, but there is still more to come. The audience is being misdirected again. It is the formal conversation regarding *philia* which has ended, but the informal one will continue after the interval.

Socrates had effectively been his own *deus ex machina*, having destroyed the entire conversation with his own sophistry. The dialogue could have ended with the conversation. Socrates, however, gratuitously ensnares himself in another conversation which never happens. There is an urgent need for outside intervention or else this dialogue will never end. As luck would have it, the palaestra is about to be closed for the night. That smoking gun had been set up in M1, when Lysis had said that he would listen to Socrates punishing Menexenus until it was time to go home. Thus there is no need for further *dei ex machina*. Socrates supplies not one but two further *dei ex machina*.

The *paidagōgoi* of Lysis and Menexenus arrive on the scene, explicitly like some *daimones*, with the boys’ brothers. These slaves entrusted with the safety of the boys are treated by Socrates as *dei ex machina*, since otherwise there is no point calling them *daimones*. It is not as if they are forces of nature or something demonic. The casual reference to the brothers of the boys explains why the guardians have been remiss in looking after Lysis and Menexenus. They were absent from the changing room (having only just entered) and looking after the brothers who, we are to infer, were playing knucklebones outside in the courtyard. Recalling and comparing details from various parts of the dialogue is an operation of dialectic. This is a concrete, non-philosophical indication by Plato or Plato’s Socrates that he sets up information which will be of significant use only later on.

These *paidagōgoi*, although only slaves, had the nerve to order the boys to go home as it was already late. Socrates emphasizes all their bad qualities, including their broken Greek tongue, their persistence in the face of complaints from the great and good, and, most interestingly, their being tipsy, although that would be expected after a day of celebration and free drinks. Socrates goes out of his way to infer that, having indulged in the *Hermaia*, they were *aporoi* (here, “difficult”) to deal with. Because of all of this, the participants in the conversation were defeated and obliged to break up

the gathering. We might reformulate this as the hostile aliens separating *philoï*, although the reality is quite the opposite. The slaves are doing their job. They are required by their masters, the parents of the boys, to see to it that they return home unharmed at the appointed hour. They are useful instruments in this scenario, and in M3 terms, *philoï*.

The meeting ends, but this is not the end of the dialogue. The final lines are worth presenting in full (223b3-8):

Nevertheless, I for my part as they were already departing said, “Now, Lysis and Menexenus, we have become ridiculous (*katagelastoi*), both I, an old man, and you (plural). For these people will say as they are departing that we consider ourselves to be friends (*philoï*) of each other - for I place myself among you - but we have not yet been able to discover what the friend (*philos*) is.

Socrates would not say to all and sundry what he suspects they are going to do, implying that he speaks in a way which only the boys can hear. If he is coming closer to the boys in order to talk to them alone (as Lysis had done to Socrates earlier at the beginning of M1), he would appear to anyone watching to be quite intimate with them. Lysis had requested the ridicule of Menexenus in an eristic debate, but now Socrates reveals that all three of them will be ridiculed by the people who had heard the conversation on *philia*. This would be a shock to the boys since the conversation, albeit riddled with eristic techniques, had lacked the one obvious feature which all eristic debate must contain, namely, a formal refutation accompanied by triumphant ridicule and scorn. Socrates had brought the conversation to an end without anyone losing face, but now he springs on the boys the shocking news that he and they will be laughed at. Socrates is talking nonsense, of course, if the onlookers are anything like the boys in their dialectical acumen. For the easily-led boys, however, the conversation would now appear to be disastrous for their reputation.

Hippothales has long been dropped from the narrative, but he has not spontaneously combusted. If he is consistent with his character until now, he would have his eyes on the boys and Socrates, and he above all people would regard their behaviour somewhat negatively. The hunting demonstration was too successful; it has mutated into a lesson in poaching and a betrayal of trust.

The volte face at the end of the dialogue would also logically have to have an effect on Ctesippus, since he was the one who had engineered the plan to enable Socrates to demonstrate to

Hippothales how to catch an *erōmenos*; he had intended Socrates to help Hippothales, not frustrate him. The audience to whom Socrates is narrating the entire proceedings would also surely be affected by the sudden turn of events in Socrates' erotic tale; we need not speculate just how they would be affected, but we may speculate about it later.

4. You Are What You Drink

4. 1. The Intoxicating *Logos*

At 222c1–2 (ML3), Socrates observes that he and the boys are as if intoxicated by the *logos*, but invokes this intoxication as a reason for taking yet another serious misstep in his apparent investigation of *philia*. The *logos*, whether interpreted as argument, conversation, or reasoning, is actually a concatenation of sophistic fallacies. A dialectician would no doubt appreciate the opportunity to analyse the many pitfalls in the conversation, but an inexperienced and perplexed reader might be encouraged by Socrates' observation to embrace the confusion engendered by the accumulation of inconsistencies; this, rather than retreating from the problems, would be a first step towards dialectical thought. That the reference to being drunk is an analogy for intellectual confusion is an interpretation I have already suggested (see p.51 above), and it is almost too obvious to require pointing out. It seems to me, however, that this analogy is intended to be taken much further, and indeed may be viewed as a key to understanding at least part of the structure of the entire dialogue.

Socrates' audience, intent more on the erotic game being played out in the dialogue than on any supposed philosophical discussion, may have been surprised to learn that the argument was confusing. Telling the audience that it was confusing might help to draw attention to such a notion. The boys themselves may have been thinking that it was Socrates who was making a mess of the argument, if indeed they could follow the *logos* sufficiently to see how bad it was. That they never reacted with an objection to that effect suggests that they were reasonably happy with the argument except when Socrates told them not to be, and even then, Menexenus would occasionally ask why Socrates thought he saw a problem with it. Readers of the dialogue may be credited with a little more philosophical acumen, although by the time Socrates mentions the intoxication by the *logos*, we might have smiled in recognition and moved on. The reference to intoxication is a literary conceit, but nothing philosophical, and there would appear to be no reason to read too much into it. It seems to be an appropriate summation of our confusion at the end of a particularly frustrating and pointless dialogue.

However, Socrates returns to the topic of drunkenness very soon after this apparent analogy for confusion. This time, it is a description of literal drunkenness, but the reference itself suffices to recall the earlier analogy. The *paidagōgoi* are somewhat inebriated when they enter the changing room; it would seem that they had participated too enthusiastically in the Hermaea festivities. It would be easy to treat the episode as comic relief after such an intense conversation and once again dismiss what is obviously only Plato's attempt to inject some humanity into his bumbling apology for a philosophical account of *philia*. As already intimated, however, this episode comes hot on the heels of the earlier reference to being as if drunk from the *logos*, suggesting that there is more to the analogy than at first meets the eye.

4. 2. Medicinal Wine

Now that our attention has been drawn (has it not?) to the potential importance of intoxication in this dialogue, we may also consider another instance of wine which, appearing earlier in the dialogue at our M3.1 (219d5–220a6, see p.44 above) might easily have been forgotten had the context in which it came up not been so shocking. This is the hypothetical case of a dear son stricken with a bad case of hemlock. We are never told why the son has hemlock, but we are given to understand that wine is the remedy for it. The distraught father, apparently wishing to remove the hemlock, places value on the wine, and consequently also on the cup holding the wine. The moment the wine removes the hemlock for the son, it will have fulfilled its task and will no longer be dear to the father, presumably until the next time he gives his son hemlock. The argument avails itself of two types of *philon*, the one which has consistent intrinsic value, and the one with temporary extrinsic value. The shock value of the example, however, necessarily originates outside the dramatic setting, although Socrates cannot be considered to be alluding to his own future death. I suspect that Plato has Socrates choose hemlock, as it were, to make the episode more memorable and ensure that the reader still has this medicinal wine in mind as we approach the end of the dialogue and the two further references to intoxication.

The three sprinkled references to wine have together the basic function of drawing attention to their presence in the dialogue. Each differs from the other two, which gives them dialectic power: Socrates' audience and Plato's readers are invited to compare and contrast them, since Plato never

states his intentions in a straightforward fashion. Unless Socrates is narrating to an audience after his death (he is not), it is only the reader who will experience the full shock of the reference to hemlock. At the same time, the death of Socrates by hemlock is irrelevant to the references as they function in the dialogue. The shock serves only to wake the reader up to the presence and possible significance of the references. The final reference, to tipsy *paidagōgoi*, has its place in a description of the boys' slave guardians, but it may also act as a reminder to compare the other two references, which are not so clearly connected with the *realia* of the dialogue. A comparison of the other two references is suggestive. That the *logos* causes intoxicating dizziness sounded in the context like permission to make yet another mistake ("Since we are drunk, as it were..."). However, the notion that wine is a remedy for the removal of hemlock points to a more beneficial function for the *logos*. While the *logos* may indeed give us a headache, this is an incidental side-effect one may need to endure in order to remove hemlock. The obvious question then arises: what is this metaphorical hemlock? Like wine, it is something imbibed.

Socrates has been attempting to cause his interlocutors to think dialectically, to compare, contrast, and reach more coherent opinions. By extension, other people have been hindering precisely this way of thinking, albeit unwittingly. Since Socrates is not a teacher imparting knowledge, the hemlock dispensers may tentatively be identified with those who do impart knowledge. While this might seem counterintuitive at first, we would do well to recall something Plato's Socrates says in *Apology*: the supposedly *sophos* "thinks he knows something when he does not know it", whereas Socrates, when indeed he does not know, does not think that he does. Socrates appears to be more *sophos* in this one small respect, that what he does not know, he does not think that he knows (21d).

The dear poisoned son analogy is shot through with sophistic fallacies and should not be taken at face value. We are merely deriving from it the most basic of indications: that Socrates uses dialectic to counter the deadening effects of one or more alternative forms of education. This is something to be considered in our analysis of the characters.

5. The Consistency of Inconsistency

5. 1. Is Inconsistency not Good Enough?

The dialogue is an absolute mess; but let us suppose that Plato the consummate dramatist set out to dramatize the philosophy of Heraclitus, that all is in flux. Not everything in his philosophy is in a state of flux. A river *qua* river remains a river although there is change in it. Day follows night as regularly as, to use a cliché, night follows day. Behind everything lurks fire, and what he calls *Logos*. Surprisingly, not everything in a Platonic dialogue is chaotic either. The palaestra does not become a tree, the palaestra does close at a set time, and behind the whole conversation we may suspect that there lurks another sort of *logos*, an organizing principle.

There was a widely-held belief in the ancient world that what could be known needed to be stable. This is a possibility which it might be worth exploring, if indeed we wish to understand the dialogue rather than be appalled by it.

Clearly, discerning an ultimate *logos* pervading the *dialogos* is currently out of the question, since we are still reeling from the intoxication produced by the conversation's *logos*. It would be fruitful, I suggest, to find something more immediately stable than the underlying principle of the whole work. The propositions and arguments of the dialogue are inconsistent and may appear to be disorganized, but the speaker of those propositions and arguments is surely rather more consistent inasmuch as he is a narrator throughout, and may have some consistent motivation, although at the moment that is merely a hypothesis worth examining. Similarly, the characters described by the narrator should be understood not only to have basic sense perception, but even thoughts and feelings (Hippothales the *erastēs* comes to mind), and they too might be stable in one way or another, allowing them to be understood to a certain extent.

We immediately hit a snag, however. The dialogue is about *philoī*, which would imply that the characters should all represent *philoī* in one way or another. However, as we have seen, the *philos* is in the eye of the beholder, and not something intrinsic to the *philos* himself. Furthermore, he may be one sort of *philos* to some, and another sort of *philos* to others. Indeed, he may even be an *echthros* to

others. We are at the sort of impasse which leads Socrates to print his favourite quotes on T-shirts in order to feel some semblance of knowledge.

5. 2. Applying M3 to the Characters

Beggars cannot be choosers, or as Socrates would say, we must follow the *logos*. A neon sign with flashing lights points directly towards the two types of *philos* in M3. If we are to analyse the characters, we are to begin in the worst way possible, using faulty terminology based on unsound logic. The intrinsic *philos* is someone who is valued for himself by someone else, and is an intrinsic *philos* only in such a relationship; such a person is also considered *oikeios* or “one’s own”, a term arbitrarily thrown into the mix, while the identification is not proven as such (M3.2). The instrumental and temporary *philos* is useful, and in particular, useful for removing something bad from the intrinsic *philos*. This mechanism allows us to analyse the characters as the non-dialectical see themselves and others. It will be a useful first step for us in our attempt to map out the various characters and their functions.

Each character or character group will be treated in a subsection strictly according to the M3 mechanism I have outlined above.

5. 2. 1. The Parents and *Technītai*

In the conversation with Lysis alone, we are introduced to the parents of Lysis and various craftsmen and skilled slaves. Socrates begins the conversation with the question whether his parents love Lysis, and he says that they do, very much. People who love should be *philoī*, but for now we shall say that the parents find in Lysis intrinsic value; he is therefore intrinsically *philos* to them, as someone *oikeios* to them by blood. The craftsmen, professionals and slaves, are clearly instruments of the parents, and this makes them temporarily *philoī* to the parents. Pressing M3 to the limit, the parents and the *technītai* all conspire to remove the lack of technical ability from Lysis rather than add technical ability to him.

5. 2. 2. Lysis

As already noted in the previous subsection, Socrates first asks Lysis, out of the blue, whether his parents love him, and Lysis replies that they do, very much. It would appear that Lysis recognizes that he is of value to his parents, that he is intrinsically *philos* to them (again we have the difficulty that the parents' love for him cannot be expressed normally through the mechanism of M3). Socrates suggests that loving someone involves wishing the loved one to be *eudaimōn* which is construed by Socrates to mean free and independent, which Lysis most definitely is not. Lysis ascribes the restrictions to his young age, but Socrates leads Lysis to agree that he is restricted due to being as yet incompetent in many *technai*.

It would seem from the agreement Lysis gives to Socrates' questions that he feels free to place letters in any order he wishes, and play notes on the lyre in any order he wishes, in the two *technai* where he thinks he is competent. It may be objected that Socrates is referring to a child prodigy who could in theory do what he wishes on papyrus or lyre, but Socrates squashes this possibility by including in his first example of the boy's competence, literacy, not only writing but also the far less flexible aspect of reading, suggesting that in reading as well, the reader may place letters in any order he wishes (209b3-4). This remark comes before his description of the assault on the lyre, where Socrates imagines that Lysis can adjust the strings as he wishes, and pluck and strike with the plectrum as he wishes. We are already predisposed by the reading example to picture Lysis making a horrendous noise. Flouting the rules of *technai* indicates that even in these *technai* he is somewhat incompetent. Yet Socrates describes the boy's parents as availing themselves of his services whenever they need something written or read or played (emphatically agreed to by Lysis, 209a7-b2). Whether the parents do or not, it reflects the boy's own belief that his competence in these *technai* is recognized by his parents since they listen and watch him perform. The impression he has that he is competent in these *technai* while he is not competent in others therefore arises from the fact that he is allowed to do what he wants in these two *technai*, while he is restricted in the others. He is so incompetent in *technai* that he cannot judge for himself his own technical ability, but needs external validation. Currently, he regards himself as competent in literacy and lyre-playing, because his parents ask him to read and play for them.

If the reader is still unconvinced by my claim that Lysis considers himself competent although highly incompetent by virtue of other people appearing to recognize his competence, I submit the ludicrous examples of his competence later in the same conversation which he does not object to, where the Great King himself recognizes his astounding cooking ability and allows him to pour handfuls of salt into his soup, and recognizes his superior ability in medicine, to the extent that his son would be blinded by all the ash Lysis would have sprinkled into his eyes (209e).

I would just dwell on the parents a moment before we return to Lysis. The parents allow Lysis to do what he wishes in the two *technai* of literacy and playing the lyre. They do not give him the same latitude in the *technai* of chariot racing and muleteering, not even his mother's needlework. The reason seems to be obvious. The former are not life-threatening, while the latter clearly are. The parents care about Lysis, as befits any parents who love their children and their clothes intact.

Lysis, then, is aware that he is *philos* to his parents (he is actually aware that they love him), and yet he sees that he is free to do what he wants only when he is competent, a state of being he wrongly assumes he has when his parents entrust him with reading and lyre-playing. Thus, when his actual incompetence leads others to restrict him, he sees only that people are stopping him from being free. When he is recognized as competent by an authority figure, rightly or wrongly, that is when he is free. It would appear that this is the way Lysis thinks long before Socrates enters the dressing room.

The people allowing Lysis to feel that he is competent in some *technai* are his parents. There is, however, no reason why only his parents, indeed only authority figures, should fill this role, but it does make sense that parents would in the first instance. What matters is that the other person should love Lysis, and thus tolerate whatever incompetent behaviour he does in his false belief, encouraged by the tolerance of him shown by the other party, that he is being regarded as competent and is therefore free. Such a pattern of behaviour is actually harmful to Lysis since he has no incentive to become actually competent at anything, and he has no guarantee that people other than his parents will always tolerate his antics.

Socrates' interrogation of Lysis' approach to becoming free proceeds logically once some elements of the boy's position have been distorted at the outset. Firstly, Socrates takes as his examples of validators of Lysis only authority figures: his father, his neighbour, the Athenians, and finally the Great King himself. Secondly, he suggests that Lysis will actually be recognized by these increasingly superior authority figures as competent, although the examples of his competence in action betray an

alarming level of incompetence, made more alarming by Lysis agreeing that those actions are what he would do in the given examples. Thirdly, Socrates suggests, and Lysis readily accepts, that these authority figures would give over all their possessions and power to the more competent Lysis, thus emphasizing how Lysis is living in a fantasy world where his self-image of competence is not matched by his actual competence. The argument would seem to be exactly what Lysis wishes for, to be recognized as competent by the most important people in the world, but quite apart from the ridiculous scenarios of Lysis shovelling handfuls of salt into the Great King's soup, and rubbing piles of ash into the Great King's son's eyes, he would be reducing himself to the level of a menial at the beck and call of those from whom he wishes validation.

We may now describe Lysis in terms of M3. He wishes to be free, but the *technitai* restrict him. They are therefore instrumentally *echthroi*. Plato ensures that we may understand how this may be so by providing an example at the end of the dialogue. Socrates' faux-aristocratic irritation with the tipsy uncouth *paedagogi* who almost came to blows with the assembled youths illustrates the resentment welling up in young aristocrats born to do what they will. If the servants are instrumentally *echthroi* when they restrict him, it is hard to see how Lysis could think his parents love him for much of the time. The reading and lyre-playing sessions must be the highlight of his day with them.

5. 2. 3. Menexenus

Menexenus is introduced to Socrates' audience during the erotic framing. Hippothales is reported to say that he is the one above all to whom Lysis is a companion (*hetairos*), and he is also a cousin of Ctesippus (206d3-5). Hippothales hatches a plan to allow Socrates to demonstrate to him the sort of *logos* he should use with Lysis. The plan involves Ctesippus accompanying Socrates to the dressing room in the palaestra, where either Lysis will come because he is familiar with Ctesippus because of Menexenus, or Menexenus will come because of his cousin, and Menexenus will act as bait to attract Lysis. So far as Hippothales is concerned, then, Menexenus is an instrumental *philos* for him in the convoluted chain that might one day result in Hippothales acquiring Lysis. Ctesippus agrees with the plan, and therefore he too treats his cousin, an intrinsic *philos* (*qua oikeios*), as an instrumental *philos*, albeit for a different end to be discussed when we analyse Ctesippus.

Furthermore, Hippothales seems to treat Lysis and Menexenus as mutual intrinsic *philoi*. His plan appears to depend on it.

When Socrates describes the scene in the dressing room, we obtain a very different impression about the boys. Lysis is standing passively among some older boys watching younger boys play a game of knucklebones in the corner. Menexenus is actively playing out in the courtyard. They are not together, as one might have expected they should be were they the great friends Hippothales thinks they are, an impression the narrator conveys in word, while his description of them in deed suggests that they are not.

I shall not dwell on Socrates' misdirection concerning Menexenus' entrance, since we have already discussed it in the survey of the dialogue. Of interest to us here are the following basic points. Menexenus would have noticed Socrates and the crowd of adolescents entering the dressing room; he follows them in and, without grabbing hold of Lysis first, sits between Ctesippus and Socrates. Lysis now chooses to join, and he sits between Menexenus and Socrates. Ctesippus and Hippothales may view this as their plan coming to fruition, but it is not obvious that Lysis was induced to join through any friendship with Menexenus, given that Lysis had not been induced to be with Menexenus before then. The behaviour of Lysis appears to fulfil Hippothales' expectations, but we should be aware that actions and character assessments in this dialogue do not always correspond.

Socrates implies in his initial questioning of the boys that they are equally of high status and goodlooking. Are they equal in every way? The conversation Socrates has with Lysis alone establishes that that boy misconstrues people's tolerance of him as recognition of his (non-existent) competence. Could Menexenus also be labouring under the same misapprehension? The parents tolerate Lysis because he is *philos* to them, and I have suggested that that is because he is *oikeios* to them (he is "their own"). Other people might tolerate him because he is *philos* to them as well, but for a different reason, namely that he is perceived to be of value to them. Socrates has given the reason why. He is of high social status and goodlooking. So far as it goes, Menexenus seems to be made of the same cloth. The main difference between them seems to be that he actively seeks to be the centre of attention while Lysis insinuates himself into being the centre of attention with the minimum of effort. Menexenus is actually as incompetent as Lysis in conversation, but he is the one who answers confidently, if questionably, while Lysis prefers to sit the conversation out, as he says explicitly during the whispering scene: he would wish Socrates to punish Menexenus until it is time to go home.

Menexenus and Lysis recognize in each other their own social and aesthetic worth and in this sense each is *philos* to the other. Being *philos* to the other means being tolerated by the other, which leads to the misapprehension that each is recognized as competent. Lysis is content to be *philos* to one and all, and bask in his unearned sense of competence, without making more effort than he is pushed to make by the circumstances, such as being cornered into a conversation with Socrates without the presence of Menexenus. Menexenus actively seeks the limelight. He is the first of the boys to join the gathering, and sits at the very centre, between Socrates and Ctesippus. Lysis puts himself into a position where he may be *philos* to everyone by inserting himself between Socrates and Menexenus, but his inclination is, evidently, to leave all the activity to Menexenus, who is pleased to take all the activity upon himself. It is not his fault that Menexenus is magically whisked away, but it is his fault when he blurts out his comment which leads to L1, between M1 and M2.

The boys would appear not to be aware of anything like hemlock in their system but they do seem to treat each other not only as intrinsically *philos* but as instrumentally *philos* as well. Their apparent rivalry serves only to draw attention to their worth; the rivalry is mutually profitable. There are situations, however, where Lysis uses Menexenus to shield him from effort, while Menexenus uses Lysis as the foil whom he can outshine or overshadow. Lysis may be revealing some resentment about this when he asks Socrates to punish Menexenus in debate.

5. 2. 4. Hippothales

Hippothales is consistently the *erastēs* in this dialogue. In M3 terms, however, the situation is somewhat complex and unstable, albeit consistently unstable.

Lysis is clearly intrinsically *philos* to Hippothales. The worth of Lysis is, as we have already seen, his high social status and his beauty. The lack of Lysis causes Hippothales great pain, and it is this bad thing, the pain, which according to M3 logic, Hippothales would remove by somehow acquiring Lysis. That is to say, Lysis is an instrumental *philos* to Hippothales as a means to removing the pain. Thus Lysis once again appears to be both intrinsically and instrumentally *philos* to another person, although Menexenus and Hippothales are very different types, giving the *philia* of the situation a completely different connotation.

Socrates muddies the waters by adding *oikeios* sophistically into the mix in order to conclude, perversely, that the one lusted should love the luster because the luster is his own. The term *oikeios*

explains *philos* better in the case of Lysis who is *oikeios* to his parents, and Menexenus who is *oikeios* to his cousin, Ctesippus. The brutal argument apparently requiring Lysis to love Hippothales is required within the erotic framework of the dialogue. This is the long-promised demonstration of the *logos* Hippothales should use in his endeavours to catch Lysis, although the entire conversation with the boys is presented as all part of the same longwinded *logos*. The *oikeios* argument alone in its perverse form is sufficient for the quick and dirty manoeuvre Hippothales requires. Neither Hippothales nor Socrates' current audience is likely to notice that minor detail.

We should not forget that Hippothales is the originator of the plan to have Socrates demonstrate the type of *logos* he should use in hunting Lysis. Instrumental *philoï* in his scheme are Ctesippus, Socrates, Menexenus, and perversely, Lysis himself.

5. 2. 5. Ctesippus

We have just seen that Ctesippus is one of the instrumental *philoï* of Hippothales. He, however, has a devious scheme of his own, which involves exploiting Hippothales' plan for his own ends. Ctesippus too has a bad thing which needs removing. He is quite vocal about it at the beginning of the dialogue. His problem is that embarrassing fellow, Hippothales, who simply will not shut up about Lysis, his family, the entire family tree, accompanied by awful poetry and wailing at all times of the day and night. Ctesippus believes he will solve his problem at the moment that Hippothales solves his own. Ctesippus therefore goes along with Hippothales' plan, which makes Ctesippus look as though he does it out of concern for Hippothales (Hippothales would appear to be intrinsically *philos* to him), or at least as if he is cooperating (Ctesippus would appear to be the instrumental *philos* to Hippothales which he incidentally also is). The one requiring assistance is actually Ctesippus himself, which would make him intrinsically *philos* to himself, in contrast to Hippothales who has concentrated all worth in Lysis, and deems himself wretched.

Ctesippus, just like Hippothales, treats Socrates, Menexenus, and Lysis as instrumental *philoï*, but for a different end.

5. 2. 6. Socrates

The strongest case for an inconsistent character may be made if we apply, as we have applied successfully in every other character, the M3 logic of *philia* to Socrates. Socrates is treated as an instrumental *philos* to every other character throughout the dialogue, and he is amenable to this treatment. He appears to give up his plan, which he gave explicitly not only to his current audience but to Ctesippus and Hippothales as well, to go to the Lyceum, just in order to help out Hippothales by agreeing to demonstrate to him how to catch his prey. By helping out Hippothales, he also helps out Ctesippus, who wishes to be rid of Hippothales in his current embarrassing form. Socrates agrees to punish Menexenus for Lysis. Menexenus exploits Socrates being the centre of attention as the crowd move into the dressing room by immediately taking centre stage between Socrates and Ctesippus (just as Lysis then takes centre stage by sitting between Socrates and Menexenus). He is the only one whom Socrates does not help explicitly.

Having made himself appear to be an instrumental *philos* to all the other participants, we may now appreciate the full force of his final act in the dialogue, when he appears to thwart the expectations of every other participant in one fell swoop. As Socrates implies, he says what he says to the two boys and not to any of the others, about whom he is making his remark. This would naturally require us to imagine Socrates and the two boys forming a distinct grouping away from the others, which would be sufficient for his various purposes. He has at least three. He goes out of his way to appear to be stealing Lysis (and Menexenus) for himself, away from Hippothales, although this is obviously not the case; Ctesippus may now expect Hippothales to be even more of an irritating embarrassment; he tells the naive boys that they will all three be a laughingstock to those who had heard their failure to work out what a *philos* might be (if only an audience would think about the actual argumentation like this!). Even worse, Socrates is now gossiping about them behind their backs to his current audience.

The person all had regarded as an instrumental *philos* becomes an instrumental *echthros* at the end of the dialogue. This is surely proof positive that a character can change, and change in the most extreme way, in a dialogue. If so, the characters cannot be seen to be models, let alone *deigmata*, and my entire house of cards comes tumbling down.

A moment's reflection will suffice for us to realize that Socrates has not changed in essence but in appearance. If the instrumental *philos* to all the other characters manages to become the

instrumental *echthros* to all the other characters after an elaborate set-up which allows him to do this, it would be necessary for the other characters, were they to take a moment to think clearly, to regard Socrates as instrumentally *echthros* from the beginning, suggesting that they should also regard him as intrinsically *echthros*, a menace to society.

It may be objected, and indeed should be objected, that how characters regard another character is no evidence for consistency or inconsistency. It is the essence of the character himself which should determine his consistency. Such an objection would necessitate a revision of all the characters, not just Socrates, according to their essence rather than the way they appear to treat each other as *philo*i. This is not to say that the analyses in this chapter have been redundant. They have helped map out the dynamics of all the non-dialecticians in the dialogue, which in turn hint at where the focus of our analysis of the essence of Socrates might be. Nevertheless, for the sake of completeness, should we not attempt to impose M3 logic on Socrates from Socrates' own point of view here in this section? It would be inappropriate to do so, since Socrates thinks dialectically. He formulated the M3 terminology with the blessing of Menexenus, to reflect the thinking of a non-dialectician, not his own dialectical thought. It is not the case, for example, that Socrates would attempt to remove a bad thing rather than add a good thing. It is clear that he allowed himself to be used as a *philos* to each of the others each in a different way, and that he had in mind the reversal at the end of the dialogue. This does not mean that he actually is a *philos* or *echthros* to any of them in their terms, but it would seem to be too early to tell what exactly they are to him before we pin down more accurately what he is doing in relation to them.

6. The Socratic Lack of Method

6. 1. Elenchus, Aporia, the Search for Truth

The Socratic Method infamously follows the practice of interrogation (*elenchus*) which refutes one answer after another until the interlocutor finally realizes that he has no further answer to supply (*aporia*), thereby preparing him to search for the actual truth about the subject. The only problem with this neat and logical method is that Socrates in the Platonic dialogues never follows it. The Socratic Method depends upon the usual Platonist fallacy that the dialogues may all be treated as one philosophical text. Elements from separate dialogues may then be cobbled together to create the golem which has come to dominate many areas of Platonic scholarship.

It may be argued that there is *elenchus* in *Lysis*. The *philia* conversation, one might say, is surely nothing but a series of refutations. While it may be true that there are refutations, they are conclusions reached by Socrates regarding premises raised by Socrates about certain qualities of a *philos* without ever addressing the question what *philia* itself is. Socrates never elicits from the boys an answer to the question, “What is *philia*?”, and the boys are not refuted. The boys are not led to *aporia*. They were already there. They are incapable of contributing anything meaningful to the conversation, but their lack of answers or original thought need not concern them so long as they feel (rightly or wrongly) recognized as valued participants. By the excruciating end of the sophistic conversation, we may be certain that a search for the truth was never part of Socrates’ plan.

The only consistent behaviour we have discovered so far which permeates and informs the dialogue is elaborate and has nothing to do with a Socratic Method. Socrates pretends to be an instrumental *philos* to each of the participants with regard to their consistent ends, although his longterm goal is to appear as an instrumental *echthros* to them precisely by thwarting their expectations at the last moment. His skill at juggling their various expectations is commendable.

All the characters are consistent in motivation to achieve an end, whatever that end might be. The ends of the non-dialecticians range from the reprehensible to the ineffectual, but Socrates’ ultimate goal is surely not merely disappointing the others and appearing hostile to them.

6. 2. Hemlock and Wine

Chapter 3 looked briefly at the subject of hemlock and wine. It is now time to drink more deeply of both. Where better to start than with an eristic question entirely irrelevant to this dialogue? Who is the one who learns: the one who knows, or the one who does not know? Either option will lead the opponent of the eristician to certain defeat. Choosing the first option leads to certain refutation, while then choosing the second option only doubles the humiliation. The outcome is predictable precisely because eristic deals in extremes. One who knows, if this is the option chosen, obviously cannot learn, since he already knows. One who does not know, however, if the alternative is chosen, would not recognize what he was looking for even if he tripped over it, since he does not know it. Either he knows completely, or he is absolutely ignorant. Such is the nature of eristics. The defeat of the opponent must be a foregone conclusion, and offering a choice of just two polar opposites is ideal.

Instead of the one who knows and the one who does not know, we could ask about one who is good and one who is bad. L1 does precisely this. The bad person is utterly bad without remedy, and hence cannot receive benefit; while the good person is utterly good, and hence in no need of benefit, being perfect. The tendency of the Many to think in terms of opposite extremes is what allows eristics to work. It is this tendency which Socrates exploits, but not in order to win some outrageous eristic victories over his interlocutors. For example, in this dialogue, he goes out of his way not to defeat the boys in public debate, but behaves as though they are seeking together the nature of the *philos*, while manifestly doing nothing of the kind.

In real life, the one who learns is of course someone who knows a little, but can add to that store of knowledge a little more. The one who learns is both one who knows to some extent, and one who does not know to some extent. Removing qualifiers such as “to some extent” is yet another essential feature of eristics. To break the apparent impasse, that neither the good extreme nor the bad extreme is *philos*, it would have been an easy matter to suggest that the person who could receive benefit is good to some extent and bad to some extent, inasmuch as the person’s goodness is incomplete and could be developed. Instead, in M3, Socrates suggests the horrific alternative of a person who is neither (most) good nor (most) bad. I call this the eristic middle because of its negation

of the extremes without explicitly (or at all) being a mix of both in the middle, although this negative thing becomes the third “kind” (*genos*) along with the two extremes.

M3 also handles the process of benefit by means of eristic formulation. Rather than adding a modicum of good to a pre-existing store of good, Socrates posits a bad thing located in the neither good nor bad which is to be removed using instruments temporarily useful for removing that bad thing. No good is ever added in this form of benefit.

To add insult to injury, the neither good nor bad person receives the specious title of *philos* on the grounds that he is loved (the son by the father), while the things deemed useful in removing the bad thing are labeled *phila* as well, although they are active and temporary, as opposed to the “first *philos*” who is passive and constant.

It is not merely unlikely, but well-nigh impossible, that Socrates failed to catch his own use of eristic techniques: the utilization of polar opposites; the negation of these polar opposites to designate another entity, all three then being considered “kinds”; the portrayal of benefit as the removal of a bad thing somehow located in the neither bad nor good; the employment of the term *philos* in two completely different and arbitrary ways, as pertaining to something of intrinsic value and to something of instrumental value in removing the bad thing from the thing of intrinsic value. Despite this breathtaking collection of eristic devices, and despite pretending to acquiesce to the request of Lysis to punish Menexenus, Socrates never executes the final flourish which would have turned the whole conversation into a truly eristic debate.

What we do see is a conversation shot through with sophisms and misdirections and straight fallacies. Some people with remarkably straight faces may attempt to argue that we are not to suppose that Plato was immune to making the occasional mistake in his philosophical ramblings. That is actually a valid point. I would simply note, however, that sophisms, misdirections, and fallacies permeate the dialogue from the very beginning to the very end, which I take to be an indication by the author that it is all intentional, including the nonsense in the sections identified in the secondary literature as philosophical.

We should now ask the obvious question, what is Socrates attempting to achieve by feeding his interlocutors Platonism? Socrates’ words, after all, are what Platonists interpret as the theories of Plato (or Socratic irony, according to taste). And so we come to the hemlock and a little rambling of our own.

Hemlock is the bad thing in Socrates' example. The father loves his son, and hemlock would deprive him of his son; for this reason, the hemlock should be seen as the opposite of useful (labeled *philon*), namely harmful (by analogy *echthron*, hostile), given that the useful (friendly) things are intended to preserve his son. If the hemlock is treated as simply bad, then all the useful things may be regarded as simply good. The terms bad, harmful, hostile are to be considered equivalent in this argument, in the way that good, beneficial, and friendly are treated. All these terms are to be seen in relation to the removal or preservation of the loved one. Interestingly, the preservation of the loved one requires the removal of the remover of the loved one. There is no development, only an attempt to return to the status quo.

In the example given, the remover of the remover is the wine. The father treats the wine, therefore, as useful, beneficial, good, and by a magnificent sleight of hand, *philon* (friendly) to himself. The cup holding the wine also becomes *philon* to himself. We should conclude, therefore, that not only is the remover of the darling son *echthron* (hostile), but whatever held the hemlock before the son drank it, presumably another cup, was *echthron* too. This would be a subtle indication by Plato's Socrates to any dialectician in the audience that any particular object, such as a cup, is not intrinsically beneficial or harmful, friendly or hostile, but is deemed to be such according to context. Eristic thinking does not usually allow for context.

The final conclusion is made even worse than it already needed to be by means of the introduction of *oikeion* (one's own) into the mix, and the sophistic conclusion that, in effect, Lysis needs to love (*philein*) Hippothales, the very opposite of the proper application of *oikeion* to that relationship (it is Hippothales who, as it were, lacks Lysis, as if he is missing part of his own). As Socrates says at the very end of this chain of logical atrocities, it is as if they are drunk.

Why would Socrates say they are drunk by the *logos*? The best we might say for the boys is that they have no idea what is going on. From our analyses of the boys, they could not be expected to find much of interest in the conversation itself beyond its usefulness in displaying their value in any of the ways open to them as handsome young members of the social elite. We cannot accuse them of being confused since confusion would require a modicum of intellectual engagement with the arguments. At the very least, however, they would probably accept that Socrates has made a mess of the search for *philia* and the *philos*, and that he has tied himself up in knots. Socrates, they would say, has tried to include them in his confusion. There is a possibility, however, that the boys are genuinely

confused. Whether they are confused or not, Socrates may have wished the notion of an intoxicating *logos* to be prescriptive rather than descriptive. Being drunk by the *logos* is to be seen as a good thing. Either that, or Socrates is simply being malicious, since he is the one who has deliberately inflicted upon them several cups of heady sophistry.

The *logos* is likened to some intoxicating beverage. The drunk *paidagōgoi* at the end of the dialogue, and the case of the stricken son strongly suggest that the beverage in question is wine, although it seems to me that any intoxicating liquid would fill the part quite satisfactorily. The example of the father and his beloved son would suggest, by analogy, that Socratic *logos* is the remedy for something bad which is located in people. What could be the bad thing, like hemlock, which might be removed by means of Socratic *logos*? What disappears the moment someone is puzzled, perplexed, even irritated, by a narrative which does not quite make sense? We should add to that question the rider that the bad thing has somehow been added in the way Socratic *logos* is added, since the poison and the wine are both liquids ingested by the son. We should also bear in mind that the notion of adding a remedy merely to remove a bad thing is part of the terminology of M3, the conceptual framework of the non-dialecticians. It is an indicator, but not an accurate template, of reality.

What have the characters other than Socrates been pouring into the neither good nor bad body (soul is not mentioned in this dialogue) of Lysis? The obviously bad thing in Lysis, among the less obviously bad things, is that he lacks competence in *technai*, but thinks that he does have it. He resents his inferiors who restrict him when he thinks he is competent enough to drive a chariot. It follows that he enjoys his peers or superiors when he thinks they are recognizing his competence, when in fact they are appreciating his intrinsic value (especially his high status and beauty) and are only tolerating his horrendous incompetence. We may infer, then, that he is fed undue praise and admiration. The extreme case is that of Hippothales, who praises the very ground the ancestors of Lysis walked on. Interestingly, the extreme case of Hippothales does not allow Lysis to feel that Hippothales recognizes his competence, since Hippothales has not yet talked directly to Lysis, but has only showered him with poems and eulogies from afar. In general, however, we may see that unmerited praise and admiration inhibit the critical faculty of the individual and act as a disincentive to learning. Flattery, or forms of it, seem to me to be the hemlock in this dialogue. Socrates hinted to

it in his warning not to puff Lysis up, although his actions did not demonstrate the proper way to deflate the boy. As a general rule, however, helium is as fatal as hemlock.

It seems to follow, if anything can follow from anything in this dialogue, that the wine is analogous to whatever is the opposite of flattery or forms of it. This is not the case, however, unless Lysis falls down drunk whenever he is told off by any of his *technītai* restraining him, for example, from riding a mule into the path of a charging chariot. The intoxication seems to be a specific form of anti-deadening of the critical faculty. Within the terminology of M3, it would involve the removal of the lack of awareness. In terms more appropriate to real life, it would involve causing someone to become aware. We may note that simple restraint has had no effect on Lysis and his lack of awareness. Socrates has had to try another method, one which allows Lysis to believe that Socrates is cooperating with him, not opposing him.

We have seen that Socrates has allowed all the participants to believe that he is cooperating with them. I suggest that that is the only approach open to him if he is to raise their awareness by some other means. The cooperation is not his ultimate aim (made clear by the reversal at the end of the dialogue). The cooperation is merely the *sine qua non* for an attempt at engaging with their critical faculty by means of the conversations with the boys. Even the audience is allowed to believe that Socrates is providing something of interest, not something of benefit.

Finally, it might already be worth emphasizing that Socrates ultimately fails. If his patients have no interest whatsoever in the “philosophical” content of the argument, but are fully engaged in their own concerns, then there is no hope of improvement, no matter how hard Socrates tries. Luckily for us, we are not extreme characters in a Platonic drama, and the dialogue can cause us one massive hangover.

7. Looking for Stability

7. 1. Dialectic Thought

The misdirections purportedly explaining events and people's reactions in the dialogue, the inconsistencies in descriptions, the glorious absurdities, logical howlers, and increasingly imaginative conclusions, the final catastrophic betrayal of all the participants, all these are the sort of thing one might naturally expect to elicit a reaction. Failing a reaction from the participants in the narrated story, or from the audience hearing the narrative, we might expect at least a modicum of irritation in the reader, some puzzlement, some rereading of passages to check if a recollection of what had been said is really what was said. This is the beginning of dialectic thought, the attempt to make sense of a *dialogos* through comparing and contrasting all its elements. After much investigation, it will be discovered that any consistency or sense in the dialogue is to be found not in the perverse conversation itself, but in the characters. Each character has his consistent outlook, his expectations, assumptions, desires, and behaviours.

The hall of mirrors is at the level of the appearance of each character to every other character, not as they should appear by our reasoning, but as they appear in the distorted constructions of M3 terminology. Who is *philos* to whom, and in which sense? Who indeed is *echthros* to whom, and in which sense? Are the characters to be regarded as intrinsically *philo*i (to whom?) or instrumentally *philo*i (again to whom, and for what?). Are the characters to be viewed as representations of eristic terminology: are they neither good nor bad (as opposed to the more correct between good and bad); do they have something bad in them (as opposed to whether they are actually bad)?

We have seen that the non-dialecticians can usefully be described in the appalling terms of M3, as can Socrates' appearance to them. M3 is less useful for identifying the essence of all the characters, since the essence is something non-dialecticians would not perceive. We have been able to outline the general dynamics of the various participants thanks to M3 terminology, but now it is time to dispense with monstrosities such as the neither-bad-and-neither-good, and rethink what might be a common feature in different aspects which would explain the existence of so many characters in a Platonic dialogue.

7. 2. Aspects of Good

Throughout the dialogue, we have seen an assumption shared by all participants that friendship is good. It is time to see whether the characters may be described more consistently in terms of good than in terms of *philos*.

7. 2. 1. Hippothales and Ctesippus

Hippothales lusts after Lysis. At first blush, this would seem to indicate that the *erastēs* represents a form of pleasure, which is one type of good. His *erōs* (lust), however, is not a form of pleasure, but only the drive he has towards acquiring what he conceives to be the good, which he lacks. Lysis appears to him to be good because of the boy's high social status and beauty. The lack of this perceived good is causing Hippothales great pain. Pain is the opposite of pleasure, and thus he does seem to represent a pleasure-motivated character after all, although his pleasure boils down to the absence of pain. The removal of bad rather than the addition of good was an important part of the mechanism of M3, and if it reflects non-dialectical thinking in this dialogue, I would hesitate to ascribe to Hippothales any aspiration to enjoy Lysis. He is fully engulfed in misery and wretchedness, a state almost guaranteed to worsen after Socrates' apparent betrayal (I do emphasize that it is only apparent, but it would certainly appear so to Hippothales).

We have argued that Ctesippus goes along with Hippothales' plan because it falls in nicely with his own plan to remove what he perceives to be an embarrassing nuisance, namely the wretched and miserable Hippothales. By the dubious calculations of Ctesippus, if Hippothales does eventually acquire Lysis, he will stop being a nightmare to be with. The perceived bad is a cross between unpleasantness and disrepute, although I would lean more towards unpleasantness. The solution envisaged by Ctesippus does not appear to him to be disreputable, and he is clearly unconcerned about the welfare of Lysis. If Ctesippus is primarily concerned with his own convenience, then, he may be another representative of pleasure, and once again in its form as the removal of unpleasantness.

7. 2. 2. Menexenus and Lysis

The boys are rolling in goodness. They are both of high social status and outstanding beauty. When they are together, they can also draw attention to their good qualities by competing over which one is better by which enviable criterion. The only drawback is their assumption that the praise they receive extends to the competence they imagine themselves to have. We see that at least in discussion they are equally incompetent, while Lysis in his earlier discussion without Menexenus betrayed an abysmal understanding of the nature of *technē*. I shall allow that even this incompetence might be considered charmingly boyish, although listening to Lysis reading and playing the lyre in any way he wishes already sounds less than ideal. The boys, of course differ in the ways already discussed, with Lysis prepared to have Menexenus take the brunt of the activity, while Menexenus can appreciate Lysis as a foil against which he may appear superior due to his more active approach which he presumably assumes displays his competence to greater effect.

They are consistent in their endeavouring to appear good to others, Lysis simply by putting himself at the centre of a crowd (those observing a game; then the Socratic gathering), Menexenus by putting himself at the centre of a crowd (actually participating in another game outside; then the Socratic gathering) but also making himself conspicuous by participating. While the boys are socially and aesthetically good, their motivation is to appear good to others, in which case it would seem most accurate to regard them as representing reputation, appearing good to others.

7. 2. 3. The Parents of Lysis and the *Technītai*

We now come to a group who are actually concerned in some way with benefit. The parents, who love their son precisely because he has all the types of goodness except competence, wish to provide him with competence as well. This itself is already only apparent benefit, since a *technē* is a means which may be used for bad as well as good ends. Furthermore, the son is under the impression that he is competent already in reading and playing the lyre, because his parents appear to be recognizing his competence when they are simply doting over their darling boy who is trying to read and play the lyre, poor thing!

The *technītai* engaged to supervise the boy are less emotionally involved since he is not *oikeios* to them, at least, not by blood, and they let him know he is incompetent by restraining him. They are

technically doing the right thing, although he only sees that they are restricting his freedom, and he resents them for it.

The parents and the *technitai* are to be seen as agents and instruments attempting to make Lysis better, but failing, each in their own way. I suggest that they represent the useful, or the apparently beneficial.

7. 2. 4. Socrates

Ctesippus was able to go along with Hippothales' plan because it conformed perfectly with his own. Similarly, we see that Socrates is able to go along with everyone else's plans and expectations because to do so conforms with his own methodology. Overtly frustrating their expectations at any point during the dialogue would risk provoking resistance such as that seen at the end with the *paidagōgoi*, and that, of course, would achieve little in the way of sparking critical thinking. Socrates must somehow enter their internal worldview, and he achieves this by becoming what each of them sees as an instrument cooperating toward their particular ends. That Socrates thwarts the expectations of all of them at the very end of the dialogue marks the very end of the dialogue, but also acts as a form of last attempt to shock them out of their intellectual lethargy.

The parents attempted to improve their son with *technai*, neglecting to consider what he would do with them, even were he to acquire them. Socrates concentrates on the very part of the human *psuchē* governing one's understanding of means and ends, and the good itself. Dialectic itself naturally leads its practitioner to consider the ultimate ends of human behaviour. Thus Socrates represents, quite naturally and quite consistently, true benefit. It is not his fault that no one in the dialogue receives any benefit.

7. 3. The Structure of the Dialogue

The *idea* informing the whole dialogue turns out to be not *philos* or *philia*, but *to agathon*.

The *eidē* are pleasure, reputation, benefit (the same aspects as in *Politeia*).

The *paradeigmata* are (in this dialogue) someone lacking pleasure, someone exposing oneself to admirers, and someone attempting to better others.

The *deigmata* are (Hippothales and Ctesippus), (Menexenus and Lysis), ([the parents and *technitai* - apparent benefit], [Socrates - true benefit]).

The *idea* is not a concept to be found in one's mind, but the aspect in all things sharing a particular characteristic, which is abstracted into the concept. Good things and apparently good things share the same aspect, the Good. The abstracted concept is also the Good.

The *eidos* is one narrower aspect within the *idea* which is the general aspect. The *eidos* is the *idea* with a specifying difference. There are as many *eidē* as are required to complete the entire *idea*. In this case, the three groups conceived to be types of good are the beneficial, pleasure, and reputation.

The *paradeigma* is a minimal concrete representation of an *eidos*. The *eidos* is notoriously difficult to dramatize given its abstractness. The beneficial becomes a person motivated by doing good, pleasure becomes a person motivated by pleasure (in one of several ways), and reputation becomes a person motivated by appearing to be good.

The *deigma* is what appears in a dialogue. In pottery, the sample for sale is the *deigma*, based on the template which is not for sale but is to the side, the *paradeigma*. The *deigma* must be envisaged as the *paradeigma* with additional details.

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