Philia, Eros and Philosophy: Socrates' Search for the Friend in Plato's Lysis

by

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“It is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness”

_Francis Bacon_

This thesis intends to be a philosophical examination of friendship and love as presented in Plato’s dialogue the _Lysis_. The focus will be on the relation between the action and argument of the dialogue, as I will argue that the action of the dialogue is a necessary part to understanding the dialogue as a whole. Most previous treatments of the _Lysis_ simply assume that a philosophical account of friendship is possible, but I consider that a philosophic account of friendship must also ask about its own possibility. I also consider that this question is present in the action of the dialogue. If the particular is integral to friendship and the friend, can this be properly treated in a philosophic account without being elided? Can a philosophic account be properly philosophic if not constantly aware of itself, aware of why it is necessary in the first place? Is it really necessary for Lysis and Menexenus to have an account of friendship as such (to have knowledge of friendship) in order for them to truly be friends? The _Lysis_ seems to keep this question of philosophy itself always at the forefront, not only because of the nature of the dialogue as such, but also because of the nature of the question of friendship.

Why is there a need to question the possibility of a philosophy of friendship, why not simply begin examining the nature of friendship and _philid_? Why is the action of the dialogue of any importance whatsoever? There have been many treatments of the _Lysis_ which do not pay any attention to the drama, to the particular context in which the arguments about friendship are made. Many of them consider the dialogue to be either something of a failure or to be a prelude to supposedly fuller or better treatments of love
in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*.¹ Often whole sections of the dialogue are ignored or dismissed as mere dramatic filler, as there for our amusement and thus not requiring any serious philosophic thought. I hold that their dissatisfaction with the dialogue is directly tied to the flaws in their approach. It is important to treat the opening section of the dialogue, which consists largely of a discussion between Socrates, Hippothales and Ctessipus on erotic love, as being related to the discussion that follows between Socrates, Lysis and Menexenus about the friend. It needs to be determined in what way *eros* and *philia* can be understood to be related. I argue that this question is tied to the question of the action of the dialogue: the dialogue as a philosophical way of writing.

Scholars have examined the particular benefits of the dialogue as a philosophical way of writing. For one thing it does not allow for one to easily make dogmatic claims about a ‘Platonic teaching’, in that there is nothing written that is explicitly Plato’s view.² Everything written is portrayed through the perspectives of various individuals, who have their own attitudes and concerns. But the benefit of not being taken dogmatically only hints at a more substantial reason why Plato would choose to write dialogues, which Strauss outlines in his commentary on the *Symposium*:

> [This incorporation of attitudes into characters] brings the nature of the thing into the open. That means, however, that it does not present the nature of the thing as that nature presents itself, but as hidden or half revealed or overlaid by opinion. Plato reproduces the natures of things as they first come to sight; he imitates them as they show themselves at first. This being the case, Plato always discusses, whatever he discusses, in a human context. Human beings talking about the phenomena at question. A human individual, a man with a proper name, a member of this or that society, is the one who talks about it. The reason is as follows: Philosophic inquiry, speculation,

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¹ See Guthrie (1975); Vlastos (1981); Price (1989)
² This is what Leon Craig, in his commentary on Plato’s Republic titled *The War Lover* identifies as the specifically political way, or the ‘polite’ way, of writing philosophy.

theoria, is in danger of forgetting itself, of losing itself in the contemplation of the subject. By this very fact speculation becomes very unphilosophic. Philosophy, or whatever you call this pursuit, must always know what it is doing – it must always be self-knowledge – and therefore it must always entail reflection on the philosophiser.3

The dialogue form always keeps the question of philosophy itself, 'Why knowledge?', present in the inquiry. Why knowledge about philos (the friend) or philia? 4 In the Lysis Socrates begins his philosophic questioning on the friend, by claiming it is the one thing he has longed to possess since childhood, but has never been able to acquire (211e-212a)5. The impetus for 'Why knowledge about philos?', then, seems to come from Socrates. But we also know that Socrates' conversation with Lysis and Menexenus is, to some extent if not wholly so, the result of his promise to Hippothales to show him what to say to a beloved so as to become endeared to his favourite (206c). With all this in mind, we must also remember that philosophy, literally 'love of wisdom', contains within it philia as a root word. The action of the dialogue, which presents to us the question 'why knowledge about philia?', is thus in a way also asking us, 'why knowledge about

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4 Though the Lysis carries the traditional subtitle 'On Friendship', it seems more obviously to treat the problem of 'who or what is philos?' than 'what is friendship?' per se. While much of the discussion between Socrates, Menexenus and Lysis centres around philos as in 'friend', philos as 'dear' is also used. Some commentaries on the Lysis argue that it is this supposed failure to distinguish the two linguistic uses of philos (that one requires reciprocity and the other does not) that causes the equally supposed confusion in the dialogue. This linguistic ambiguity is something which Aristotle appears to quickly dispense with in the Nicomachean Ethics, by stating that friendship is an active condition, and 'people wish good things for those they love for others' own sake, not as a result of feeling but as a result of an active condition (1157b30). The voluntariness of friendship and its reciprocity serve as central to his distinction. But this does not mean that the lack of distinction between the active and passive senses of philos in the Lysis can be considered as carelessness. Socrates' treatment of the substantive philo and the verb philein serves to make the substantive derivative of the verb: the friend is somehow a result of loving or being loved. It is worth noting, certainly, that because of this philosophy is not as marginal as it would otherwise be. Socrates can speak with philosophy in mind.

5 Bolotin, David. Plato's Dialogue on Friendship: an Interpretation of the Lysis, with a New Translation. Ithaca: Cornell University press. 1979. For all subsequent references to the Lysis, Bolotin's translation will be used.
love of wisdom (philosophy), or why self-knowledge? To ignore the action of the
dialogue would seem to be doubly blind to the question of philosophy as a way of life.
Philia, Eros and Philosophy

The problem of philosophy is the problem of our quest for knowledge of the whole. As humans we are forced to attempt to approach the whole through its parts: human experience is necessarily experience of parts. And yet we seem to be inclined towards a seeking after the whole. And so it is through the parts that we seek after the whole. But there are certain problems that result from this. One is that our partial understanding of the parts can be sufficient for achieving certain ends which we desire: through this we come to see ourselves as self-sufficient, as wholes unto ourselves. The other is when the vastness and variety of parts overwhelms us, and we are left with either an acute sense of perplexity and despair, or a profound sense of wonder and awe. Either of these, Strauss claims, are ‘charms’ against philosophy:

Men are constantly attracted and deluded by two opposite charms: the charm of competence, and the charm of humble awe. Philosophy is characterised by the gentle, if firm, refusal to succumb to either charm. (...) In spite of its highness or nobility it could appear as Sisyphian or ugly, when one contrasts its achievement with its goal. Yet it is necessarily accompanied, sustained and elevated by eros. It is graced by nature’s grace.⁶

The ugliness of philosophy, or its tendency to appear as such to some, is mitigated by eros. There is, it seems, a natural coupling of eros and philosophy, or rather philosophy is naturally borne out of eros. This apparently futile striving for the whole is not only saved from condemnation but elevated because of eros. But what relation does philia have to philosophy? Philia, that other form of love which can be extended to attachments of whatever kind and to whatever degree. Can philia be attributed to the natural in the same way as eros? As Benardete points out, while “eros is experienced as a

god, *philia* is a fiction of poets.” 

*Eros* as love points beyond the particular object of love to the eternal, but *philia* remains always with that particular thing which is loved, the love and the particularity cannot be separated. It does not seem possible to understand *philia* in any abstract sense. If, as Benardete claims, the essentially desirable Helen is one for whom any of the men, even the Trojan elders, would fight, Briseis is not. She is but “a small thing but my own”, and Achilles’ attachment to her is apparently based on exactly this, that she is *oikeion* (Benardete, 2000). To understand *philia* philosophically would be to be able to understand what is *oikeion* and to maintain it as such. Is there any thing (or one) in particular for which this is possible?

The action of the *Lysis* serves to question the possibility of a philosophic account of friendship. *Philia* and *eros* are placed side by side throughout, and Socrates blurs the distinction between the two. Is this because there is essentially no distinction between *philia* and *eros*, or is this because a philosophic account of *philia* requires making *philia* appear to be virtually the same as *eros*?

In discussing the relevance of action in a Platonic dialogue Strauss argues:

*It is relatively easy to understand the speeches of the characters: everyone who listens or reads perceives them. But to perceive what in a sense is not said, to perceive how what is said is said, is more difficult. The speeches deal with something general or universal, but they are made in a particular or individual setting; these and those human beings converse there and then about the universal subject; to understand the speeches in light of the deeds means to see how the philosophic treatment of the philosophic theme is modified by the particular or individual or transformed into a rhetorical or poetic treatment or to recover the implicit philosophic treatment from the explicit rhetorical or poetic treatment.*

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Strauss outlines several ways in which the action of the dialogue affects how we understand the speech: the philosophic is transformed into rhetoric or poetry (as in the Symposium or Apology of Socrates, perhaps), or the philosophic is modified by the particular or individual. Socrates’ discussion with Lysis and Menexenus is modified by the fact that he had conspired with Hippothales to demonstrate his erotic technique on Lysis; we must keep in mind this conspiracy and question its intention, i.e., whether it is to promote the lover, or to demote the friend. The self-sufficiency created by the friend is turned upside-down and replaced with lack and longing. Does Lysis’ friendship with Menexenus stand in the way of Hippothales’ winning Lysis? One might also ask, does friendship stand in the way of one’s turning toward philosophy?

In the Lysis the action is especially important because the particular seems to most of us, who have not reflected on philia, to be all that there is to philos. The action of the dialogue provides two examples of friendships in Lysis and Menexenus, and Ctesippus and Hippothales, and both examples demonstrate the particularity of friendship that resists generalisation. As Benardete points out, “Granted that Ktesippos is particularly insolent and sharp, it is surprising how scornful and mocking he can be of Hippothales and still remain his friend. If he were not a good friend and very understanding, he would not have put up with the drunk and sober Hippothales singing and reciting day and night.”9 Those things which one would expect to create enmity do not; in the friend they are forgivable, perhaps even endearing. Likewise is the tendency between Lysis and Menexenus to dispute about virtually everything, and yet to still consider each other friends. It is the unfathomable and impenetrable (and highly believable) quality of these

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two friendships that qualifies the generalised account of friendship that Socrates seeks. Can Socrates provide a philosophic account that does not compromise the integrity of the particular? The philosophic treatment of *philia* seems to require the abandonment of *philia*, or at least that element of *philia* that is inextricably linked to the particular or individual, to ‘one’s own’. Does this mean then, that *philia* is in some way anti-philosophic, or resists philosophic treatment? Does *philia* rest to a certain extent on ignorance, ignorance about what we believe to be our own? If this is true, then it might lend to an understanding as to why Socrates’ probing of Lysis and Menexenus’ friendship served to undermine or perhaps even ruin it. It may also be, though that *philia* embraces imperfections, that it creates a sense of wholeness in spite of the imperfections. If this should be the case than it would stand in relation to philosophy as one of the dangerous charms of which Strauss wrote. *Philia* puts us at ease with our imperfect selves because it demands nothing, and seems to arise simply out of an identity as something being one’s own. But without this sense of lack and the inclination or desire to remedy the lack there would be no philosophy.

The conspiracies presented in the action of the *Lysis* give us pause to consider the intentions of the examination of friendship that are their result. In addition, the two examples of friendship presented give us particulars against which to judge the verity of the general account. The action of the dialogue also shows us a Socrates who was not initially much interested in Hippothales’ proposal, but whose interest was sparked somewhere along the way for reasons which we must ourselves surmise. In presenting an initially disinterested Socrates, a question arises as to his own motivations in the discussion. What is the interest, and the urgency, which these events, or series of
conversations, hold for Socrates? Does this motivate him to pursue the conversation in a certain way, i.e. with something specific in mind?

The central philosophic problem of the Lysis identified by several scholars is whether all friendship depends upon the presence of a lack or need, or whether there is a higher type of friendship that unites those who admire and cherish each other simply because of one another’s goodness. It seems, though, that this question already takes too much for granted from the argument of the dialogue, and does not consider that the action forces us to question the very possibility of a philosophic account of friendship. As Benardete points out,

If we disregard the frame and consider the arguments about the friend in themselves, we imitate Socrates, who argues for the neutrality of body, soul, and other things, if each is taken by itself, as if there ever were a living body that was neither sick nor healthy. The theoretical attitude that Socrates exemplifies, in urging the perspective of neutral being, is as false to the nature of things as is the detachment of the perplexities of friendship from a setting that determined from the start the triumphant assimilation of philein to eran (2001:198).

The ‘outer frame’ as Benardete calls it, or the action, not only presents to the careful reader the ‘perplexities of friendship’ through the examples of the two sets of friends, but it also reveals ulterior motives for the discussion, both the explicit ulterior motive related to Hippothales the lover, and the implicit ulterior motive (which still needs to be defined) of Socrates himself. It should be asked, then, if it is Socrates who introduces the idea of lack to philia for either or both of these undisclosed ends, and further, what this in turn says about philia and about Socrates. Will (or can) Lysis and

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Menexenus remain friends after this discussion with Socrates, and if not, what might this say about the relation between *eros* and *philia*?

Taking the action into consideration, with regard to Hippothales’ desire to win Lysis, it seems that the dialogue turns on the relation between *eros* and *philia*. But the conspiracy with Hippothales is not the only thing to point to the conflation of *eros* and *philia*. Greater cause for suspicion is seen when we turn our attention to a consideration of Socrates: who is Socrates here (both to his interlocutors and to us as readers) and what are his intentions? We are witness to Socrates’ claim that he is knowledgeable in erotics. We also see Socrates state that his greatest desire has been for the acquisition of a friend, a desire which has gone unfulfilled. Why does Socrates display his erotic technique to Hippothales by discussing friendship with Lysis, Hippothales’ beloved?

Benardete argues that these questions all point to Socrates’ own examination of himself as philosopher and the practice of philosophy:

The setting of the dialogue (...) seems to put into question the relation between Socrates’ erotics and Socrates as philosopher, which in other dialogues, where they are treated as the same, cannot even be raised as a problem. If the question were to be put linguistically, one would ask whether it was just an accident that *philosophia* had not been designated *erotosophia* (wisdom of love), and if Socrates had been in charge from the first, whether philosophy would have been stamped with his own understanding of it11.

Why is it that Socrates’ display of his knowledge of erotics consists in part of a discussion of his ignorance? Socrates claims, “I am so far from the possession [of a friend] that I don’t even know the manner in which one becomes a friend to another” (212a). Socrates proceeds under the assumption that with Lysis and Menexenus already being friends, they must know what a friend is and how one becomes a friend to another.

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And yet, does not their friendship exist regardless of their ability or inability to answer Socrates’ questions? If they are ignorant on the matter of how one becomes a friend to another, or what a friend is, does this mean that they cannot be friends? It is apparent, however, that by the end of the dialogue, their inability to respond to Socrates has in some way altered (if not dismantled) their friendship.

Socrates’ states his desire to possess a good friend, as others desire to possess “the best quail or cock to be found (211e).” This suggests that he considers this desire to be nothing more or less than these other desires. Just as others might desire to acquire horses, dogs or wealth, he says, he desires to acquire a friend. This is a desire that has remained constant since he was a boy: it has neither changed nor been fulfilled. For all his lack of success in achieving this acquisition, Socrates must have some idea (or knowledge?) about the friend. But then what does it mean to claim that he is so far from the possession that he does not even know how one becomes a friend to another? He knows the friend, it seems, but not the way to the friend. Furthermore, Socrates speaks of the friend as a possession in the same way one would speak of a dog or horse as a possession. Whatever it is about dogs that would make one desire to acquire them, Socrates thinks in the same way regarding the friend.\(^\text{12}\) It is strange that Socrates sees the friend as existing as such before his acquisition of it: generally speaking we understand that friends are made and not simply come upon as such. What makes person X the friend of person Y seems to have as much to do with person Y as with person X. But Socrates wants that which is and has always been a friend to him. This would only make sense if

\(^{12}\)And yet it is possible to love dogs without wanting to acquire one, and it seems that precisely this kind of love is what philia is about. And so it is doubly strange that Socrates would want to possess that which loves without wanting to possess.
there was something which was his own, but had somehow been lost to him.\(^\text{13}\) Is Socrates seeking to retrieve for himself that which was his own, particularly his own? Why is it something which continually eludes him? He does not even know how to go about pursuing it. Socrates knows what to say to win one’s beloved but he claims he does not know how to acquire a friend. This must mean, then, that the two are not identical.

The *Lysis* is particularly intriguing because it distinguishes Socrates’ *eros*, which is directed toward the possession of a friend, from his knowledge of erotics. It must in some way be the combination of these two which allows us to understand Socrates as philosopher, or his questioning of himself and his aim. The *Lysis* asks us to ponder Socrates as philosopher and the possibility arises as to philosophy being the friend of which Socrates speaks: is philosophy the friend which Socrates has been seeking, or the way in which he has been seeking his friend? Is philosophy the object of his love or the manner by which he has been pursuing it?\(^\text{14}\) Philosophy literally is ‘love of wisdom’ and thus that which is *philos* must be wisdom. And yet if we consider the death of Socrates (as told to us by Plato) it seems that the love itself, philosophy - rather than the wisdom - became something for the sake of which Socrates accepted death. How are we to discriminate between that which is loved and the loving itself?

Does thinking philosophically about friendship remove the idea of one’s own required for friendship? Giving a general account erases or elides the particularity which seems to be so central to the love itself: it takes what we believe to be our own and gives

\(^{13}\) This statement has something of a mythical quality to it, and reminds us of Aristophanes’ speech in the *Symposium*: the friend existing as a part of our prior selves, and ‘the way’ as an attempt to put back together what has been torn asunder. Of course, with Aristophanes’ account (which was between lovers) the way in which we went about trying to find our other half was futile.

\(^{14}\) If philosophy is the friend which Socrates desires we can see how the search to possess the friend would be lifelong and fruitless. If the friend is that which is one’s own, and philosophy is what Socrates has wanted as a friend— what he perceives to be the friend— then success in his quest would require making knowledge of ignorance one’s own.
it back to us in a general sense. Socrates takes away what Lysis has taken for granted, the love of his parents, at the same time that he reveals Lysis’s ignorance to him; Socrates then leads Lysis to believe that should he gain knowledge he will (re)gain not only their love but the love of his neighbours, the whole of Athens, even the love of the Great King. Thus the love of his parents will be returned to him, but not in its original sense (Lysis, 210d). It will no longer in a true sense be love of one’s own. But this promise of achieving some kind of universal love should he gain knowledge is a dubious one, one which Benardete claims is part of Lysis’ enchantment by Socrates:

The disenchantment of Lysis goes along with his enchantment. To sacrifice the local, the neighborhood, and the private – everything, in short, summed up by the word oikeion – for the sake of the universal, seems to be the same as to replace philein with eran. Such a replacement, however is only possible for Lysis because he is taken in by Socrates’ picture of the case with which Lysis’s wisdom would be accepted worldwide. [Benardete, 2000:207]

The question arises throughout the Lysis: Do philosophy and eros necessarily stand in the same relation to philia? At any rate, the question of philia seems to ask us to give an account of philosophy. Why is the sense of lack so central to Socrates’ understanding of philosophy? Is the realization of one’s ignorance truly the point at which philosophia is stirred in the soul? If so, then the turn to philosophy comes as a result of an unsettling realization that one is ignorant – a kind of break with one’s self - coupled with the sense that such ignorance is bad: the turn to philosophy is the result of a loss or a sudden sense of lack, the sense that you are less than what you previously thought you were. But this does not seem a sufficient cause for philosophia: the realisation of ignorance is in a way a revealing, a sense that one has gained in the realisation of ignorance (no matter how it might look to others). The loss of what one
thought was one's own is mitigated by the realisation that this belief was illusory, or rather mitigated only if one comes to love what is true – something which one would not truly know unless faced with one's ignorance. And perhaps it should be added, only if what one thought was one's own is proven absolutely not to have been one's own. This is because however bad ignorance might be, it does not seem to leave one utterly incapable of carrying on; it does not seem to be a fatal handicap. Knowledge of the whole does not seem to be necessary, which is why Socrates must provide an apology for philosophy. It seems, then, that an erotic account of philosophy is what best can explain philosophy: the love of the truth or of wisdom seems best accounted for by eros.

The question is whether there is anything at stake in the apparent difference between eros and philia? There does seem to be another potential cause of philosophia that does not spring directly from lack: wonder. But wonder does not have the same sense of urgency and alienation as the realisation of ignorance, and it can be argued that though wonder may cause a desire to know the whole the sense of ourselves and what is our own does not seem to be threatened. In fact, the approach seems inverted from Socrates' approach; it seems rather like the charm of humble awe which Strauss claims turns us away from philosophy (a philosophy which he sees as necessarily tied to eros). Nonetheless, wonder is perhaps the source of the old kind of philosophy, i.e. the pre-Socrates kind, which resulted in the term philosophia rather than erotosophia.

The striving and the urgency associated with philosophy is best presented in Plato's Symposium — in relation to eros, or rather Socrates' erotic account of philosophy. Diotima describes Eros' parentage as being mothered by Poverty and fathered by Resource. Both the lack and the striving are intrinsic to the nature of eros: "So Eros is
neither without resource nor is he ever rich; he is in the middle between wisdom and ignorance” (Symposium 203e). If wisdom is knowledge of ignorance, philosophy and the erotic drive are presented as one and the same in Socrates’ account of Eros in the Symposium. In fact, the symmetry or identity of the two are so striking that Allan Bloom even goes so far as to call the account a “perfect description of Socrates, ... the man of the great hunt”:

So Eros, the powerful attraction to the beautiful, is the same as Socrates, the man most powerfully attracted to wisdom. This is the identity Diotima wants to establish and explain. In an act of supreme hubris, Socrates uses Diotima to praise himself in the guise of Eros. The only bit of modesty he displays consists in his denying he is a god. But, for reasons that may soon be evident, he probably does not wish to be one. A god would have to be wise and therefore would not pursue wisdom. A man who is fully ignorant would not pursue wisdom, because he would not know that he needs it. He is self-satisfied and that is very ugly. Neither gods nor ignoramuses philosophise, and Socrates says that philosophy is best, the most pleasant, and the most beautiful way of life.15

Socrates wants to make wisdom a part of himself, in the possessive manner of eros, but it consistently eludes him. Philia, however, does not seem to be characterised by the same possessiveness; it maintains that which is loved as distinct and yet in some way akin. Diotima explains to Socrates, after separating the good and the beautiful in her account of eros, that Eros is “of the good’s being one’s own always” (206a). She states that the actions of those who pursue eros are those of a ‘giving birth to the beautiful’, whether in body or soul. It is in these forms of birthing that we, as mortal beings, are able to strive for the immortal and eternal. The highest form of striving for the immortal, of giving birth to – i.e. making it one’s own – the beautiful, is to know what is beauty itself, rather than to see it as it is engendered in its phantom images (211a-212a). The

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philosophic life, then, is the most erotic life. There are, however, a few problematic aspects with regard to this account: it describes the fulfilment of the philosophic longing in an imagistic manner, it cannot reproduce it as such. The way becomes obscured though the experience is made clear. The birthing metaphor, then, is significant only insofar as it imparts an experience to us, but cannot show us the way to that experience. Socrates' knowledge of eros, and his ignorance of the friend (or the way to acquire the friend) come together in philosophy as knowledge of ignorance.

**Friendship, Philosophy and Politics**

In providing a commentary on the *Lysis*, this thesis must also in some way deal with the question, 'To what extent, if at all, is friendship (or *philia*) relevant to our understanding of the political?'

As Strauss argues, in order to understand what it is that qualifies some thing as political we must also understand the non-political:

The non-political may be entirely irrelevant for the political, e.g., digestion, or the backside of the moon, or it may be politically relevant. In the latter case, the non-political is either subpolitical, say the economical, or suprapolitical – religion. The non-political as politically relevant, is the foundation of the political, either as condition or as the ultimate end. In both meanings the non-political was called traditionally the natural. There may be something natural which transcends the political in dignity and which gives politics its guidance.

Is friendship something which transcends the political and gives it its guidance, or is it a condition for the political? The relation between friendship and the political was much discussed by the classical political thinkers: friendship was relevant to the political

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16 One could, and should, ask what the importance of the political is in the first place, that we are trying to understand it by looking at what is not political. After all, the turn to the political is something that was attributed first to Socrates, and there were many who did not consider it important to understand nature (or what is, i.e. being).

in their eyes. For most of the modern political thinkers, however, friendship is irrelevant to the political. In order to understand the relationship between the classical claim of relevance and the modern denial, it will be necessary to understand whether the classical thinkers, broadly understood, considered friendship as subpolitical or suprapolitical: is it a condition for the political or an ultimate end?

Is friendship for the sake of the political (i.e., for the city or polis), or is the political for the sake of friendship? This is a difficult question. Aristotle claims in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “friendship is a certain kind of virtue, or goes with virtue, and is also most necessary for life. For no one would choose to live without friends (1155a).” For Aristotle the city exists for the sake of virtue (1099b30; 1095b25-32); moral virtue is something choiceworthy for its own sake. But what does it mean, in relation to the city, to say that friendship goes with virtue? Is friendship, as Joe Sachs argues, a particular disposition towards virtue, a natural disposition perhaps, in the way that the city is meant to be a cultivated disposition? At any rate Aristotle describes friendship as having a particular relation to the city and to the virtue central to the city, justice:

And friendship seems to hold cities together, and lawmakers seem to take it more seriously than justice, for like-mindedness seems to be something similar to friendship, and they aim at this most of all and banish faction most

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18 For the philosophic soul, however, virtue is a means rather than an end in itself:
For someone who contemplates there is no need of such things [external props] for his being-at-work; rather, one might say they get in the way of his contemplating. But insofar as he is a human being and lives in company with a number of people, he chooses to do things that have to do with virtue, and thus will have need of such things in order to live a human life. [1178b5-10]
The moral virtues are tied to man as a social being. Philosophy is, in a way, a striving to get beyond this.

19 Sachs specifically argues in relation to the above quote, “[Aristotle] means not that it is one particular virtue but that it is a state of character involving choice that must have some relation to virtue as a whole.” See note 230 of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Joe Sachs. Newburport, MA: Focus Publishing. Aristotle is careful to assert that friendship is not simply affection, resulting from the passions, but involves choice(NE 1157b30). But it seems that this is rather where the political problem associated with friendship lies, and perhaps why Aristotle strives to demonstrate that friendship, in the true sense, is associated with virtue; for if this should be the case, then the city and friendship (if properly ordered) can work in tandem towards true happiness.
of all for being hostile to it. And when people are friends there is no need of justice, but when they are just there is still need of friendship, and among things that are just, what inclines toward friendship seems to be most just of all. [1155a20-29]

From this quote it seems rather that friendship is, in some way, a condition for the political. Friendship is traditionally seen as being a necessary, even sufficient, condition for the ‘togetherness’ or unity of the city\(^\text{20}\). Friendship, then, seems to point toward the political, but it also seems to point beyond it in that the strength of ties between friends seems to make the political unnecessary. Justice as the standard of political rule does not seem to apply to friendship, and the presence of friendship seems always to leave this standard open to question. Considered another way, one might ask whether it is worse to betray one’s city or one’s friends. If we do not answer that to betray one’s city is to betray one’s friends, the political problem of friendship reveals itself. Part and parcel of this problem is the distinction between the different kinds of friendships and to what they are directed (or on what they are based).

It seems that an important issue in the distinction between the political and the friend or friendship is that the political extends to all who are citizens in the community, whereas friendship is a \textit{particular} relation which one shares with few people. To what extent, then, should the political attempt to mimic friendship in affection and unity for the sake of its ends?

In his critique on the suggestion in Book V of the \textit{Republic} of having all things (women and children included) in common Aristotle remarks:

For we suppose affection \textit{[philein]} to be the greatest of good things for cities, for in this way they would least of all engage in factional conflict; and Socrates praises above all the city’s being one, which is held to be, and which he asserts to be, the work of affection. … in the city [described in book V],

\(^{20}\) Of course this traditional understanding might not have the same view as to the end or purpose of the city that Aristotle will hold.
however, affection necessarily becomes diluted through this sort of partnership, and the fact that a father least of all says ‘mine’ of his son, or the son of his father. … For there are two things above all which make human beings cherish and feel affection [philein], what is one’s own [idion] and what is dear [agapeton]; and neither of these can be available to those who govern themselves in this way. [Aristotle, Politics: 1262b7-24]

The development of affection requires privacy and distinctness of some sort, and this sense of one’s own is not something which, according to Aristotle, can be extended to the city as a whole. But is this affection, then, truly a good to the city? In this passage, as in the previous passage from the Ethics, Aristotle refers to philein as something which seems to be, and which we suppose to be important if not central to the unity of the city. He does not argue that philein is in fact important to the unity of the city; indeed Aristotle even goes so far as to say that a city is better off as less a unity, and that “a city does not arise from persons who are similar (Politics1261a24).” Thus, while a person cannot be happy without friends, the relation between friendship and the city (as a multitude of persons) is increasingly unclear. The city arises out of dissimilarity between people, but (the highest) friendship arises out of what is similar (Nicomachean Ethics, 1156b5-10). While it is supposed that the city requires philein, it is not clear whether this is truly the case; and it is also unclear whether the city is for the sake of friendship.

For the classical political thinkers, then, the relation between the city (or the political) and friendship is not necessarily a clear one. It is nonetheless important enough to require consideration. For the modern political thinkers, or the social contract theorists such as Hobbes and Locke, friendship is irrelevant to the political. This is largely because the political is thought to be derivative of the sub-political, of the economic (see Strauss, 1964:33). For the moderns, the political exists so as to protect the individual as
they go about pursuing and acquiring their natural desires. The supra-political, i.e. religion, morality, art, is shifted to the merely personal. The city need not concern itself with affection as a means to bind the people together; in fact ‘togetherness’ no longer has anything to do with the political. The political arises out of necessity, not out of inclination or desire. As Strauss argues, “The actions of the market are as such voluntary whereas the state coerces. Yet voluntariness is not a preserve of the market it is above all of the essence of genuine, as distinguished from mere utilitarian, virtue (Strauss, 1964:33).” It seems that the political/ non-political distinction makes a significant shift with the modern tradition, and one can no longer ask (with the same meaning), ‘for the sake of what does the city exist?’

With the supra-political shifting to the merely private, and the understanding of the workings of the political as being through coercion, the question of friendship slips from the purview of modern political concerns. And yet both Plato and Aristotle (among others) considered it significant enough to require substantive treatment. Is this because a philosophical consideration of friendship shares something in common with a philosophical consideration of politics? Are both the city and friendship relevant in a similar way to philosophy itself? Or do they act differently in relation to philosophy? It certainly seems possible that just as the political is reluctant to admit its need of the wise (and therefore philosophy), so friends are also reluctant to admit the need of philosophy. It is possible to conceive that the greatness of the city (honour and glory) and the greatness of friendship are the result of what is intrinsic to the city and to friendship, it does not appear to need wisdom or philosophy. In the Republic, Socrates explains how the city can turn the potential philosophers away from, or even against, philosophy, and
presents an account of how philosophy is in fact useful to the city (494b-497b). In the 
*Lysis* Socrates also seems to present knowledge or wisdom as central to *philein*, both in 
his first discussion with Lysis, and in his later presentation of the neutral neither/nor.
Chapter One: The opening of the dialogue (203a-206c)

The *Lysis* opens with Socrates’ narration of how a conversation was struck up between himself, a young man Hippothales, and his companion Ctessipus. Socrates does not initiate the conversation but is rather stopped by Hippothales, standing in his path with Ctessipus and their group of friends, as he is making his way to the Lyceum. As Socrates himself narrates the dialogue we are privy to his thoughts and perceptions of what ensues. For some reason – he does not tell us why - Socrates wants to share the story of what has occurred on this particular occasion. With this question left unanswered, then, the reader quickly becomes aware that, though privy to some of Socrates’ thoughts, we are not privy to all of them. Indeed, when the intention behind the telling of the story is left as a question, the way in which it is told becomes somewhat questionable as well. We must assume that eliding certain details and providing an account for others has been done purposely.

Another important opening detail is that Socrates comes upon the young men apparently by chance. He comes upon them in transit from one place (the Academy), to another (the Lyceum), not in search of any discussion in the meantime. Socrates is not in search of the young men so as to question them on some particular issue or concern, but whatever strikes his interest during this conversation arises naturally. As we are not told any specific reason why he was going to the Lyceum, we are left to assume that his reasons are general: to watch the sporting and to share in speeches.

Hippothales is forced to make quite an effort to get Socrates to stop in with them: the sight of Hippothales and his companions – and presumably what that promises - is
not enough to make Socrates want to stop and talk. Socrates is unfamiliar with the place in to which he is invited and asks what it is and who is there. Hippothales first assures Socrates that along with themselves there are a number of others — "and good-looking ones too" — who regularly pass their time at the place. Not obviously persuaded by this alone, Socrates asks how they spend their time. "For the most part we pass our time with speeches, which we would be pleased to share with you" (204a). In spite of these attempts by Hippothales to entice Socrates into their company, Socrates continues to press for further information: 'who is the teacher?'. The teacher is said to be Miccus, a man who is a companion (hetairos)²¹ and praiser of Socrates, and whom Socrates identifies as "not an inferior one but a capable sophist". Finally Hippothales invites Socrates to come in to the palaestra to see for himself who is there. Hippothales must consider that Socrates' curiosity is sufficiently piqued that he will commit himself to their company in order to satisfy it.

Still, it seems as though Socrates has not entirely made up his mind as to whether he would not prefer to simply continue on his way: his final questions, before his decision to enter with the young men, are for the terms of his entrance and the name of the good-looking one. In other words Socrates asks Hippothales, 'why do you really want me to come in with you, and might it not have something to do with who you think the good-looking one is'. Socrates suspects, and rightly, that Hippothales' 'friendly' motives of open discussion and admiration of beauty might be hiding a motive of more personal gain. Hippothales attempts to diffuse Socrates' suspicion by claiming that 'we all have

²¹ This is the first usage of the term hetairos. A term Bolotin translates as companion, which in his understanding is a weaker bond than friendship. Penner and Rowe, however, translate the term as friend. It appears to be used interchangeably with philos, and we should note especially that in speaking of his own love of friends Socrates calls himself a philetairos (212a).
our own opinions as to who the beauty is', a statement which undermines, in a sense, the friendliness of his earlier invitation, as it seems to suggest that the pleasure of admiring beauty is ultimately not one that is, or can be, shared. Friendly admiration of beauty is not very far from erotic longing, from the desire to possess it for oneself and to possess it exclusively. For the young men all to agree on who the good-looking one is points to two things: firstly that a friendly admiration of beauty can admire but does not want to possess, and secondly that there is some dispassionate standard by which all can agree about the beautiful. But when passionate love is introduced it may be better if the friends differ as to whom they consider to be the beautiful.22

With Socrates’ blunt question Hippothales blushes. The question indicates that Socrates is more aware of the situation than Hippothales intended for him to be, that Hippothales had unwittingly revealed more than he wanted. A more quickwitted – or a more shameless? - man might have been able to deflect the question without revealing that Socrates’ surmise was correct. Hippothales’ blush, a physical and hence uncalculated response, revealed the truth to Socrates which Hippothales had been trying to hide. Socrates gathers from this, “not only that you love, but also that you are far along the way in love already” (204b). How is it that Socrates comes to this conclusion? Somehow Hippothales blushing served to indicate that the young man was in love. Socrates claims that his ability to recognise a lover and beloved, from a blush for

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22 Socrates’ question to Hippothales reminds us of his lesson from Diotima about the admiration of the beautiful and exclusive erotic desire: “And first of all (...) he must love one body and there generate beautiful speeches. Then he must realise that the beauty that is in any body whatsoever is related to that in another body; and if he must pursue the beauty of looks, it is great folly not to believe that the beauty of all bodies is one and the same. And with this realization he must be the lover of all beautiful bodies and in contempt slacken this [erotic] intensity for only one body, in the belief that it is petty (210ab).” How does philia relate to such a consideration of this ‘ladder of love’? In making one open to mutual or shared admiration of one single beauty without exclusivity it seems to fall after the ‘untaught’ possessive and exclusive form of eros. And yet it seems to exist and occur prior to it as well, in some way or form.
instance, is a gift from a god. While we are shown this gift in action with respect to
recognition of the lover, we are not shown it with the beloved. Does this mean that
Hippothales’ blushing is otherwise inexplicable to those of us without such gifts of
divination, or just that the gift from the god is rather superfluous (in terms of the lover, at
least)?

That Hippothales is reluctant to reveal his favourite to Socrates is indeed
remarkable in light of the fact that he is, according to Ctesippus, so open about his love
amongst his other companions. Ctesippus treats this as mock modesty or refinement, and
ridicules the discrepancy in Hippothales’ manners on the subject:

How refined that you blush, Hippothales, and shrink from telling
Socrates his name! And yet if he spends even a short time with you, he’ll be
tormented by hearing you speak it so frequently. Our ears, at any rate,
Socrates, he has deafened and has filled them full of Lysis. Indeed, if he
drinks a little, it’s easy for us to suppose—even when we wake up from
sleep—that we hear the name of Lysis.

Whatever kind of a beauty Lysis might be, it seems the point of mutual admiration
has long since been passed. The obsessiveness of *eros* has Hippothales talking his friends
ears off. What makes Hippothales’ pursuit supposedly unendurable (his friends have yet
to abandon him) is not simply the extent to which he floods his friends’ ears with Lysis,
but that he is a terrible lover. The many ways in which he praises Lysis, through song,
poetry or prose are, according to Ctesippus, terrible. *Eros* and erotic longing have been
known to inspire the most beautiful of poetry and song, indeed it is often this inspiration
itself which causes many to consider *eros* to be a great and beautiful thing. Hippothales
does not appear to inspire any such admiration in his friends. And yet he does not feel
shame in constantly inundating them with praise of his beloved, in ways which he must know to be worthy of ridicule.

What are we to make of the spirit of Ctesippus’ rather humiliating account to Socrates. Is this friendly banter, or does it have an edge of bitterness to it? Bolotin contends that Ctesippus takes some offence to Hippothales’ sudden shame about his love with Socrates, when he is otherwise so shameless a lover; he argues that Ctesippus’s remarks about Hippothales’ behaviour as a lover are vengeful. It is difficult to determine whether there is genuine ill-will between the two young men, or whether Ctesippus is simply teasing Hippothales in a friendly manner, perhaps even aiding Hippothales in his intention of getting Socrates’ help. It is interesting to consider though that in spite of Ctesippus’s sharpness and Hippothales’ never-ending praise of Lysis the two remain friends. What would otherwise create enmity, or make the other seem less lovable does not appear to have any such effect between the two. Why is it, then, that Socrates does not make any attempts to examine these rather puzzling and intriguing dimensions of friendship? Benardete considers that Socrates must be after something else:

Socrates … seems not to be interested in these aspects of friendship. He records them but does not treat them. He seems to be after the alphabet, or better perhaps the syntax, of friendship that can afford to assign things of this order to the unlimited of individual experience. Whereas we might be inclined to suppose that that was all there was to friendship, Socrates, by making philosophy central to his understanding of it, thinks he discerns a structure in it that can be formulated precisely and dispense with all the variety of its expression. [Benardete, 2002:202]

Can only Hippothales and Ctesippus answer the question of whether they are truly friends?

23 See Bolotin, 1979: 72-75.
Hippothales’ embarrassment in front of Socrates opens up an interesting problem with respect to the relationship between eros, shame, and friendship. Why is Hippothales so shameless a lover when in the company of his friends, but unwilling to reveal even the name of his beloved when with Socrates? Should Ctesippus be offended by Hippothales’ ‘acting’ in front of Socrates? Bolotin contends that it is this jostling for position in front of another that demonstrates the weakness of their friendship, and this largely because he considers Hippothales and Ctesippus as being ‘members of a group’ rather than friends:

We see in Hippothales’ preoccupation with Lysis, and in Ctesippus’ resentment of his deference to Socrates, the typical weakness of such a circle of ‘friends’. As members of such a group, men try to satisfy both their desire to share love and their desire for honour or respect. Yet while attempting to satisfy both of these desires in the same community, they are generally unable to fulfil either adequately.24

Bolotin takes here what seems to me to be the ‘outsiders’’ view of the complexities of friendship. The tension between love and honour is certainly present between the two, but this is precisely the point: Ctesippus’ insolence does not appear to erode the friendship, and neither does Hippothales’ day-and-night praise of Lysis or his blush in front of Socrates. There is a permissiveness in friendship that astonishes.

At any rate it is through Ctesippus that Lysis is first introduced to the reader as being Hippothales’ favourite, and the subject of many ridiculous speeches and poems by his lover. Socrates does not know Lysis by name, and assumes therefore that he must be quite young. As it turns out, Socrates does know Lysis, but only by his patronymic: based on this, Socrates commends Hippothales as having discovered a love that is “noble and dashing in every way”. Socrates, unlike Ctesippus, is willing to judge the love favourably sans speeches, songs or poems. It seems then, that Socrates is willing to

24 Bolotin, 1979: 73.
judge the love itself by virtue of its object, whereas Ctesippus judges the love by virtue of its effects or consequences. Ctesippus is aware of Lysis' superior beauty, but Hippothales is a ridiculous lover because of the actions which this love has resulted in.

Socrates then asks: “Display for me too the things you display for these fellows, so I may know whether you understand what a lover needs to say about his favourite to him or to others” (205a). He does not say, ‘for the purpose of winning the beloved’, though it seems to be the natural end to which a lover’s speeches are directed. What about the speeches directed to others about the beloved, are they also intended for the purpose of winning the beloved? Why do we speak to others about our loves? This desire to share with others, or to express to others, our love, is perhaps not tied to eros itself, or rather it is generally recognised that to express our love to our lover and to express it to others does not serve the same purpose.

Socrates offers the service of his better judgment as to whether Hippothales’ speeches are appropriate. This ability to “understand what a lover needs to say about his favourite” is not a result of some divine gift as is his ability to recognise lover and beloved. This time Hippothales denies not that he loves Lysis, but that he makes speeches and poems about him. Ctesippus interrupts, claiming that Hippothales is so far gone in his love for Lysis that he is ‘raving’ and ‘mad’. Socrates does not seem to want to make a spectacle of Hippothales though, and does not request to hear the exact speeches and poems, but requests, “the thought [behind them], so that I might know in what manner you approach your favourite (205b).” Regardless of the lack of skill or quality in the compositions themselves, Socrates does not seem to consider Hippothales raving or mad; indeed he assumes the opposite – that there is some thought behind them.
The actual compositions, then, are of no account, an issue which is conveniently supported by Hippothales' unwillingness to recite any of them. One wonders, though, whether Hippothales might be a bad lover if his compositions sounded beautiful but had little thought behind them. Conveniently, Hippothales' compositions are bad in both respects and so this problem does not obviously require consideration at this point.

Hippothales jests that if Ctesippus has really been subject to so much of his raving about Lysis then he should be able to supply Socrates with an account of the thought behind his speeches and poems. Hippothales is no Pausanias: he feels shame for his erotic longing and does not want to have to give an account of it. According to Ctesippus Hippothales is a ridiculous lover: he has nothing private to say about Lysis "that even a boy couldn't tell", but gives elaborate descriptions and makes songs of the kind that old women sing, about the feats and successes of Lysis' lineage (205c-d). Hippothales' speeches are never about Lysis himself, as even his beauty represents the ideal. For Ctesippus, the bad lover is the one whose love is general rather than individual. Socrates agrees that Hippothales is a bad lover, but not for the same reason as Ctesippus argues: for Socrates Hippothales is ridiculous because he is already praising himself though he has yet to win his beloved. Socrates' charge presents a significant shift in perspective on the issue: Ctesippus teases Hippothales for singing songs which do not properly represent the object of his love, never questioning the object of his love in the process. Socrates on the other hand, takes an approach that outwardly maintains Lysis as the object of Hippothales' desire, i.e. as that whom or which he is trying to win, but introduces a

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25 The persuasiveness of poetry (as a form of music) simply through its rhythms and other characteristics is presented as a matter of serious concern in Plato's Republic with regards to the proper education of the souls of the guardian class. Socrates and the others heavily censor both the content of the poems and the different musical forms and rhythms. In the Ion Socrates artfully avoids Ion's recitation of Homer, instead asking him about the thought behind it — of which Ion proves to have little understanding.
further and deeper element of that desire: to see himself honoured and praised by others for having won his object. Socrates seems to be suggesting that the generalised and impersonal statements made by Hippothales about his beloved have been made to secure the greatest amount of honour for himself. Honour, Socrates claims, is what underlies Hippothales’ desires.

Socrates leaves his criticism open to interpretation with respect to what he thinks makes a proper lover: he has not really sided with Ctesippus in his view that bad and ridiculous lovers are those who love generally and impersonally, though what he has said could still allow Ctesippus to think that they are in agreement. What Socrates has said is that with respect to the true object of Hippothales’ desire, honour, his actions are impeding any progress to winning this object.

Hippothales is naturally quite astonished to hear that he is singing songs in praise of himself rather than in praise of Lysis, and, not understanding the full import of Socrates’ comment, attempts to clarify that he is not in fact singing songs about himself. At this point he has acknowledged that which he was earlier denying: that he does, indeed, compose poems and songs about Lysis. The shamelessness which Ctesippus earlier reported is slowly being revealed to Socrates; of course, the issue of his shamelessness is somewhat turned on its head with Socrates’ hypothesis that these shamelessly performed poems and songs are, after all, seeking his own honour. At this point, then, Socrates has caught Hippothales in two lies: that each has his own opinion of who the beauty is, and that he does not compose songs about his beloved. This last denial, that the songs are in praise of Lysis rather than himself, is not an outright lie: it seems that Hippothales truly does believe that he composes his songs in praise of Lysis.
And, indeed, if Hippothales thinks that he sings praise to Lysis out of love, who is Socrates to assert otherwise?

Socrates’ first piece of advice to Hippothales is that, “whoever is wise in love-matters ... does not praise his beloved before he catches him, since he fears how the future will turn out” (206a). Socrates puts into sharp relief the possibility of Hippothales’ failure as a lover: “But if he escapes you, the greater the praises you have spoken of your favourite, the greater will be the fine and good things you’ll have been deprived of, and you’ll be thought ridiculous (205e-206a).” The reasoning behind this argument is that Hippothales’ praise will fill his beloved with pride, and thereby make him more difficult to catch. But this argument seems somewhat bizarre and requires further reflection: in what sense does bestowing greater praise result in a greater loss? Surely Socrates does not mean that the praise itself makes that which is praised better or more desirable? On the other hand, it may be that Socrates is reminding Hippothales that there is more than love at stake here – there is his honour to think of as well, something which Hippothales (and likely many other lovers as well) may have forgotten. Socrates turns Hippothales’ love from innocent and artless to calculating.

Socrates’ advice to Hippothales as a lover utilises the analogy of a hunter enticing his prey. The lover’s art, or the expertise of the good lover, is the same as the expertise of the good hunter, as both have to a certain degree the same aim: that of catching their object. Hippothales is a bad lover because he makes his beloved harder to capture by puffing him up with his poems and songs. Based on this, Socrates adds that Hippothales

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26 This is an interesting analogy as it seems that this is the first time that Hippothales has stopped to consider his actual pursuit of the boy. Hippothales’ love up to this point seems to have been passive, and perhaps because of this passivity was not inclined to be reflexive. As we later learn, Hippothales is concerned with not causing Lysis’ hatred. As for the hunter, much of the enjoyment of the hunt is from the sport itself, though the completion of that enjoyment is with the capturing of the prey.
is a bad poet, as a man who harms himself through his poetry is certainly to be considered as such. While Hippothales thanks Socrates for showing how unreasonable he was being in his pursuit, there is something important about Hippothales' love for Lysis that is not being acknowledged here: Would Hippothales do anything to win Lysis, even if that should mean to harm the boy in some way? If not, does this not suggest that there is, in fact, something selfless about Hippothales' love? It appears as though Socrates is not simply turning Hippothales' love from artless to calculating, but from selfless to selfish.\footnote{This question certainly becomes more relevant later in the dialogue when Socrates chastens Lysis. Of course, while it is true that Socrates causes Lysis to suffer somewhat, this does not necessarily mean that he harms him – he may in fact be helping the boy. But Hippothales the lover, we will see does not want to cause Lysis any suffering at all, regardless of intention.}

Socrates' conversation with Hippothales ends with an open plea by Hippothales for Socrates to "give . . . advice as to what to say in conversation or what to do so that someone might become endeared to his favourite" (206c). Socrates responds by stating that it is easier to show someone how to endear themselves than to tell them, and offers to display what one needs to say in conversation. In this way, Socrates offers to educate through action rather than speech, but the education is how to converse with one's beloved to win him rather than what to do to win him. This means, then, that Socrates will interact directly with Lysis, only because he claims it is easier to show what to say to win the favourite. The erotic art is apparently one of those arts that is better learned by example.

The introductory section of the dialogue, what happens from the moment when Socrates encounters Hippothales until he enters the palaestra with him ostensibly in order to display how to endear oneself to one's favourite in conversation, supplies the context within which we must read the subsequent conversation between Socrates, Lysis and
Menexenus. Socrates enters into conversation with Lysis with a hidden intent that is never revealed to the boy; he is displaying through this conversation how to endear oneself to a beloved. With this in mind, one wonders how far Socrates’ manner with Lysis differs from how he would approach the boy without this intent (or even whether he would approach him at all). To what extent does this hidden intent direct the conversation?

There is also the further consideration that this secret arrangement between Socrates and Hippothales is only a partial explanation of Socrates’ own intentions. It seems possible, if not likely, that Socrates wants to satisfy his own curiosity about something which Hippothales and his company are not entirely (if at all) aware of. Hippothales’ invitation did not seem to inspire great enthusiasm in Socrates; the discussion caught his interest only when Hippothales’ love for Lysis was revealed. Benardete surmises that it is Ctesippus’ criticism of Hippothales that revealed a question for Socrates that he considered worthy of investigating:

Ktesippos saw that Hippothales had lost sight of Lysis in writing up family history and myth. … Hippothales could not come up with anything that was both properly Lysis’ and lovable. … everything Hippothales collected had nothing peculiar (idion) to Lysis in it. It is, I think, this remark of Ktesippos that settles the issue for Socrates whether he is to interrupt his journey or not. The idion, which is good and does not become universal once there is knowledge, determines Socrates’ inquiry into the friend. [Benardete, 2002:204]

It is difficult to unpack the full import of Benardete’s interpretation: is it possible to know something without it being as such universalisable? Does our understanding of something as idion require a kind of ignorance? If this is so, then Ctesippus’ expectation that that which is lovable (which Benardete understands as necessarily being good) be
idion, must mean that this love requires ignorance. To introduce knowledge into this picture, then, would be a kind of disenchantment.

With this in mind Hippothales’ blush in Socrates’ presence, and his apparent shamelessness in the presence of his other companions requires further consideration. What explains Hippothales’ reluctance to share with Socrates who his beloved is (and his poems and songs about his favourite) when he deafens the ears of Ctessipus and his other companions with exactly this information? The blush is an involuntary expression of shame that displays publicly something one would rather keep private. It is almost as though Hippothales fears losing that which he sees as his own in revealing it to Socrates, whereas he has no such fear in the company of his friends. Is Socrates correctly interpreting in this fear the concern for losing his honour or is it a concern for losing his love of Lysis? It is only because Hippothales maintains his ignorance (in failing to understand what Socrates says) that his love for Lysis stays intact. Socrates shifts the discussion of Hippothales’ love from Lysis to his own honour (also a disenchantment of sorts), but is this shift correct and sincere? Socrates will demonstrate to Hippothales how to win Lysis through disenchantment.
The strategy developed by Socrates and Hippothales that will allow Socrates to display how one endears oneself to his favourite is to lure Lysis into conversation simply by virtue of the boy's fondness of listening. If Lysis does not come to them on his own, they decide to utilise Ctesippus' connection to him (whose cousin Menexenus is Lysis' closest companion) in order to engage him in conversation. The probability of engaging Lysis in conversation is especially favourable on this particular day owing to the festival in honour of Hermes, which allowed for boys and youths to intermingle. Through this detail about the festival we learn then, that this discussion - even the possibility of it - is delimited by peculiar circumstances: normally it would not be possible for this discussion (or seduction) to occur in the palaestra. Socrates' seduction occurs by virtue of a ritualised chink in the armour of societal conventions.

After Socrates and Hippothales have developed their strategy, Socrates and Ctesippus enter the palaestra together, with the others following behind. Socrates narrates several details about the setting of the palaestra: that the sacrifice has already occurred, that the boys are dressed up, and while most are playing in the courtyard, some are playing dice in a corner with a few standing by to watch. Lysis, we are told, is not playing, and Socrates describes him as "standing out by his appearance as someone worth being spoken of not only for being beautiful, but because he was beautiful and good" (207a). Lysis is not playing, which is a sign either of his character (i.e. disengaged) or of his growing maturity, both of which would signal him as being vulnerable to seduction.
Socrates and Ctesippus pick out a spot on the other side of the courtyard, away from the noise of the boys, and begin to converse with each other. Socrates then narrates a virtual play-by-play description of the action that follows:

Then Lysis started to turn around frequently to look at us. Evidently, he desired to come over. Now for a while he was perplexed, and he shrank from coming over to us along. But then Menexenus, in the middle of his playing, entered from the courtyard, and when he saw me and Ctesippus, he came to sit down beside us. On seeing him, Lysis then followed, and he sat down beside us along with Menexenus. Then the others also came toward us. And in particular Hippothales, when he saw rather many of them standing near by, screened himself behind them and approached to where he supposed Lysis wouldn't see him, for he feared to incur his hatred. [207b]

Lysis' curiosity about their conversation is evident to Socrates, though he shrinks from joining them. Menexenus, on the other hand, quits his playing to sit with the men when he catches sight of them. The presence of Menexenus in the group apparently gives Lysis a pretext to join as well: it allows him to appear as though he is simply seeking the company of his friend. Though Socrates and Hippothales originally intended to have Ctesippus call Lysis over if he should not come on his own, Socrates waits, allowing the boy to deal with his perplexity how he will. Why did Lysis resist his curiosity and remain where he was with the other boys until Menexenus joined the group? Is his reserve a sign of his nobility, or a sign of excessive pride and self-sufficiency? In either case, what might this suggest in terms of how each might relate to philosophy, which requires a dominant, or perhaps a shameless, curiosity? Lysis masks his curiosity by acting as though he is simply seeking his friend's company.

The juxtaposition of Lysis' move to join the group and Menexenus is striking: Menexenus spontaneously abandons his play in order to sit with Ctesipus and Socrates; his action did not appear to require any consideration. In contrast, Lysis, who was not
really engaged in anything, stood with perplexity and indecision with respect to joining the group. And yet it is Lysis who is described as being especially fond of listening. Would Lysis’ joining Socrates and Menexenus without the pretext of his friend have been a shameless act, or would it simply have revealed that Lysis is not self-sufficient? It may be that Lysis considers such a revelation to be shameful: that lacking self-sufficiency is ignoble and shameful. If such is the case then this stands in tension with philosophy, which requires a shameless curiosity. It is through his friend that Lysis’ curiosity is made to appear decent.

Socrates begins his demonstration to Hippothales by first addressing Menexenus, asking him a variety of questions about his friendship with Lysis. Socrates’ questions are all comparative – he seems to be analysing the boys, as a pair of friends, with respect to one another. He asks them about qualities which they cannot possibly share with each other, but which must be attributed individually. For these two young boys, who have chosen each other as friends, how might they deal with such issues? Socrates begins with the rather simple question of which of the two boys is the older. Menexenus responds by stating that they dispute, or have different views, on this issue. That the two boys dispute about who out of the two is older is striking: it has just been stated (206d) that they are each other’s closest companions, and yet they see fit to argue about something as matter of fact as who is the eldest. Lysis and Menexenus must know who is the elder of the two, and yet there is strife between them on the issue.28

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28 It seems then, that as both boys know which of the two is the older, the one who disputes the issue with the knowledge that it is not he might be understood to be more prone to disputation or eristical argument than the other, who is simply arguing with respect to what is true (though perhaps with some self-satisfaction as well).
From this Socrates surmises that they must also, then, dispute about who is more noble or from a more distinguished family, a conclusion which Menexenus emphatically affirms. If they assert wilful pride regarding age then they would certainly do the same regarding nobility, and thus, with regard to things that cannot be shared between these two friends, they choose to dispute about them – regardless of whether or not there might be a true conclusion to be found in the issue. That the two friends dispute over such issues is perhaps rather curious: as two friends, if their friendship was the first concern, it would be likely that in those things which cannot be shared, they would agree on being equals, or otherwise ignore the issue as not being a real concern. In this way the question arises as to whether the two boys are friends. And yet that they are seems manifest in their affection for each other. It is the question of ‘who is the friend?’ that is really at issue, as there seems to be nothing that could not create a dispute between them and thereby create enmity between them. Why are they friends and not enemies?

Socrates narrates that the boys laugh when he asks if they dispute about which is more beautiful. He does not supply the reader with any insight of his own as to why they should laugh. It might be that one of the boys is simply obviously more beautiful. Perhaps they laugh because they realise it would be ignoble to acknowledge that they do (privately?) dispute about this. Or perhaps this is one thing about which they do not dispute, which poses the question as to why not? Is there a limit to those things which cannot be shared that the two friends will dispute about, regardless of whether one might be superior in it as compared to the other. What is it that determines this limit? Honour?

It is at this point that Socrates changes his line of questioning, which has up to this point resulted in the two emphasising that they are not like each other but rather different
in these respects. Socrates states that he will not ask which is wealthier because the two are friends, concluding with the question, "For you two are friends (φιλοι), aren't you?" (207c). When the boys affirm that they are indeed friends he continues with the claim that as the things of friends are said to be in common, then Lysis and Menexenus "will not differ in this respect, if indeed you [two] are speaking the truth about your friendship" (207c). Socrates has shifted the frame of reference: whereas the previous questions appeared to lead the boys in the direction of emphasising their difference, his direct question regarding their friendship leads to an emphasis on their likeness (in wealth). In contrast with the previous traits of age, nobility and beauty, likeness in wealth can be created. Whereas similarity in age, nobility or beauty might lead to the creation of friendships, it is friendship that would be seen as the cause of one's sharing one's wealth.29 Indeed, Socrates states that whether one would share one's wealth with one's supposed friend is a measure of true friendship. Socrates has introduced here the idea that simply claiming to be friends is not the only condition to being friends.

The reader is told by Socrates that he had intended to ask Lysis and Menexenus as to which one of them was juster and wiser but was interrupted because Menexenus was called away to participate in some rites related to the festival. These two qualities of justice and wisdom are treated as one in this question: it suggests that whoever is the more wise will also be the more just (not an altogether unjustified assumption). Are justice and wisdom qualities that can be shared in friendship or does it differentiate (or separate?) individuals. Would justice and wisdom be qualities about which the boys would (or could) compete? Such questions bring to mind the definition of justice

29 Does sharing one's wealth create friendships? Discrepancies in wealth are seen as being the greatest source for faction and enmity amongst people. For a wealthy man to share (or even to give) what is his own with another might result in gratitude (or indebtedness), but will it or can it result in friendship?
proposed by Polemarchus in the *Republic*, where he argued that justice is benefiting friends and harming enemies. On this account, a competition regarding who is most just would necessarily include consideration of the good of others, or recognising that one’s perceived good (in attempting to be most just) is to some extent determined by advancing the good of others. If one compares this with the sharing of wealth as put forward in the earlier question, where the friend who shares his wealth loses some of that which was his own in the sharing, it seems that justice and wisdom (if they are indeed seen as essentially one and the same) can better be shared than wealth. But can justice and wisdom be shared together, i.e. as the cause of friendship, or is it rather that friendship must be present for justice and wisdom to be shared? In the setting up of the ‘city in speech’ in the *Republic* it is precisely *philia* which bonds together justice and wisdom. For it is the love of the city which makes the guardians use their knowledge to the advantage of all rather than just themselves:

“Now since they must be the best of the guardians, mustn’t they be the most skilful at guarding the city?” “Yes.” “Mustn’t they, to begin with, be prudent in such matters as well as powerful, and, moreover, mustn’t they care for the city?” “That’s so.” “A man would care most for that which he happened to love.” “Necessarily.” “And wouldn’t he surely love something most when he believed that the same things are advantageous to it and to himself, and when he supposed that if it did well, he too himself would do well along with it, and if it didn’t, neither would he?” [Republic 412de]

The difficulty in accomplishing this task, is made especially apparent in the conversation that follows, between Socrates and Lysis.
Chapter Three: Socrates chastens Lysis (207d – 210e)

Socrates was about to ask the boys which of the two was the juster and wiser but their discussion was interrupted and Menexenus was called away for reasons which Socrates surmises relating to the performance of ritual duties for the festival. Socrates’ discussion is first allowed, owing to the laxity of everyday conventions on the festival day, and is then restrained because of some special duty imposed on Menexenus, again because of the festival. But then, does Menexenus’ being called away to perform some sacred rites create an opportunity for Socrates or remove one? Does it give Lysis a freedom to speak in the same way that Cephalus’ departure (for similar reasons) gave Polemarchus – and perhaps the company as a whole - a freedom to speak in the Republic? At any rate, Socrates cannot continue on with the discussion, as it was, with Menexenus absent.

It is strange that Socrates considers it appropriate to question Lysis about his parents’ love for him in their absence, when he chooses not to question the friendship of Lysis and Menexenus in the latter’s absence. It is here where the shift is made from the substantive philo to the verb philein, and where the discussion as a whole takes its turn to the abstract: it no longer seems to take the experience of friendship, and the reciprocity, as its starting point. Socrates is able to discuss what it is to love (philein), without having to refer back to the judgment of experience.

Socrates begins the discussion by asking Lysis whether his father and mother love him very much. Lysis’ response is typical of what most would assume without having felt the need to reflect on it: his parents love him ‘very much so’. From where does Lysis’ confidence in his parent’s love stem? To what extent might Lysis be
referencing both an abstract sense of a parent’s philia for his or her child, and his particular sense of his parent’s love for him?

Socrates new line of questioning takes a much stronger tack insofar as it questions that love on which most people are most certain, and this love’s ability or potential to meet Lysis’s own wants and needs. If one considers that Socrates has in mind his arrangement with Hippothales – his demonstration as to what one should say to his beloved to win him – and his criticism that Hippothales was puffing Lysis up by praising him and his family, Socrates begins his demonstration by questioning precisely that which even Hippothales considered to be Lysis’s own. What is it that makes Lysis’s parents his own? For Socrates to be able to humble Lysis, to demonstrate that his existing friendships/loves are insufficient, he must be able to abstract what it is that draws two people together in friendship.

Socrates asks Lysis if his parents, whom Lysis has already confirmed love him very much, wish for him to be as happy as possible. When Lysis confirms this to be so, Socrates questions generally whether happiness is possible for a slave, or for anyone who cannot do as they desire. Lysis swears that one cannot be happy if one cannot do anything they desire. The carelessness of his youth perhaps prevents him from qualifying this by recognising that one’s desires are not always for the good, and that desiring the bad, and being allowed to pursue it, might well result in unhappiness. But this may very well be what Socrates had reckoned upon. Parents do not give their children perfect freedom because they are thinking of their child’s good as much as, or more than, their happiness. Instead of pointing this out to poor Lysis, Socrates sends him further along the path, concluding the opposite: since Lysis’s father and mother love him, and want him to be
happy, they must also act so as to foster his happiness, i.e. they must allow Lysis to do as he wishes, and not prevent him from doing anything. Socrates points out that not only do they prevent him from doing things he might wish to do, but they entrust 'hirelings' to do them in his stead. Lysis does not seem too perturbed by Socrates’ question as to why they would entrust a charioteer to take the reins in a competition as opposed to their own son, or even allow the slave muleteer to rule over the team of mules rather than have him do so: in the former case Lysis probably considers that it would be better to have the professional do the job, and in the latter Lysis more than likely has no real desire to drive a team of mules and thus does not feel slighted that he is not entrusted with the job. But Socrates has shifted the issue somewhat: it is no longer whether Lysis can do as he likes simply, but that Lysis can do as he likes, i.e. rule, with that which belongs to his parents (even their team of mules). If not, what is their own is not what is Lysis’s own.

Lysis sees that he is not entrusted with these tasks because he lacks the knowledge to do them properly, but now being entrusted with these tasks is presented as evidence of their love for him. When Socrates asks, seeing as they do not entrust him with anything of their own, whether they entrust him to rule over himself, it becomes evident that Socrates is leading Lysis to reflect on something on which he has not reflected and, indeed, why should he have? If Lysis’s relations with his parents have been harmonious, and have always been so, what reason does he have to question their love for him? The love of parent for child appears as the most natural and taken for granted of loves, it is the love of one’s own. This mere fact seems sufficient cause for its existence.
Socrates questions the love of Lysis' parents for him by pointing out Lysis's uselessness to them. Not only is he not able to do what he pleases but he is not allowed to do a number of other things, things which even a servant is allowed to do. Whether Lysis is beginning to perceive the implications of this line of questioning or not, he remains in good spirits, laughing at the thought of his attempting – or desiring – to touch his mother's tools for spinning wool. Throughout this examination of the manner in which Lysis's parents demonstrate their love for him, Socrates continually emphasises that they are restricting the boy's freedom, and in this way are not allowing him to be happy by doing what he likes.

Socrates is silent with respect to any possible beneficence on Lysis' parents behalf: that they may be attempting to make Lysis a good, noble, and/ or just man and citizen, and not simply a happy one. He finally asks Lysis:

But in response to what do they so dreadfully prevent you from being happy and from doing whatever you wish, and support you through the whole day always being a slave to someone and – in a word – doing almost nothing that you desire? (208e)

What have you done, Lysis, to deserve such treatment? Lysis responds by providing an explanation which is both common and sensible: he is not allowed by his parents to rule over himself or other matters private or public because he is not yet of age. Lysis does not elaborate as to what precisely this means, likely because he had never bothered to consider the matter to any further extent as it is consistent with law. Lysis's response, stated simply and without further argument, reveals him to be a noble and dutiful son. On the other hand, the fact that he has an answer already at hand shows that this may be a question which he has already arrived at on his own.
But Socrates points out to Lysis that in spite of his not being of age his parents entrust other matters to him such as reading and writing letters for the household and playing his lyre: not only is Lysis entrusted with such things, but he is also given freedom with respect to how he will carry them out. It is not age which is the condition requisite for giving him these freedoms. Considering both examples Socrates uses in making his point we see that in both cases it is knowledge that is what is required for Lysis to have his freedom. Lysis has gained sufficient knowledge in the art of lyre-playing and letter writing: he understands the art with respect to itself. But is that all there is to the knowledge of the arts (or any kind of knowledge whatsoever)? What is the relation between the knowledge required for the art and the ability to judge as to the proper use of the art, i.e. not to misuse the art?

Lysis is allowed to do some things but not others (including ruling over himself) because he understands the former things but not the latter. Socrates proposes then, that when Lysis' father "considers your thinking to be better than his own" he will not only entrust his own things to Lysis, but also give himself over to be ruled by Lysis. Lysis agrees with what Socrates proposes for the future. Knowledge is made desirable to Lysis not only because his parents will love him for it – it is, apparently, the only thing his parents will love him for - but because it will give him freedom and power. The lure of this picture allows Lysis to easily accept that his parents will pass over what is theirs, as well as themselves, that they will easily see his superior wisdom and knowledge. After all, if Lysis did come to be more knowledgeable than his father, wouldn't it be in his father's interest to have his affairs, and his self, managed by the one better suited and able
to do so? Socrates leads Lysis down a path that does not recognise the difference between the selflessness of the art and the selfishness of the artisan.

But ruling over his father is not all that Socrates dangles in front of the youthful ambitions of Lysis:

But what about your neighbor? Doesn’t he have the same standard concerning you as your father does? Do you suppose that he will entrust to you his own household to manage, as soon as he considers your thinking about household management to be better than his own? Or will he preside over it himself?” “He’ll entrust it to me, I suppose.” “And what about the Athenians? Don’t you suppose they will entrust their affairs to you, as soon as they perceive that you think capably?” [209cd]

The distinction between his parents and his neighbour which Lysis himself had argued earlier in trying to maintain his freedom by stating that the slave that his parents had assigned to rule over him was “ours” is forgotten: the particularity which marked the parent-child relation is now a generalised form of relation which can be extended to his neighbour, or even to all of Athens.

Again, what passes unnoticed in this discussion is the distinction between Lysis’ parents wishing Lysis to gain knowledge for his sake and theirs, that which caused Lysis to name the slave assigned by his parents to him as ‘ours’, as opposed to all others who would use Lysis’s knowledge for their own sake. The end to which the art is intended and the end of the artisan is presented as being the same: Socrates is presenting it as though the universal element of the arts’ intended use is the only thing that matters, whereas Lysis had previously understood that it is the common intention for the use by the artisan, not the art itself, that really matters. It is with this understanding that he claimed the slave (a sort of tool itself one supposes) was common to him and his parents. But with Socrates’ account there is no common advantage to the use of the art by the artisan: once
the artisan is recognised to have superior knowledge of the art, even those for whom the use of the art would be intended are handed over to him.

The potential of knowledge extends beyond even what most typical desires can imagine: it presents to Lysis not just the Greek world, but the whole of the known world. Socrates' questions turn to the “Great King” of Persia, asking whether the great king would prefer to trust his own son to season the meats, or Socrates and Lysis, if they should demonstrate to him “that our thinking about food preparation was finer than his son’s” (209e1-4). Lysis considers that the great king of Persia would clearly prefer to give them the reins over his own son and heir. Once having persuaded the king through whatever demonstration was required in order to establish their superiority in cooking, Socrates and Lysis would have licence to do whatever they choose in food preparation, even throw salt in by the handful, while the son would be restricted in this. Here Socrates finally introduces the question of the distinction between the selfishness of the artist and the selflessness of the art. But Lysis does not bat an eye: they would be at the mercy of the one superior in knowledge. The King may be in need of a person who possesses the knowledge or expertise of cooking, among other things, but the king is likely just as aware as Lysis, who is currently imagining himself as the expert, that he is vulnerable to that expert if he were to have ulterior motives: there is more than handfuls of salt which a cook can throw into the soup.

A similar example is described in the case Socrates poses of the two being perceived by the king as having skills in the medical art: should they throw ashes into the diseased eyes of the prince, the king would not prevent them “since he would consider our thinking to be correct” (210a5). Both of these examples prompt some reflection on
the relation between the knowledge or expertise of something, and the expert’s choice to use his skills or his knowledge for the proper end. Why would Lysis choose to use his knowledge of the medical art, or his expertise as a cook, for the sake of the great king, or anyone else? Is the expert concerned with the proper use of his art, i.e. that the art itself has ends inherent to it (such as the end of the medical art, which is healing or the advantage of the body), or is there something more to be said. Lysis would be wanted for his expertise or knowledge, but there is a distinction to be made between himself and his knowledge: while the knowledge may be intrinsically useful, the person who possesses such knowledge may not be. Indeed, they may even be harmful.

In this way, then, the use of certain examples prompts us to reflect on why Lysis, or anyone, with certain knowledge or expertise, would choose to use that expertise for the benefit of another: Does philia need to be involved? Do we need to see our own advantage as necessarily being tied to the advantage of the others. If this is so, even the Republic’s ‘city in speech’ stopped at the bounds of the polis. But Socrates says to Lysis:

With regard to the things in which we become prudent, everyone – Greeks as well as barbarians, and both men and women – will entrust them to us ...we ourselves shall be free in regard to them and rulers over others, and these things will be ours, for we shall profit from them. But with regard to those things in which we don’t acquire good sense, no one will entrust us with permission to do what is in our opinion best concerning them; but everyone will obstruct us as much as is in his power – not merely aliens, but even our father and mother and whatever may be more closely akin to us than they are. And we ourselves shall be subject to others in regard to those things, and they will be alien to us, for we shall derive no profit from them.[210bc]

30 This discussion recalls a somewhat similar discussion between Socrates and Thrasymachus in the Republic, wherein Socrates argues that the arts do not consider their own advantage but of the advantage of that for which it is the art, and that they rule and are masters of that of which they are arts. 342a-d.
When Socrates claims that everything will be ‘ours’ what precisely does he mean?

Benardete points out that this ‘ours’ is not meant in the same way as Lysis’ earlier reference to the slave being ‘ours’ (i.e. his and his parents’): “What they would have in common would be knowledge, but what they had of others would belong to each separately; ‘all mine’ would be as true for either as ‘all ours’ (2000:207).” The advantages of knowledge break up or undermine what unifies: his superior knowledge would make what belonged to his father his rather than theirs, and his father would essentially be his slave. Knowledge does not seem to cause philia, but to undermine it. All advantage is lost where there is no knowledge.

Socrates asks Lysis, “will we be friends to anyone and will anyone love us in regard to those matters in which we’re of no benefit?” to which Lysis answers, “Surely not” (210c). But the relation that Socrates has described seems to be one where the benefit (through knowledge) creates a love in which the self is lost, rather than maintained as distinct. Is this kind of love *philia*?

Lysis becomes trapped in an argument that forces him to admit that insofar as he is useless, not even his father loves him. The charge of corruption which we see laid against Socrates in the *Apology*, does not appear altogether unjust with this forced admission. After taking the wind out of Lysis’ sails, Socrates tells him that should he become wise all will be his friends and be akin to him, for he will be useful *and* good. He then proceeds to probe Lysis as to where he is on this scale of the knowledgeable and wise. Lysis, seeing as he requires a teacher, is not (yet) to be considered thoughtful; Lysis admits, then, that he is not self-sufficient, that he lacks something, namely knowledge.
It is at this point that Socrates narrates to the reader that he almost makes the mistake of revealing his conspiracy with Hippothales. Socrates wanted his erotic skills to be acknowledged by Hippothales; he had succeeded in his demonstration of what to say to one’s beloved. Was Socrates prepared to end the discussion on friendship at this point, having succeeded in his goal? He states that he checked himself upon seeing Hippothales in agony, and realised that Hippothales did not want to draw Lysis’s attention. Obviously, though, seeing Hippothales in agony served to make Socrates aware of the situation in a way that he had not been, it drew Socrates out of himself and his intended end. Socrates, having achieved the end he and Hippothales had discussed, felt satisfied, while Hippothales felt distressed. Why would this be?

Does it pain Hippothales to see his beloved humiliated, even if it makes his prospects at becoming Lysis’ lover greater? If this is the case, it poses a serious challenge to Socrates’ earlier interpretation of Hippothales’ ends in pursuing Lysis: that his real concern is with his own honour rather than with the boy. Another interpretation is that Hippothales does not see, in the argument that Socrates uses to bring Lysis down, any room for himself as lover: there was no indication given in the entire discussion that what Lysis lacks is a lover like Hippothales, or that gaining such a lover would somehow serve to reduce the lack which Lysis has now been made to feel that he has. Hippothales is no Pausanias, he does not see how his own desire for Lysis might possibly relate to Lysis’ desire for knowledge. This is perhaps because he does not pretend that his ultimate concern in loving the boy is with making Lysis better. In this way Hippothales is more sincere than Pausanias, as he wants his love for Lysis to be understood as an end in itself, rather than as a means.
Socrates has done more for Hippothales than to show him how one should go about winning his beloved. Socrates' humiliation of Lysis shows Hippothales that what he was saying in praise of Lysis, what he saw as Lysis's own was not Lysis's own. But what, then, is Lysis's own? Socrates has shown Lysis that what he thinks is his own is not, unless he should have knowledge, but once he gains knowledge the boundary between what is one's own and other things is lost. With knowledge what was once understood as one's own becomes understood as universal.

After this near-blunder of Socrates, Menexenus rejoins the party, taking his place beside his friend. In a moment of privacy between himself and Socrates, Lysis makes a request: "tell Menexenus too what you've been saying to me" (211a). Socrates refuses, but urges Lysis to repeat the argument to Menexenus himself. Socrates is unwilling to repeat the argument, and indeed, the boyishness of Lysis is apparent in the request. Perhaps Socrates is unwilling to repeat the exercise because there is no ulterior motive involved that could redeem its corruptness. There is a vengefulness in Lysis's request also, as though Lysis could not bear the idea of his humiliation only having been a matter of circumstance, when the failings revealed in the argument, are just as true for Menexenus as for himself. But the purpose of the humiliation was specific to Lysis, though Lysis is not aware of this.

Lysis insists that Socrates inflict the same treatment on Menexenus: "Speak to him of something else, so I too may listen, until its time to go home" (211c). He no longer seems very concerned about the specific argument that occurred between himself and Socrates being repeated to his friend; while he emphatically states that he will go over it with Menexenus some other time, he continues on in making a request that
Socrates speak with Menexenus, leaving the topic of discussion open. Why does Lysis insist on Menexenus’ humiliation? It is perhaps the ugliest moment in the dialogue: the pain of the humiliation Lysis experiences is not turned inward: he does not blame himself for his humiliation. Nor does he blame Socrates, instead he lashes out against his friend—an act of unmistakable injustice. Lysis states that he would like to listen to the conversation, and that he will stay for as long a time as he is allowed to remain at the palaestra. Socrates concedes to the request, stating that it needs to be done since Lysis bids it of him. Socrates will do what Lysis bids, but Lysis must in turn act as an ally to Socrates when Menexenus attempts to refute him, which he is known to do, as he is understood to be something of a contentious sort. Socrates states, then, that he knows he is being pitted against Menexenus by Lysis, something which Lysis affirms when he says that it is because of Menexenus’ contentiousness that he wants Socrates to talk with him. Socrates presents Lysis with the opportunity to show the strength of his friendship to Menexenus by questioning whether the boy want Socrates to look the fool, but the opportunity is all but lost on him, as he openly states his reason for wanting Socrates to converse with his friend: so that he may chasten him (211c). Thus Socrates and Lysis become secret allies against the unwitting Menexenus, as Socrates and Hippothales have been secret allies against Lysis (and perhaps still are).

Socrates argues that they ought perhaps not to gang up on Menexenus so rashly, that perhaps they, or he (Lysis), should check their desire to see him chastened, against the possibility of humiliating themselves in the process. In his haste to chasten Menexenus Lysis appears to have forgotten the risk to his honour, just as Hippothales did the same in his praise of Lysis. How is it that they are to chasten Menexenus, who is not
only terrifying, but his teacher and cousin, Ctesippus is also present. Is Lysis blind to the danger that they will open themselves up to in making such an attempt?

Socrates agrees to abide by Lysis’s wishes, and the conversation between the two is closed by none other than the teacher himself, Ctesippus: “Why are you feasting alone by yourselves and not giving us a share of the speeches?” (211d). Ctesippus, the teacher and cousin of contentious Menexenus, and companion of Lysis’s would-be lover Hippothales, asks for a share of the speeches. It is certainly strange language to speak of getting a share of speeches, as though speeches were somehow akin to a pie that can be divvied up, where each slice or part (provided they are equally divided) is no different from any other. How is it that speeches can be shared, or that individuals can be given a share of them? If we consider the dialogue as a whole, how are the speeches divided into shares between all of the interlocutors? Ctesippus is likely fully aware that to be excluded from what is discussed at the beginning of a speech can result in a skewed understanding of the meaning of what was or is going to be said. Ctesippus, then, may resent that another is given exclusive access to the speeches, and thus may garner a greater understanding of what is discussed than himself.

While Lysis stings from the initial pain of Socrates flattening his pride, Socrates has left him with a path to follow. What Lysis once thought he had — indeed he had never really questioned whether he had it — was taken from him, or at the very least, he now feels cause to doubt it. But Socrates has not left this void without the promise of a way to fill it: Lysis can regain his own, though in a different sense, by pursuing knowledge.

One wonders to what extent Hippothales the lover fits into this picture that Socrates has sketched out for Lysis. It may be that Socrates was simply demonstrating
how to bring down Lysis’s pride a notch, or it may be that Socrates was readying a path for Hippothales to enter (though this possibility seems somehow less likely than the first).

How genuine is this promise of all that knowledge will bring to Lysis that Socrates hints at? Firstly there is the unacknowledged problem of others not recognising this superiority of wisdom. Secondly, should it succeed, is the love that Lysis thinks he will receive the same as the love he earlier thought he already had? Is Socrates’ love as he discusses it at 210c philia?
Chapter Four: Socrates' defining desire, and the first attempt to understand the friend (211d-213e)

Socrates smoothes Ctesippus' ruffled feathers with what seems to be an untruth regarding what was just discussed between himself and Lysis: "This one here doesn't understand something about what I've been saying, but he says that he supposes Menexenus knows, and he bids me to ask him (211d)." This is, in part, an untruth as Lysis has said nothing of the sort regarding Menexenus. On the other hand, the claim that there is something (or some part) of what was said that Lysis does not understand is true. Socrates diminishes the importance of the private conversation between himself and Lysis by claiming that Lysis was only asking for clarification about what all – except Menexenus – had had the privilege of hearing. Not only this, but he flatters Menexenus (on Lysis's behalf) by stating that Lysis supposes that there is something that Menexenus knows which he does not. On the other hand, Menexenus (and the others) might suspect that Socrates is giving them the run around, as they might deem it unlikely that Lysis should admit a superior understanding on Menexenus' part. With Ctesippus' encouragement, and under the guise of seeking clarification from Menexenus, Socrates proceeds to question the boy.

It is striking that this is now the second conspiracy in which Socrates is involved. Why is it that Socrates allows himself to be party to this plotting and scheming that require certain individuals to be unaware of the intentions of others? Why is it that these schemes can only be successful if the one party is kept ignorant? Does a lack of full disclosure about the intent behind the arguments make them any less true?
Socrates begins his discussion with Menexenus by telling a personal story about a desire he has had since childhood:

Now it happens that since I was a boy I’ve desired a certain possession, just as others desire other things. For one desires to acquire horses, another dogs, another gold, and another honours. Now me, I’m of a gentle disposition regarding these things, but when it comes to the acquisition of friends (ktesis tuv philon) I’m quite passionately in love; and I would like to have a good friend rather than the best quail or cock to be found among humans, and indeed, by Zeus, for my part, rather than a horse or a dog. And I suppose, by the Dog, that I would much rather acquire a companion than the gold of Darius, and rather than Darius himself – that’s the kind of lover of companions (philetairos) I am. [211e-212a]

This is certainly a strange thing to claim, and though what follows might allow one to suggest that he makes such a claim for the purpose of setting up the discussion that follows, it is certainly intriguing enough not to dismiss so quickly. Socrates says that he has always desired to possess a friend, but to what extent does one ever acquire friends? One makes friends, certainly, but Socrates could not be so naïve as to consider the friend to exist as horses and dogs do. It is the dogness of the dog that leads the lover of dogs’ desire to acquire one, but the making of a friend has to do with the particular qualities of the particular individual in relation to oneself, does it not? Before one becomes a friend to you, are they not a stranger? The friend is familiar, it is ‘our own’. Socrates desires to have for himself something or someone that is, from the start, his own.

Furthermore Socrates takes pains to elaborate the extent to which this desire operates in him. Should he be offered all the gold of Darius, even Darius himself, he would choose the friend over such an offer. Thus while we may call some people lovers of horses or lovers of dogs, Socrates is a lover of the friend. His desire for friends is no
more or less understandable than another’s desire for horses or dogs. Having said this, then, when he sees Menexenus with Lysis, “able to acquire this possession quickly and easily, and that you have quickly and thoroughly acquired such a friend in him” (212a), Socrates feels that he should congratulate him on his happiness. But Socrates, older and (far) more experienced, has not enjoyed such a possession, indeed, he even goes so far as to say, “I am so far from the possession that I don’t even know the manner in which one becomes a friend of another” (212a). Menexenus, who has experience in the acquisition of friends, then, should be able to answer Socrates the question of who becomes the friend to whom: the one who loves of the loved, or the loved one of the lover, or whether there is no difference between them.

Socrates does not explain any further what he might mean in saying this, but only goes on to say that whatever this ‘friendness’ might be, he has been unable to secure it for himself. And yet, is this what Lysis and Menexenus have secured for themselves in each other? What is it that makes Lysis and Menexenus friends? Socrates does not ask what it is of Lysis that Menexenus loves as his friend, but asks rather how does one become a friend, when one loves or when one is loved? This question is rather perplexing in light of Socrates’ statement that he knows he has been unable to secure a friend for himself. Socrates’ previous discussion with Lysis revealed that Lysis had done little in the way of reflecting on philia or friendship, and it is likely that Menexenus shares this ignorance with Lysis (at least Lysis anticipates that he does). But what are we to conclude if Menexenus is unable to answer the questions that Socrates poses? Socrates assumes here

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31 It is worth noting that Socrates attributes to the horse-lover or dog-lover the desire to acquire the horse or the dog, as we could also very well consider that horse or dog lovers are simply fond of horses and dogs and that this fondness does not require any further satisfaction, i.e. it fulfills itself. If we consider this in relation to the next set of questions that Socrates poses to Menexenus, how does possessing relate to being loved?
that since he and Lysis are friends, they must know something about friendship. Does this in turn mean that, should he be unable to answer Socrates, he has not acquired a friend in Lysis?

One wonders whether Lysis might also be perplexed by Socrates’ line of questioning: could he have anticipated that Socrates’ chastening of Menexenus might imply his undermining their friendship. At any rate, while Lysis might see his friendship with Menexenus being set up by Socrates’ questions to tumble like a house of cards, Menexenus does not appear at all guarded or circumspect. He openly answers that he considers there to be no difference regarding who becomes a friend to whom, the loved one or the lover. If this is the first time that he has stopped to consider such a question, what is the basis of his answer? The question is likely somewhat strange to him as he probably takes the reciprocity of friendship for granted, in that friends both love and are loved in return. But Socrates’ question forces us to ask whether friendship comes into being because of the loving or because of the recognition or acknowledgement of that loving.

Socrates points immediately to the problem in Menexenus’ response: “Do both become friends of each other if only the one loves the other?” (212b). Menexenus, however, stands fast to his opinion. Perhaps he considers that as long as the one loves the other, one must, as a result, be loved. Loving must somehow involve that which is loved, and it is that involvement which makes the friendship. ‘No,’ Menexenus likely thinks, ‘even if the one does not love while the other does, they can still both be friends to each other.’ But Socrates does not let the import of this statement pass unnoticed, “Isn’t it possible for someone to love but not to be loved in return by the one whom he loves?
Menexenus maintains his position in part because he still does not see any reason for the reality – insofar as it is acknowledged as such by both the lover and the beloved - of the love to be called into question. The one loves and therefore the other is necessarily a beloved, which is all that is necessary. But what if the other does not acknowledge this person’s love? Is this in fact a possibility?

Socrates finally does away with the ambiguity of his questioning and points out the problem in a way that Menexenus must recognise: “Isn’t is possible for the one who loves even to be hated?” (212b). This question brings up an interesting problem which was lurking in the background earlier: is it the love simply that serves as the cause of the friendship, as what ‘makes’ the friendship? If this is the case, what do we make of the situations in which the one who loves is hated in return for his love? In the example which Socrates provides, which flits between philia and eros - he describes the lovers (erastai) who are tormented in thinking that their favourites do not love (philoustén?) them in return, or even hate them - it is on occasion precisely this love from the lover which causes the beloved to find him hateful or to feel hatred towards him. In this case, then, it is the act of loving which serves to create enmity for the lover on the part of the beloved: a strong case indeed that it may not simply be the act of loving which serves to ‘make’ friends. But what else is needed: a desire for their good perhaps, or simply a lack of desire for their harm? Of course, there is the question to be asked as to whether one can truly hate someone who loves them, but Menexenus at this point has been persuaded somehow by the example that it is possible for the one to love and the other to hate them in return. Why does Menexenus not consider questioning either the loves or the hates?

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32 It is worth noting, that amongst this group is Socrates’ earlier conspirator, Hippothales, who prefers to hide himself from Lysis so as not to incur his hatred (207b).
Perhaps Menexenus holds, as Hippothales claimed in trying to hide his love of Lysis from Socrates, that the loves or hates of another are particular, i.e. arbitrary, and are therefore beyond question.

Having thus separated the lover and beloved friend-pair, the question now becomes:

Then which of them is a friend of the other? Is it the one who loves [that is a friend] of the loved – whether he is in fact loved in return or whether he is even hated – or is it the loved one, of the lover? Or again, in such a situation is neither one a friend of the other unless they both love each other? [212c]

Menexenus’ responds by wanting to rearticulate the friend-pair in the only way that is left to him, by stating that neither is a friend of the other unless they both love each other. The love of the one does not make a friend unless loved in return, the problem of hatred has made it such that indifference will no longer suffice. This response elides a problem that had surfaced earlier with respect to the one who is loved who in turn hates the one who loves: the question of the basis for this love (or for the hatred) is not acknowledged. Socrates, of course, points out that this opinion which they are now holding is different from the one they held but a few moments before, when both could be friends when but one of them loved the other. Menexenus concedes that it appears that this is where they now stand. Socrates finally questions, in what appears to be a rather redundant manner, “And so nothing which does not love in return is a friend to the lover?” (212d). This apparent redundancy, however, masks a shift in the discussion: whereas the earlier part of the discussion was entirely on the subject of someone being
friend of the one who loves or the one loved, Socrates has now introduced the question of something being friend to the one who loves.

Of the things of which one is a lover that do not love in return Socrates utilises the already familiar examples of the horse, quail, and the dog, as well as the newly introduced examples of wine, gymnastics, and wisdom. Can one not be a lover of wine or wisdom, unless wine or wisdom loves them in return? Or, as Socrates says, “Do each of them love these things, although the things are not friends?” (212e). One notes the lack of discrimination between these so-called loves, where the lover of dogs or wine is treated as being on a par with the lover of wisdom. Socrates, however, does not stop at this, but continues by reminding Menexenus that their position, as it currently stands, sits contrary to what the poet Solon states in a quote which Socrates provides: “Prosperous is he who has children as friends, together with single-hoofed horses, Dogs for the hunt, and a guest-friend in a foreign land”. Is Solon stating exactly what Socrates purports? Many have pointed out that there is a discrepancy between Socrates’ quotation and what Solon intended, which is more along the lines of, “Prosperous is he who has dear children, etc.” (see Bolotin, 1979: n.40, Benardete, 2000: 213; Penner and Rowe 2005: 57). In this sense ‘dear’ would also mean ‘of one’s own’. But Socrates seems to be drawing explicit attention to the fact that there is loving going on here, and that the happiness or prosperity is a result not of having things as one’s own, but in the loving of them (or the friendship with them?).

33 This leads us into the difficulties of interpreting the greek word philos and whether it is meant to be referred to as ‘friend’ or ‘dear’ (or one’s own). Bolotin consistently uses the english term friend in almost all cases, but distinguishes the usage by the associated article ‘of’ or ‘to’. ‘friend of’ is considered to be a noun and active, whereas ‘friend to’ is considered to be an adjective and passive.
Socrates once again gets Menexenus to concede that his position – that nothing which does not love in return is a friend to the lover – was incorrect. At this point then, Socrates sums it up as being “that which is loved is a friend to the lover ... whether it loves or even if it hates” (212e), supplying for this position the example of newly born children – who don’t yet love, some who even hate – being at that time, most of all, dearest to their parents.

Menexenus has agreed now to an opinion –that which is loved is a friend to the lover whether it does not love, or even if it hates - which is contrary to his previous opinion – that no one who does not love in return is a friend, and that neither are then friends to each other unless they both love – which in turn was itself a revision of his original opinion that both the lover and the loved one are friends to each other regardless of the distinction between who does the loving and who is loved. Considerable confusion has been created with respect to the ambiguities of philia in asking who is a friend to whom, and who (or what) is dear to whom, and this confusion becomes especially apparent when the problem of the hated or hateful is taken into consideration. But why is this so? Is it because the one who hates in return negates or denies the love of the lover? When one loves that which hates in return it suddenly appears questionable as to whether there is any loving at all. It seems that while Socrates is trying to emphasise the loving with regard to inanimate things he problematizes the loving with regard to people.

The problem of the friend as distinct from the enemy serves to force Menexenus to retract once again his stated opinion with respect to who is friend to whom or what. Following from their conclusion that it is the loved or dear one who is the friend rather than the one who loves, they conclude that it is the same way with respect to being hated:
that it is the hated one who is the enemy, but not the one who hates (213a). But, as had been previously established with the example of the passionate lover, the one who hates can in turn be loved by the one whom he hates; the result is the apparent impossibility of being an enemy to one’s friend and a friend to one’s enemy. This counter-argument seems true to Menexenus, though he does not remark on the fact that it flies in the face of the other apparent truth of newly-born children being dearest to their mothers and fathers when they themselves hate them. Socrates again reformulates their position to be ‘that which loves is the friend’, which Menexenus agrees with on the basis of it appearing to be so, and in turn, that which hates is the enemy, which Menexenus states must necessarily be true. Why is the one easier to comprehend than the other for Menexenus? Is it that hating necessarily makes the enemy while loving does not obviously make a friend? This would suggest that of the friend-enemy dichotomy the enemy is primary. But this reformulation still does not appear to rectify the impossibility of there being friends of enemies and enemies of friends, as the one who loves could be a friend of the one who hates.

Socrates concludes by saying, “What shall we make of it … if neither those who love, nor the loved ones, nor those who both love and are loved will be friends? Or shall we say that there are still some others, aside from these, who become friends to each other?” (213c). Menexenus, apparently rather perplexed, swears by Zeus that he cannot “find his way at all”. We must note, however, that it is not clear that the last of the three kinds of friends, those who both love and are loved, is not a friend. This restricted view of the friend is not satisfactory to Socrates because it cannot explain the loving which is not returned. Is there love when the love is either not returned at all, as in the case of
nonhuman things, or when it is returned with indifference or hatred by the person who is loved? What is it that makes the friend if not the loving? Menexenus and Socrates have up to this point discussed the making of friends in terms of loving and being loved, and seem to have come to the conclusion that the making of friends requires more than either just being loved or just loving, but also does not require both.

Socrates asks Menexenus whether they have not been seeking in ‘an altogether incorrect fashion’. Menexenus does not have a chance to answer, however, because Lysis enthusiastically exclaims, “Yes – at least in my opinion, Socrates (213d).”

Socrates narrates that “at the same time he said this he blushed”, and that he was of the opinion that “what had been spoken escaped him involuntarily, because of his applying his mind intensely to what was being said” (213d). It seems then that Lysis’ remark is literally an outburst, that his desire to respond to Socrates’ question overpowered his earlier intention to remain quiet and let Socrates ‘chasten’ Menexenus. But why does Lysis blush? He has acted contrary to his original intention, which was to remain silent and allow Socrates to chasten his friend in the same manner in which he was chastened. Lysis’ original plan centred around his concern for his honour, but during the course of the discussion his concern for his honour was forgotten and replaced with a concern for the matter being discussed; he naturally and spontaneously acted in a way that undermined his arrangement (which he strongly lobbied for) with Socrates.

It is not clear whether Socrates had completed the chastening which Lysis had encouraged Socrates to make Menexenus suffer. If one compares the two conversations, we see that while both boys are left to flounder every which way in the course of the discussion, on the whole Menexenus is given a lighter treatment. For one thing Socrates
never leaves Menexenus’ alone in the conversation to openly admit his ignorance: Socrates consistently presents their pursuit of the problem as being a joint venture. On the other hand, Menexenus is the one who is said to have the knowledge of the manner in which one becomes a friend of another, and therefore his failure in leading the discussion to any sort of conclusion suggests that he does not know anything of the sort, which leads to the rather unpleasant and unsettling conclusion that perhaps he does not have a friend, as he earlier thought he did. Of course one question that is left unanswered, among others, is whether one needs to know how one becomes a friend in order to be a friend. This conclusion, that if he is lacks understanding of how one becomes a friend (and the association of this question to the question of who is a friend to whom is rather ambiguous) then perhaps he does not have a friend, is not made explicit by Socrates, as indeed it was in Lysis’ case. One wonders if Menexenus is left in the same state of perplexity (and isolation) as Lysis was left in, and if their different treatments by Socrates can be attributed to the different causes for their having occurred, or if it was simply due to chance (i.e. Lysis interrupting).

Socrates claims to recognise in Lysis’ outburst, and the blush that follows, a love of wisdom or philosophy (213e); this recalls his recognition of Hippothales as a lover from his blush. Lysis intervenes in the discussion in order to have it proceed in a certain direction. He does not claim to know that they were seeking in an incorrect fashion: his desire to carry the discussion further is based on his desire to know. Socrates decides to give Menexenus ‘a rest’ and pursues the conversation with Lysis. He does not force him to explain his agreement that they have been seeking in an incorrect fashion. He only qualifies Lysis’ assertion by claiming that they had wandered in their examination and
were on a 'difficult path' (213e): a difficult, but not impossible or fruitless, path. The difficulty is revealed in what they choose to accept as given in their shift in the discussion: that the god himself makes the friends friends. They choose to leave the issue of becoming aside, and to simply ask who is a friend to whom. As we shall see, however, the issue of becoming, or the dynamic aspect of friendship, is in some way essential to an understanding of friendship since it returns to the discussion later in the form of the

neither good nor bad.

There are several questions that we are left with upon reading this section of the dialogue: How does Socrates' knowledge of erotics relate to this newly revealed desire for the possession of a good friend? Why does Socrates continue to make the substantive form of *philia* derivative of the verb, for example in his idiosyncratic interpretation of Solon? The shift from 'happy is he who has dear children (or children of his own), to 'happy is he who has children as friends' implies that the happiness requires action rather than possession. One thing is clear: in making this shift, love of wisdom is no longer as marginal a manifestation of *philia* as it is without the shift.
Chapter 5: Socrates with Lysis, the Friend as like (213d-215c)

With the examination of who becomes the friend in the lover-beloved pair having fallen into shambles, Socrates asks if they have wrongly been seeking the friend. Lysis’s enthusiastic outburst allows the discussion to be started anew. Socrates suggests that they ought to proceed from where they turned aside, “by examining things according to the poets. For the poets are, as it were, our fathers in wisdom and our guides” (214a). He discards the problem of the lover and the one loved as being too difficult a path and proceeds instead on what the poets have to say about friends and who they happen to be. Does he also discard his reliance on Menexenus’ experience as the one with the experience regarding friendship? His shift to the authority of the poets seems to suggest this. Socrates was expecting Menexenus to be able to give an account of friendship based on his apparent friendship with Lysis, but Menexenus had given little thought to friendship, whether his specific friendship to Lysis or about friendship in general. The poets, however, do seem to have given friendship some thought, and provide accounts that are admired for their wisdom. And yet the art of the poet is a beautiful art, not one disposed to a critical apprehension of the truth. The poets are guides because they do think about those things which most of us do not think about (or find difficult to think about, which itself discourages us from further consideration), but their accounts persuade us by their beauty rather than by their truth.

The problem of how two people become friends is attributed by the poets to the actions of the gods: “the god himself makes them friends, by leading them to each other” (214a). The ‘making’ of friends is, then, a divine action. But the divine action, the ‘making’, consists only in leading, or drawing them to each other, in other words in
attracting them to each other. According to the poets, Socrates says, the making of friends lies in the attraction that draws two people to each other. Attraction was not addressed in Socrates’ discussion with Menexenus: they attempted to address whom was friend to whom on the basis of the act of loving. This discussion between Socrates and Lysis is now guided by the idea that it is that which leads one to love another that is the source of friendship rather than the loving itself, with the assumption, it seems, that the loving will naturally follow from the attraction. The problem with this assumption, which Socrates will not address here, is that sometimes the same source can create love or enmity; after all we are still left with the question of why Hippothales and Ctesippus are friends, and why Lysis and Menexenus are friends rather than enemies when they dispute about everything?

Socrates recites Homer as evidence of who the Gods lead to whom: “Always a god leads [the one who is] like to [the one who is] like” (214a), adding himself that the Gods must also make them acquainted. There is nothing in the quotation directly relating to friendship, however; in fact, the preceding passage (which Socrates does not include in his quotation) refers to the bad guiding the bad, suggesting that there are multiple reasons why those who are alike might associate. But Socrates elides these possible associations emphasizing rather that gods bring those who are alike together. And, not only are they drawn or brought together, but they are made to know each other. The making of friends seems to require as well a certain kind of knowing, a knowing of the other and a recognition of their likeness to us.

To further his argument Socrates refers to those writings of the ‘wisest ones’ who claim the attraction of like to like as evident in “nature and the whole” (214b), and that
“what is like is always necessarily a friend to its like” (214b, italics my own). These writings, contrary to those of the poets just mentioned, seem to suggest that the attraction of like to like is rather a principle of nature than an act of the gods, and further, that it extends beyond human attraction.

Socrates asks Lysis if these ‘wisest ones’ speak well, to which Lysis responds only with a ‘perhaps’. Why is Lysis so non-committal in the face of the authority of these so-called wisest ones? Socrates assumes that Lysis is uncertain as to the verity of the poetic account for the same reasons as he: the problem of the bad being friends. He contends that they speak well “Perhaps in half of it ... or perhaps even in all, only we don’t understand them. For in our opinion the nearer the one who is wicked comes to the wicked and the more he associates with him, the more hated he becomes” (214c). Socrates is not quick to dismiss the claim that they are wisest, checking the presumptuousness of Lysis’ scepticism with the suggestion that it stems from a lack of understanding on their part. He is likewise not quick to accept the idea that the human (or human experience) is entirely separate from nature and thus cannot be explained as part of nature. But the challenge that human experience gives to such comprehensive natural accounts must be dealt with. The challenge that Socrates brings forward, however, seems more to do with conventional beliefs and opinions than human experience: the wicked are incapable of being friends. This is based on the common belief that “it is impossible for those who do and suffer injustice to be friends” (214c), and that the wicked will be unjust toward each other. Lysis agrees to this, but his agreement is, obviously, not owing to his experience as a wicked person. It may very well be that the wicked are not unjust toward each other, as in a gang of thieves; if such were the case, however, then they would not
truly be wicked. It seems to be something of an open question as to whether there are, in fact, such people, and Socrates qualifies the statement by saying that with respect to like being attracted to like, “half of what is said would not be true, if indeed those who are wicked are like each other” (214c).

It is at this point where Socrates introduces his own understanding of what it means to be ‘like’, namely that likeness is associated with goodness. Socrates proposes that, as others say, “those who are bad ... are never alike, not even themselves to themselves, but are impulsive and unsteady” (214c). What does it mean for the bad not to be like to themselves? For this to be true goodness must be presupposed, and badness is understood as independent of goodness. In other words badness is not simply a degree of lack or ignorance of goodness, but constitutes something wholly on its own.  

Based on this evaluation of the bad, their earlier criticism - that what the wisest say is only half true - can be done away with. Instead of this more obvious interpretation, which would incorporate the bad and make the claim of like being friend to like problematic, what they are really suggesting, in riddle-like fashion, is that, “he who is good is a friend to the good – he alone to him alone – while he who is bad never enters into true friendship either with good or with bad” (214d). Lysis quietly agrees with a nod, as this suggestion made by Socrates shows his earlier scepticism to have been unreflective. He emphatically agrees to the statement that it is only those who are good

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34 In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle provides a more detailed account of why the bad do not have friends: “for they differ with themselves, and desire some things but wish for others, like unrestrained people; for they prefer things that are pleasant but harmful, instead of what seems to be good for themselves, and they refrain from doing what they believe is best for themselves out of cowardice and laziness. ... Such people do not even feel joy or pleasure along with themselves, since the soul within them is in a state of civil war, and one part, on account of vice, is pained at refraining from certain things when another is pleased; one part drags them gere and the other part there, as if tearing them apart. [1166b6-25]
who are friends. And yet this is something of a problem when one considers that the wisest ones were speaking of nature and the whole, and now friendship is being restricted to only the good (and presumably to humans who are good).

In spite of this apparent resolution to their difficulties in investigating the views of the poets on who are friends, Socrates again confesses that what they have gotten hold of in fact leaves him "uneasy about something in it" (214e). The uneasiness which Socrates confesses to arises, not out of a problem of what is contained within the definition, but rather its form:

Is he who is like, insofar as he is like, a friend to his like, and is such a one useful to such a one? Or consider, rather, in the following way. Would anything whatsoever which is like anything whatsoever have the power to hold out any benefit to it, or to do it any harm, which that couldn't also do itself to itself? Or would it have the power to suffer anything [from its like] which it couldn't also suffer from itself? How then, would such things be treasured by each other, if they held out to each other no help as allies? Is that possible? [214-215a]

Lysis ultimately answers only the final question in the series which Socrates poses: it is not possible for those who hold out to each other no help as allies to be treasured by each other. But what are we to make of the questions which Socrates does not give Lysis the chance to answer or address: Socrates asks firstly, whether he who is like (insofar as he is like) is a friend to his like, and is useful. Here he introduces the two issues, being a friend and being useful, as distinct from each other. In the prior discussion with Lysis the philia of his parents for him was discussed in terms of its uses to Lysis, and it was determined that Lysis would have many friends should he become wise and thus useful to them. The question of why Lysis should want their friendship – what use they should be
to him - was purposely confused or left vague. In this discussion the usefulness of the friend is once again brought up in relation to likeness and then to goodness.

Is it true, though, that like is of no benefit to like, as the power that the one has, the other already possesses in itself? Politically, like holding fast to like creates a cumulative strength, which surpasses the power of any one individual, but such a desire to hold fast would generally only occur when there are enemies present, when unity is necessary in the face of a threat. Without the presence of the threat, the need for the other (to which one is like) dissipates, as indeed there is no benefit one can derive from them that one cannot achieve on one’s own. But Socrates has established that likeness be measured in terms of goodness: that one is only alike insofar as one is good.

When Lysis states that there is no way in which what is not treasured can be understood as a friend, Socrates attempts to separate the issue of the good being friends from the issue of like being friend to like: “Then he who is like is not a friend to his like. Yet might he who is good be a friend to the good insofar as he is good – not insofar as he is like? (215a)” Lysis is open to this possibility, though he does not have any sense of how it would be so. He would, of course, like to find a way in which the two positions which he emphatically agreed upon – that the good are friends, and that what is not treasured, because it is useless, is not a friend – could be reconciled. Having tentatively agreed to Socrates’ suggestion, however, he is challenged to demonstrate how this would be possible, as after all, “Wouldn’t he who is good, insofar as he is good, be to that extent sufficient for himself?” (215a). What follows from this is the conclusion that the one who is sufficient lacks nothing; the one who lacks nothing, treasures nothing; the one who treasures nothing, loves nothing; and finally, whoever does not love, is not a friend
Insofar as one is like another they are useless to that other, and thus will not be befriended by that other. Insofar as one is good, one has no need for another and thus will not befriend another. The question is whether desire presupposes lack: whether we can love something when it is in no way a necessity to us.\textsuperscript{35}

Socrates asks how are the good to be friends with the good, when their self-sufficiency dictates that they neither long for nor need each other: "What device is there for those who are of such a kind to make much of each other?" (215b). Lysis replies that there is none, to which Socrates concludes: "And if they don’t make much of each other, they wouldn’t be friends" (215c). What is Socrates’ intention here, since one hardly suspects that he would believe there to be such perfectly good individuals in our midst. The issue seems to be less a demonstration that the perfectly good cannot be friends, than what follows from this conclusion: that the rest of us, who consider ourselves to have friends, are not perfectly good. The friend must be to some extent the result of a deficiency on the one hand in likeness, and on the other hand in goodness. The question is, how much of a deficiency? In being human we naturally lack: our temporality makes it so. But we do not all lack to the same extent, or so it seems. Perhaps it is in relation to this problem that Socrates portrays the bad as existing independently of the good: there is a sense in which bad is not simply understood as the lack of good, i.e. when bad is not even aware of its lack and considers itself sufficient. If we consider Lysis’ previous assumption of self-sufficiency, which took for granted what the philia of his parents (among others) provided for him (a common complaint, perhaps, among parents), we get

\textsuperscript{35} This understanding of love seems very much to do with Socrates’ philosophic account of eros (or is it an erotic account of philosophy?) as presented by Diotima in the Symposium. Why is Socrates so concerned with bringing philia and eros together, purposely ignoring the understanding of philia which sees that which is loved as one’s own (and loveable as such) rather than filling a lack.
a sense of what Socrates may be intending with this example. Contrary to what some, perhaps even Lysis, may believe, having friends does not demonstrate self-sufficiency, but demonstrates lack.

In the prior conversation (207e-210e) Socrates had Lysis consider that friendship was a result of lack, insofar as others would flock to him once he became wise and had something they did not, handing themselves and their belongings over to him. At that point he suggested to Lysis that, should he accomplish this, he would be free, the possessions would be his own, and he would profit from them. While he did not explicitly state that Lysis would be self-sufficient, it is likely that this was Lysis’ own conclusion. Now Socrates is suggesting to Lysis that his desire for friends is somehow a result of his own lack.

In order for Socrates to reach this point in the discussion he needed to alter to some extent the claims of the poets. Socrates introduces the idea of the like and the good and claims that insofar as there is likeness and insofar as there is goodness, there is no need for the friend. All of this occurred as a result of a certain interpretation of likeness, recalling the unacknowledged preceding line of Socrates Homeric quotation, “Now the bad is leading the bad, just as always a god leads like to like.”
Chapter 6: Socrates with Menexenus, the Friend as Opposite (215c-216b)

After Lysis agrees with Socrates that the good cannot be friends, Socrates asks him to consider if they are "somehow being deceived in the whole?" (215c). Lysis is quite resistant to such a suggestion, asking, "How could that be?" Socrates turns to examine the opposite argument of who are friends, namely opposites. This argument, which Socrates says he heard from someone else, contains three parts. Socrates begins by introducing the argument with the use of Hesiod:

I once heard someone – and just now recollect it – saying that what is like was most hostile to its like, and that those who are good [were most hostile] to the good. And moreover, he brought Hesiod forward as a witness, saying that, Potter bears a grudge against potter, and singer against singer, And beggar against beggar. [215c]

Thus the position that contradicts that which Socrates and Lysis currently hold is likewise supported by the poets, or rather a poet. Homer and Hesiod are seen to differ in their interpretation of the relation between likes, or so it seems at least. The likeness which Hesiod seems to be speaking of here is a likeness in aim or objective, and a likeness in the ability to achieve that aim or objective, namely through some art. Are these the only forms of likeness, or perhaps the only forms relevant to friendship?

The order in which Hesiod presented these types is switched, with singers being placed in the central position, and carpenters being omitted. Placing singers as the central example might be meant to emphasise the dissension between the poets, but it seems further to highlight another dimension that is present in the strife that exists between these types. What is the basis of the grudge that these three types bear against their like: competition. Strife arising out of competition amongst equals, those who possess the
knowledge of the art of pottery, for example, to the perfection of their art, need not be a bad thing. Hesiod holds that such competition can lead to emulation and potentially to friendly bonds. But this form of likeness is not of the kind that Socrates previously spoke of, which was so much of a kind as to be useless to the other.

If we consider that likeness then is not the same kind of likeness which Socrates describes we can consider that: the likeness of the potter and singer can provide a usefulness to the one, insofar as the one potter or singer may be better than the other. But as to the beggar, their likeness is nothing but trouble to the other. In such a case of competition the benefit of one beggar seems to be at the expense or harm of another: one’s gain is another’s loss. As there is, ostensibly, no art associated with begging, there is no potential benefit, i.e. in knowledge, to another in practicing it; there is only the threat of losing one’s livelihood when the other is successful. A question arises as to who benefits from such competitions? Is it not more accurate to say that the benefit that comes through such competition affects the art (and those who need or use the art) rather than the artisan. The two potters must perform their art to their utmost in order to prevent themselves from being harmed by the other’s success. Is this entirely accurate, though? Hesiod, of course, would argue that the artisan is being benefited because he is raising himself up to new levels in terms of his abilities, he is proving his worth amongst his equals.36 This does not appear to be the perspective of the anonymous speaker.

The second part of the argument Socrates presents altogether eliminates the potential benefits to strife in emulation rather than just envy and enmity. After relating the words of Hesiod, Socrates continues by saying that the anonymous person argued that “it was

36 this perspective on strife seems to be represented by the relation between Lysis and Menexenus, and perhaps even Ctessipus and Hippothales.
likewise necessary for things most alike to be most filled with envy, love of victory, and hatred toward each other, but for things most unlike [to be most filled] with friendship” (215d). While it is unlikely, then, that Hesiod intended to suggest that the strife between likes necessarily causes enmity, it is especially unclear that the opposite occurs in the opposite situation: that unlikes are most filled with friendship. Is it correct to conclude that if likeness is the cause of the strife and hatred between the likes, unlikeness will be the cause of friendship between unlikes? Socrates argues this through certain examples:

For he who is poor ... is compelled to be a friend to the wealthy, as is he who is weak to the strong – for the sake of help as an ally; and so it is between the one who is ill and the doctor, and in all things whoever doesn’t know is compelled to treasure the knower and to love him (215de).

The latter part of this list hearkens back to Socrates’ earlier discussion with Lysis, with the difference that in this account, there is no mention of the one who does not know giving themselves over to the knower, it is said only that they treasure them and are friend to them. The love the poor have for the wealthy, the weak for the strong, and the ill for the doctor is not reciprocated. They have no need for and thus do not treasure nor love them. The final part of the argument presented to Socrates once by an unknown speaker is that in which the speaker stretches his argument to the ultimate conclusion: that that which is most opposite is most a friend to its most opposite:

(...) [T]hat is to say, each thing desires what is of such a kind [most opposite], and not its like; namely what is dry desires wet, what is cold hot, what is bitter sweet, and what is sharp blunt, while what is empty desires filling and what is full emptying, and the other things likewise according to the same account; for what is opposite, he said, is sustenance to its opposite; for what is like would enjoy no advantage from its like. [215e-216a]
This ‘magnificent’ argument does two things: it conflates the difference between ‘unlike’ and ‘opposite’ (not all unlike things are opposites), and it finds its basis in a cosmological understanding of the order of nature as a whole. The argument is substantiated by its reference to fundamental natural principles that apparently apply to all properties and things in the world. While earlier the relation between the ill and the doctor can be understood to be one of unlikes, and not opposites, now the argument turns explicitly to opposites, that it is only the opposite that can provide the thing needful, indeed that which constitutes the existence of its opposite. But the pairs of opposites do not all clearly seem to stand in equal relation to each other, they seem rather to stand in relation where one is the determinant of the other: the weak lacks strength, the blunt lacks sharpness. The same problem stands with the other examples of the poor and the wealthy, or the one who knows and the one who doesn’t know: in these more human examples there seems to be, in these opposites, a positive and a negative case (the presence vs. the absence of something desired). Or is it rather that we understand the negative case and see the positive as a lessening of the negative case? If we consider the example of knowledge and ignorance: do we understand ignorance as a lack of knowledge, or knowledge as a lessening of ignorance? If we were to take this example as our primary consideration, it would seem rather that knowledge is a lessening of ignorance, as ignorance is our primary condition. It is only when we see our ignorance as something bad that we choose to strive for knowledge, i.e. choose to strive for a lessening of ignorance.

After presenting this abstract argument related to him by an unknown speaker, which he just happened to remember at this rather opportune moment, Socrates relates to the two boys that “it was my opinion, while he [the unknown speaker] was saying these

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37 This is certainly the interpretation which Benardete espouses. See Benardete 2000: 216.
things, that he was clever. For he spoke well” (216a). This is an interesting revelation made by Socrates, that at the moment when the argument was being presented, Socrates deemed the individual to be clever. Clever speech, however, is not true speech, and Socrates’ determination of this can only follow after his dissection of the (cleverly constructed) argument through questioning. Clever speech seems to be persuasive because it follows a rational and logical order of argument. Socrates asks the boys, after having admitted that he himself thought that the person ‘spoke well’, what they thought of how he spoke? Speaking well and speaking truly are not the same thing, but Socrates does not lead the discussion so as to make that distinction.

It is Menexenus, rather than Lysis, who speaks up to answer the question posed. Lysis does not give his opinion of how the unknown person spoke, perhaps because he considers that this path leads them astray even further than the previous path, or perhaps because he sees that once again he is being forced to accept an argument that contradicts what he previously agreed to, or perhaps because he simply isn’t sure what to make of this new argument presented. Socrates does not press Lysis for his opinion. Is this because he thinks he may be treading on dangerous territory with respect to the frustrations of the boy in terms of the argument, that they are being asked time and again to admit that what they thought was right was in fact utterly incorrect? Whatever frustrations the boys may be feeling, when one stumbles the other quickly picks up after him. Is this rivalry or *philosophia*? \(^{38}\) Perhaps the one leads into the other.

\(^{38}\) The relation of the two boys, and the manner in which they ‘take turns’ with Socrates in conversation, is in many ways similar to Glaucon and Adeimantus’ dealing with Socrates in the Republic. In that dialogue the two took turns in the discussion because their concerns for the city in speech and for justice differed somewhat. Glaucon’s discussion with Socrates would invariably leave out an issue of concern for Adeimantus, which he would then question Socrates on. Ultimately the partiality of the two helped to create a more comprehensive understanding of the problem of justice. With Lysis and Menexenus this does not seem to be the situation. The rivalry that exists between the two friends (friendly or not) seems to
While Lysis falls silent, then, Menexenus answers that in his opinion the anonymous speaker spoke well, qualifying his opinion that it seems as such “from hearing it like this” (216a). However, when Socrates asks whether they should assert that what is opposite is most a friend to its opposite, Menexenus replies, “Very much so”. Menexenus is persuaded by what he hears, or at least he is at a loss to see where the claim that opposite is most a friend to opposite might be at fault. He seems to be aware that the presentation of the argument may have a failing, but, unable to see what that might be, he is inclined to enthusiastically assert the argument himself (a risk perhaps, but it has the potential windfall of showing up Lysis). The contentiousness that Lysis and Socrates spoke of earlier shows itself here.

The way in which Socrates deals with Menexenus’ willingness to prematurely assert his opinions, is by unleashing the “all wise ones”, “the ones skilled in contradicting”, who would only be too pleased to cut what is now their whole argument to pieces by asking whether hatred isn’t most opposite to friendship. Menexenus necessarily concedes that they would be speaking the truth: friendship and hatred are certainly most opposite to each other. What follows though, that an enemy is a friend to the friend, or that a friend is a friend to the enemy, is not something which Menexenus would be willing to assert, and so he must retract his original assertion. This retraction only occurs after Socrates has asked Menexenus about a few other cases: the just to the unjust, the moderate to the undisciplined, and the good to the bad, all of which Menexenus denies can be friends to each other. Socrates concludes that “neither what is

be a cause for the one or the other to pick up after one stumbles. Whether they realise this or not, their efforts to best each other in argument provide benefits for the both of them (although not equally perhaps, which may have something to do with Lysis’ philosophia).
like a friend to its like, nor is what is opposite a friend to its opposite”, to which Menexenus replies, “It doesn’t seem so” (216b).

This last discussion between Menexenus and Socrates brings an issue regarding friendship to light, at least as it has been discussed thus far. In the original discussion of opposites friendship was understood as a relation between two things, two opposite things. Should friendship and enmity be understood in the same way as those other things which are opposites? For Menexenus the discussion of friendship between opposites is brought to a halt with the friend-enemy pair of opposites. The substantive friend and its opposite get in the way. Of course Socrates could have pointed out that the same person could be a friend to one, and an enemy to another and not be in contradiction with himself, pointing out more clearly the contours of this problem regarding friendship; but he chooses instead to make it even more opaque by discounting the argument of opposites through the friend-enemy opposites. One dimension of the problem of friendship, which might have here been exposed, remains hidden under the surface of the discussion, unseen by Menexenus. It is worth wondering whether the anonymous speaker would have come to the same conclusion as Menexenus.

It is clear, at this point then, that Socrates is avoiding some issues regarding friendship in favour of others: he alters the example from Hesiod, omitting any possibility of emulation coming from the strife between likes. Between likes there is only “envy, love of victory and hatred”, which would go along with his earlier conclusion that likes insofar as they are alike are useless to each other and therefore would not be befriendened. Not only this, he further concludes that they are not only not friends but have enmity for each other. That opposites would be friends seems to have less to do with
mutual opposition than with one determining the other: the bad and the less bad. But this is argued against because it would mean that the friend is only less of an enemy than the enemy. Being a friend would seem to be more about repulsion from the bad than attraction to the good, which certainly does not seem to be right.
Chapter 7: Socrates and Menexenus, The Neither-good-nor-Bad (216c-218c)

Having established that it cannot be generalised that what is like is a friend to its like, nor that what is opposite a friend to its opposite, Socrates poses another possibility:

"whatever is neither good nor bad may thus at some times become a friend of the good" (216c). This option has not appeared as a result of any obvious case discussed, but seems to have developed as a result of the discussion itself: it was borne out of the argument. Why does Socrates make this turn in the discussion: it seems, for Menexenus, at least, to be rather unanticipated. His confusion is evident in his baffled response ("How do you mean?"): one imagines that he sees little or no continuity between the two earlier arguments presented and this new one. The neither-good-nor-bad appears like an alien invader, and reciprocity has once again fallen out of the argument. Menexenus needs clarification, and asks Socrates what exactly he means by this. Socrates’ response is quite remarkable:

"Well, by Zeus," I said, "I don’t know, but I am really dizzy myself from the perplexity of the argument, and I’m afraid – as the old saying goes – that what is beautiful is a friend. It seems at any rate, like something soft, smooth, and sleek. And that is why, perhaps, it easily slides past us and gives us the slip, inasmuch as it is such. For I say that the good is beautiful. And you, don’t you suppose so?"

Socrates presents an argument as to who the friend is that has come to him as a result of their attempt to understand the friend: the beautiful must be the friend, since the beautiful
is elusive and the friend, too, has been eluding them. The friend appears to him out of what is left from the arguments.

It is through divination, Socrates says, that he has arrived at his proposal that whatever is neither good nor bad is a friend of the beautiful and good. This is because, in his opinion there are three kinds: the good, the bad, and the neither good nor bad. The neither-good-nor-bad is somewhat problematic however. Is the neither-good-nor-bad [the neither/nor] meant to be understood as neutral, i.e. as independent of good, or as intermediate, i.e. as in the process of becoming either good or bad? It seems that for Socrates the neither/nor is that which is in itself neutral, but which is in a process of becoming good or bad. The neither/nor will be a friend to the good because, following from their previous discussion, the good will not be a friend to the good, nor will the bad be a friend to the bad. He concludes by saying:

There is left, then, if indeed anything is a friend to anything, what whatever is neither good nor bad is a friend either of the good or of what is such as it is itself. For nothing, surely, would become a friend to the bad. [216c]

Through a process of elimination from previous arguments, they decide also that the neither good nor bad could not be a friend to itself, as like is not a friend to its like, and in this way are left with the neither good nor bad being a friend to the good. Menexenus, though he, like Socrates holds the opinion that there are three kinds, and agrees that nothing is a friend to the bad, is somewhat hesitant in agreeing that the neither good nor bad will not be a friend to that which is like itself. One recalls that this part of the discussion - where it was determined that he who is like, insofar as he is like is useless to

39 Benardete argues in relation to this section of the dialogue, “Somehow the way of the argument about the friend has become associated with the friend. In a way typical of Socrates’ second-sailing the speeches about a being take over from the being itself.” (2000: 218)
his like and thus will not be treasured, loved, and a friend to his like - was between Lysis and Socrates, with Menexenus listening in. But what does it mean to be like insofar as one is neither good nor bad? This entire discussion warrants a more careful examination of what these three kinds are; Socrates pursues this with an eye toward examining the needs of each kind.

“If we were willing to conceive of the healthy body, at any rate, it has no want of the medical art or of benefit. For its condition is sufficient, so that no one when he is healthy is a friend to a doctor because of his health. Isn’t that so?”
“No one.”
“Rather, I suppose, the one who is ill, because of his disease [would be his friend].”
“Well how could he not be?”
“Now disease is a bad thing, and the medical art is a beneficial and good one.”
“Yes.”
“And a body, presumably – insofar as it is a body – is neither good nor bad.”
(...)
“Then whatever is neither bad nor good becomes a friend of the good because of the presence of an evil.” [217ab]

The example presented illustrates the argument almost too clearly, and in a way obscures some rather bizarre or problematic aspects of it. The neither-good-nor-bad’s desire for the good stems only from a desire to be rid of the presence of the bad; it has no love for the good otherwise. With the presence of the bad, disease, the neutral being loves the good, the doctor. But at what point does the neutral being cease to be neutral and fall into badness with the presence of the bad? Does the presence of the bad immediately initiate the neutral being into becoming bad? Is the neutral being only seeking to reconstitute its neutrality in loving the good? From this example it appears so. Furthermore, the example makes the point at which the neither/nor is lost to the bad appear to be something which is up to the good to determine; otherwise the disease would only make the body bad at the
point of death. The example of the body as the neutral being is certainly problematic. Its temporality practically assures that it never really is neutral. Socrates elides this by making the healthy body the neutral. Even healthy bodies are working their way towards death as health is only temporary.

Socrates further argues that the neither/nor is lost to the bad, “when it no longer [has] any desire for, or to be a friend of, the good (217c).” The question is, what is the difference between those who do and those who do not befriend the doctor, or rather, why does the neither/nor cease to be a friend of the good when the bad which originally caused it to befriend the good, is still present?

In trying to deal with the question of the neither/nor who remain a friend to the good and those who do not Socrates seeks to clarify the presence of the bad:

“Now examine for yourselves what I say. For I say that some things are also themselves of such a kind as whatever is present, whereas some are not. For example, if someone were willing to rub anything whatsoever with any coloring, I suppose that [the coloring] which is rubbed on is present to that which it’s rubbed upon.”

“Very much so.”

“Then is that which is rubbed upon of such a kind, at that time, with respect to color, as what is on it?”

“I don’t understand.”

Menexenus fails to discern the distinction between presence as appearance and presence in reality. His confusion is somewhat justified, as it is not clear how the appearance/reality distinction has any effect on the neither/nor being or not being a friend of the good. With the example of rubbing white lead on blond hair, Menexenus catches on to the distinction: the presence of the whiteness (from the white lead) on his blonde hair would not make his hair white, though when he becomes aged, the presence of whiteness in this case would indicate that his hair is white. With this example clarifying his point
Socrates asks Menexenus, “If whenever anything is present to something, that which has it will be of such a kind as what is present. Or will it be so if the something is present in a certain way, and if not, not?” (217e). Menexenus proposes that it should be the latter and Socrates concludes that, “whatever is not yet bad or good is sometimes not yet bad although an evil is present, but there are times when it has already become such” (217e).

Although Menexenus emphatically agrees with Socrates, his example intended to clarify the issue is perplexing: the example demonstrated the difference between the appearance and the being of the thing, but the actual argument discusses the presence of evil in terms of some sort of chronological time frame of the presence of the bad, i.e. that the neither good nor bad becomes a friend to the good before it itself becomes bad as a result of the evil which it has (217bc). In the example of the hair, the source of the whiteness in the ‘appearing’ case is not the cause of the hair actually becoming white: the cause of the appearing whiteness is completely different from the cause of the actual whiteness. But, in the case of badness, or evil in the presence of the neither good nor bad, the cause of that which makes the neither good nor bad appear bad is the same as the cause of what makes the neither good nor bad become bad. The only guidance that we have to make the distinction between the appearance and actual being of badness is the way in which the badness is present.

This points us in the direction of understanding the relation between the neither good nor bad and the bad. Socrates says that, “Whenever it is not yet bad, though an evil is present, this presence makes it desire good. But the presence which makes it bad deprives it of the desire, at the same time as the friendship, of the good” (218a). This seems to suggest that the neither good nor bad, being aware of the badness of the presence of the
bad, wants to rid itself of it through its friendship with the good. But the badness, if it is not overcome acts incrementally to corrupt the desire for the good. When it is no longer aware that the presence of the bad is indeed a bad thing, which seems to be an inevitable corruption if it is present, it ceases to desire the good and has itself become bad.

Socrates presents another example in order to demonstrate that this new argument holds: the cases of wisdom and ignorance.

[W]e might say also that the ones who are already wise, whether these are gods or humans beings, no longer love wisdom. Nor, on the other hand, would we say that those love wisdom who have ignorance in such a manner as to be bad. For we wouldn’t say that anyone bad and stupid loves wisdom. There are left, then, those who while having this evil, ignorance, are not yet senseless or stupid as a result of it, but still regard themselves as not knowing whatever they don’t know. [218ab]

In this example people are divided into the already wise, who no longer love wisdom, those who are ignorant but regard themselves as not knowing what they do not know and love wisdom, and those who are ignorant but do not love wisdom. This example is somewhat startling because, in contrast with the previous example, where illness and disease afflict only a small minority of the population, and the rest fall into either of the other two categories, with this example we realise that the proportion of people who are ignorant but are satisfied with their condition is actually the larger proportion. Indeed, the proportion of people who fall into the category of wise is so small that Socrates includes gods in this category to make it feasible. In addition the love of wisdom and its relation to the presence of ignorance is incredibly perplexing: in this example it seems that it is the strength of the individual’s love of wisdom that staves off the corrupting influence of the presence of ignorance. The dangers associated with the awareness of one’s ignorance, are equally great, if not sometimes greater, than the dangers associated with the evil of
(the stupid form of) ignorance itself. Does love of wisdom really stem from hatred of our own ignorance? Socrates seems earlier to have enticed Lysis into seeing the benefits of wisdom and the drawbacks of his ignorance in relation to the love of others; but if Lysis were to realise that he could achieve the same benefits by merely appearing to be wise, would he still hate his ignorance and love wisdom? What is the source of most people’s hatred of ignorance, is it not that they see it as an obstacle preventing them from gaining what they desire? How many are there who truly desire wisdom simply because they hate their ignorance? Most individuals, it seems, only hate their ignorance insofar as it impedes them from some particular end: they do not hate ignorance simply.

It is after the presentation of this example involving wisdom that both Menexenus and Lysis assert their agreement with Socrates that they have come to an understanding as to what is the friend and what isn’t: regarding all things – body and soul – “whatever is neither bad nor good is itself, because of the presence of an evil, a friend of the good” (218c). The neither/nor argument relies on the ability to come to terms with how the presence of the bad affects the neither/nor being or not being a friend of the good, or how the bad can be present with the neither/nor not yet being bad itself. The appearance/reality distinction is meant to clarify this by stating that only when the bad is present in a certain way has it already become bad. This seems to make most sense when considering the philosopher, who has neither the good of wisdom nor the bad of ignorance. The philosopher, rather has a certain kind of ignorance, they “regard themselves as not knowing whatever they don’t know” (218b), which is not to say that they know they do not know. The philosopher has a sense of what lies beneath appearances (as for instance
in Socrates’ ability to interpret blushes). Benardete argues that the philosopher is in between two bads, and in that sense is a neither/nor:

    He does not strictly have the good of the bad, namely, knowledge of ignorance; but his belief gives him the appearance at best of knowledge of ignorance, and at worst of ignorance of ignorance, and in this sense he is a neither/nor; but he must also realise that it is bad to be a neither/nor; otherwise, he would not desire to know. But what he desires to know cannot be wisdom, if he knows that is impossible, but knowledge of ignorance. He wants to know what it is he believes he does not know. (...) The good of the philosopher is poised very precariously between a bad that cannot be eliminated and a bad that possibly can be ameliorated. [Benardete, 2000:220-221]

It is through appearances that the philosopher catches sight of the appearance reality distinction, without truly knowing it, and it is through this that he sees his own ignorance.
Chapter 8: Socrates and Menexenus: For the sake of or Because of

(218d –221a)

Socrates relates that he himself rejoiced at having found out what the friend is, “as if I were a hunter and had, to my satisfaction, what I had been hunting” (218c).

Benardete, however, translates it as: “I myself was very pleased too in barely (agapetos) holding on, like a hunter, to what I was hunting.” He argues that “Agapetos is the adverbial form of the verb agapan, which Socrates has used throughout as the equivalent of philein; and were it not for the context, the adverb could have its usual meaning, ‘gladly’ or ‘contentedly’”(2000:222). The distinction is significant because it means either that the chase has been fulfilled by catching the hunted, as the Bolotin translation suggests, or that the chase was almost lost but was somehow able to be maintained.

At any rate the analogy is particularly striking: the sport of hunting, of course, lies in the chase, but the enjoyment of the sport does to some extent presuppose that it should be fulfilled by catching the hunted. Benardete’s translation suggests that catching sight of the friend (who has till now been elusive) is what has occurred, rather than gaining knowledge of the friend.

Whether they have gotten hold of the friend by catching sight of it after it had almost eluded them, or whether they had actually had it in their possession, Socrates immediately begins to doubt this satisfaction, as he states, “then some strange suspicion came over me – from where, I don’t know – that the things we had agreed to were not true” (218c). When he exclaims (with vexation) his doubts to the two boys only Menexenus responds, questioning why or how Socrates has come to have this doubt. Lysis remains quiet.
Socrates claims that in their search for the friend they have struck up with some false arguments, arguments that are false in the sense in which boastful human beings can be considered false (218d). This remark on the falseness of boastfulness recalls Socrates' original discussion with Hippothales, in which Hippothales was said to be "puffing up" Lysis, or presenting Lysis as greater than he truly is for the sake of making himself look the better. Such boastfulness is the bad kind of ignorance, against which the philosopher must always be wary. Menexenus, though, is in the dark as to how, and perhaps even which, arguments are false, and asks for clarification. Socrates proceeds to try to clarify the problem by presenting a general argument regarding that for the sake of which one is a friend (the final cause), or the end to which friendship is directed, as distinguished from the efficient cause of friendship.

Let us look," I said, "in this way. Is he who would be a friend a friend to someone, or is he not?"
"Necessarily," he said.
"Now is it for the sake of nothing, and because of nothing, or else for the sake of something, and because of something?"
"For the sake of something and because of something."
"Now that thing, for the sake of which the one who is a friend is a friend to his friend, is it a friend, or is it neither a friend nor an enemy?" [218d]

It is worth noting that Socrates is here returning to an examination of friendship between humans, implying however that such friendships do not terminate in human relationships.

None of what is said between Menexenus and Socrates at this point contradicts their earlier position that the neither good nor bad is a friend of the good because of the presence of the bad, it merely asks whether getting away from the bad is the only thing that draws the neither/nor to the good. With Socrates' last question Menexenus admits that he does not follow what Socrates is asking, which is understandable as Socrates'
presentation of the argument is incredibly complex, too complex for someone like
Menexenus to be able to follow upon first hearing it. For the reader, however, who has
the leisure to consider the question without the pressure of an immediate answer, the
answer seems readily apparent: it seems unlikely that that for the sake of which we are
friend to someone would be a matter of indifference to us (i.e. neither loved nor hated).

At any rate, Socrates makes it seem that he rather expected such an answer from
Menexenus, and turns to a more specific manner of presenting the argument, adding that
by presenting it in such a manner, “even I will know better what I mean” (218e). This
recalls that Socrates had stated that his suspicion against their claims were aroused
mysteriously, without knowledge as to their source.

In order to clarify what he meant in his earlier presentation of the argument,
Socrates returns to the example of the body, disease and the medical art. According to
this original argument, the body, which is neither good nor bad becomes a friend to the
medical art because of disease. When Socrates asks whether disease is an evil,
Menexenus responds with the question, “How could it not be?” (218e). Socrates now
adds to this configuration a new factor: health. Health, Menexenus contends, should be
considered a good. With this in mind, then, Socrates argues that, “[T]he medical art has
accepted the friendship for the sake of health” (219a), and that health is also a friend, or
dear to us. Menexenus agrees to this, and agrees further that disease is an enemy, or

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40 In both examination of this example (see 217ab), Socrate shifts from a discussion of the diseased or ill
person being a friend to the doctor (who can at least potentially be a friend in return, though he has no
reason to be), to a discussion of the body being a friend to the medical art because of the presence of
disease. The discussion shifts from a discussion of friendship between two people, to a discussion of
friendship between two things. This may be because asking the question of whether the doctor is a friend
to health or not might bring in questions of the potentially ambiguous motivations of the doctor, that are not
necessary to consider with respect to the art (see Republic345b-347a).

41 In consideration of this question, how disease could not be an evil, or of the strange relationship which
philosophy might have to the bad, one might consider the description Socrates provides in the Republic of
Theages, whose crippled and diseased body was the cause of his turning to philosophy. [Republic 496c]
something hated. This line of questioning seems almost redundant: first it is established that health is good, and disease is bad. Then it is established that Health is a friend, and dear to us, and that disease is an enemy and hated by us. While Menexenus draws a strict correlation between the good things being friends and loved, and the bad things being enemies and hated, the line of questioning implicitly distinguishes those things that we find dear and what we hate, from that which is good and bad. What is the basis of this distinction? It might be that the causes which stir us toward love and hatred are more than simply the goodness or badness of the thing, or at the very least require the recognition of the goodness and badness as such (a judgment which is not always made correctly).

A further problem is the line which Socrates draws between the initial friend, the medical art (in the original example the friend was the doctor and not the medical art), and the friend for the sake of which the friend is a friend, health. Socrates omits the doctor as a friend: that one is the friend of the doctor for the sake of the medical art, who is a friend for the sake of health. Are we certain that the doctor is actually the friend for the sake of the medical art, for the sake of health? There are certainly other causes possible for the doctor to be a practitioner of the medical art that only indirectly relate to health, for instance the doctor may be more concerned about the art and the perfection of the art than about that for the sake of which the art exists (again we are led back to the selfishness of the artisan and the selflessness of the art).

With Menexenus having drawn a correlation between the good and the friend (which had strong precedent in the conversation) Socrates puts forward the new proposition: that "That which is neither bad nor good, therefore, is a friend of the good
because of what is bad and what is an enemy, and for the sake of the good and friend” (219b). Menexenus seems hesitant and agrees only that it appears so. This may be because there is much which has been left out with respect to this proposal, namely that there are things which we may love, which are not good; or things which we do not love which are good; or things which we hate that are not bad; or things which are bad which we do not hate. All of these have been brought forward at different points in the conversation. Nonetheless, what Socrates argues here, that we love those things which we think are good and hate those things which we think are bad (however rightly or wrongly), holds even with all these other unstated examples taken into consideration.

Socrates presses on that they must fully consider what is being proposed, so as not to be deceived. He decides to let one discrepancy in their argument pass, “that that which is a friend has become a friend of the friend” (219b), i.e. that like is a friend to its like, in order to pursue the argument fully. To do so means to pursue an understanding of that for the sake of which one is a friend to another, or rather what draws one to be a friend of another. The pursuit of this argument leads first to the detection of a problem, infinite regress, and then to its solution: the proposal of the ‘first friend’:

“The medical art, we assert, is a friend for the sake of health.”
“Yes.”
“Health, then, is also a friend?”
“Very much so.”
“If, therefore, it is a friend, it is for the sake of something.”
“Yes.”
“Now that something is a friend, if it is going to follow our previous argument.”
“Very much so.”
“Will that too, then, also be a friend for the sake of a friend?”

42 The problem of being deceived in the consideration of who is a friend (and who is an enemy) is also discussed in the Republic(332d-334e). The problem with being deceived in who is the friend or enemy in this discussion (between Socrates and Polemarchus) has to do with the distinction between those who seem to us to be good and those who are good but may not seem to be so.
“Yes.”
“Isn’t it necessary, then, for us to renounce going on like this or else to arrive at some beginning principle, which will no longer bring us back to another friend, but will have come to that which is a friend in the first place, and for the sake of which we say that the other things are also friends?”
“It’s necessary.” [219cd; italics my own]

From this it is not altogether clear how the beginning principle and the first friend are related. One thing is clear, however: without the beginning principle this method of proceeding would be entirely fruitless. It is following this that Socrates presents something of a shocking proposal: all those things which they have said are friends for the sake of this ‘first friend’ are in effect only phantoms of that first friend. They are things which we “make much of” only insofar as they are for the sake of this first thing.

This is something of a departure from where they had last paused in their discussion to consider further their argument: for it is one thing to say something is dear because it becomes needful in the presence of an evil, but it is another to posit that there is some ultimate dear thing for the sake of which we hold other things dear. This ultimate dear thing is, presumably, loved for its own sake, regardless of the presence of the bad in the neither good nor bad. This seems to suggest, then, that the healthy man and the ill man, both love health, with the ill man loving a phantom friend, in the doctor, for the sake of his love of health. Even health, though, seems to be loved for the sake of something. In order to clarify his argument Socrates present Lysis and Menexenus with another example:

Whenever someone makes much of something – as sometimes a father values his son more highly than all his other possessions – would such a one also make much of something else for the sake of considering his son worth everything? For example, if he should become aware that his son had drunk hemlock, would he make much of wine, if he considered that this would save his son? [219e]
This seems rather a cruel example to use, considering Socrates had just taken the wind out of Lysis' sails by questioning his father’s love for him. Lysis' father does not value his son more than his possessions, or at least so it seemed in their earlier discussion. In fact, it was said that Lysis would be loved insofar as he had sufficient (or superior) knowledge of his father’s things. One wonders what Lysis must be thinking at this point, with something of a suspicion that he may be thinking that a father values his son above all other things when his son is known to be wise (and thus useful). There is something problematic in Socrates' example: he describes the father making much of the wine “for the sake of considering the son worth everything”, which does not have any obvious relation to the first friend, or the hierarchy of goods. In the context of the original discussion with Lysis, Lysis as friend or dear to his father was understood in terms of a hierarchy of goods. In the context of this example, because the son is about to die, the friend is temporarily placed at the top of the hierarchy. It is through this example that Socrates undermines his argument for the first friend. On the other hand, while he undermines the first friend he also provides an account as to why it does not always hold: because as humans we live temporal lives, lives with accident, urgency, fortune, and crisis.

Socrates goes on to argue that this is even the case with gold and silver, which is something of an odd claim: as on the face of it, the worth of all things is typically measured in terms of their weight in gold or silver, which might make it seem that gold and silver are inherently valuable. Socrates argues however that we only value gold is in terms of its usefulness for the sake of something else. In this way Socrates determines the inherent value of a thing as being something which one would not dispose of for the sake
of something else. But Socrates' example to bolster his argument is bizarre, as it is common knowledge that there most certainly are people who do make much of gold and silver, whose only concern is to increase their wealth, and who prefer to sit on their gold than to spend it. Menexenus, however, eagerly agrees with Socrates on this point; something which can perhaps be attributed to his age and lack of independence. Others might associate money as being the key to their ability to acquire what they desire, and thus also to their happiness. For some, this intimate relation between money and happiness makes it seem as though money is an end in itself.

In any case, with Menexenus having agreed with regard to money, and wine and the earthenware cup, Socrates treads back into less decent territory: whether the same can be said of the 'friend' as can be said of those things which we make much of:

"Then is it also the same account about the friend? For it is manifest that we say 'friend' in name only as regards all those things which we assert to be friends to us for the sake of some other friend. For I'm afraid that what is really a friend is that itself into which all these so-called friendships terminate." "I'm afraid that's so," he said. "Then what is really a friend is not a friend for the sake of some friend?" "That's true."[220b]

This seems to apply to some extent with most friendships, namely those for pleasure or utility, where the friendship is struck up with some other end in sight. But does this necessarily mean that it is "manifest" that we call some such friend a friend only insofar as they aid us in achieving that end? Socrates' suggestion that we misuse the term friend should give one pause to consider: what is the distinction between a 'friend' aiding us in achieving an end, as opposed to a servant, a hireling, or a partner? Do we not feel gratitude to those who freely help long after the end has been achieved? This seems to indicate that there is a sense in which even the utilitarian friend develops some
importance to us outside of the end for the sake of which we may have sought them out in the first place.

The friend for the sake of a friend has the problem of absurdity or infinite regress. The purpose of all these friends for the sake of friends is because there is a true friend in which all the other friendships terminate. Socrates tries to make clear what he has, up till now, only succeeded in creating confusion about: the difference between the apparent friends and the true friend. Socrates has claimed that apparent friends are friends because of some bad and for the sake of a friend, or a good. The apparent friends, then, are friends for the sake of some friend. But the real friends Socrates tries to clarify, is distinct from the apparent friends in that it is the friend for the sake of some enemy. This hardly appears to supply us with much in the way of clarification, as the phrase ‘for the sake of the enemy’ seems like it should rather be ‘because of the enemy’. But to read Socrates’ statement in this way, which is likely how Menexenus understood it, is to elide the importance of ‘because of’ and ‘for the sake of’—that which Socrates has been at pains to distinguish. So how can the true friend (or the good) be a friend for the sake of an enemy? It would only make sense if one were able to consider the true friend to be at once the true friend and the enemy.

The best way in which to make sense of this passage is to recall the problematic passage just referred to in which the father values the wine and the goblet “for the sake of considering his son worth everything” (219e). It is in this event, this instance, that the theoretical relation of the neither/nor to the good is made irrelevant and the neither/nor is loved simply. If, however, as Benardete argues, “It is against the nature of a neither/nor to jump its class and be treated as if to be not-good were to be good (2000: 225),” what
Socrates states in claiming that the true friend is the friend for the sake of the enemy only makes sense with respect to this problematic circumstantial account inserted into his theoretical account. The true friend resists generalization because human life is itself particular.

With respect to this rather difficult passage Bolotin argues that it refers to our love of the good for the sake of ourselves. “For even though we who love the good because of the presence of an evil are not yet bad ourselves, we would not love it unless we hated our present bad condition. One can therefore say that we hate ourselves, or that the being for whose sake we love the good is an enemy (Bolotin, 1979:175).” Lorraine Smith Pangle disagrees with Bolotin’s argument, arguing that she considers Socrates’ characterization of human beings as ‘chronically needy’ as a gross exaggeration, and not sufficient cause to consider oneself an enemy. But this does not seem to give adequate acknowledgement to the limitations we face in our striving for the good owing to our mortality and temporality. It would seem most accurate that the theoretical striving which Socrates outlines is better understood as *eros*, and the circumstantial loving that arises because of the contingencies of our temporal existence – making much of the son for the sake of considering him worth everything – is what best describes *philia*. And what does Socrates make much of when faced with his own mortality? It seems that, being condemned by the Athenians, Socrates makes much of philosophy (as opposed to wisdom), whereas prior to this condemnation philosophy was only the way to wisdom and not an end in itself. Of course Socrates claimed that he did not consider his own death to be a bad thing, at least not for himself.

When Menexenus agrees with Socrates that the first friend would not exist if there were no enemies, Socrates presses Menexenus to consider if all desires would cease to exist along with needs (as they would disappear along with the bad). Swearing on Zeus, Socrates asks, "if that which is bad ceases to be, will there no longer be hungering or thirsting, or any other such things? Or will there be hunger, if indeed there are humans and the other living beings, but without its being harmful? (221a)" It is worth noting that the neither/nor does not change its identity as neither-good-nor-bad when the bad ceases to be: the bad is still bad, it just no longer harms the neither/nor. This seems to mean that we would no longer treat the bad things as bad, something which is reminiscent of the bad kind of ignorance (which also does not recognise itself as bad). So what would this shift mean for ignorance (and thus also for philosophy)? Would ignorance really matter if it was no longer perceived as bad? Would philosophy exist if the recognition of the bad kind of ignorance was no longer a problem?
Chapter Nine: Desire and Oikeion (221a-222a)

After pushing the boys to consider a possible world in which there is no bad, and whether the neither-good-nor-bad will still have desires without them being bad, Socrates withdraws his line of questioning before giving Menexenus a chance to respond:

"Or is the question ludicrous – what will be or not be then? For who knows? But this, at any rate, we do know, that even now it is possible for one who is hungry to be harmed, and it is possible for him also to be benefited (221a)." Thus, while Socrates has led Lysis and Menexenus to the possible conclusion that there are desires which exist apart from good and bad, and do not of themselves discriminate between good and bad, he refrains from allowing the conclusion to be drawn that we should not apply good and bad to the desires. The question as to whether the desires would exist apart from badness is irrelevant when we live in a world where there is badness. Socrates redraws his argument by asking whether it is possible for one who desires to desire at different times or on different occasions beneficially, harmfully or neither. In agreeing to this Menexenus agrees that there are desires that are neither-good-nor-bad, and as such are independent of the existence of the bad. From this Socrates proceeds to argue that desire is the cause of friendship:

"Now is it possible for one who desires and who loves passionately not to love [as a friend] (philein) that which he desires and loves passionately?"
"not in my opinion, at any rate."
"There will be, then, as it seems, some [things that are] friends, even if evils cease to be ... Yet if what is bad were a cause of a thing’s being a friend, and it ceased to be, nothing would be a friend to another. For if a cause ceased to be, I suppose it would be impossible for there still to be that [thing] which had this cause."
"You are speaking correctly."
"Now have we agreed that what is a friend loves (philein) something and because of something? And did we suppose at that times that whatever is neither good nor bad loves what is good because of what is bad? [221bc]"
What is worth noting is that desiring is loving or being a friend to, and so the structure of the argument here is in large part the same as the original argument about the neither/nor. The major distinction is that the neither-good-nor-bad has desires that are also neither-good-nor-bad. These neither-good-nor-bad desires do not exist in the realm of becoming, as in desires that do not have the potential of becoming either bad or good, but they exist entirely outside of the influence of the good or bad. They are wholly of the kind of the neither-good-nor-bad who does the desiring. This seems to suggest that we, as neutral beings desire friendship with others simply by virtue of the fact that we are neutral beings who desire. The cause is the constituents of our make up, or at least this is so if we accept that *epithumia, eros* and *philia* are in harmony with each other in this respect. With this having been said, Socrates asks, "And as for that which we were previously saying to be a friend, was it some kind of idle talk, like a long poem strung together? (221d)"

Does the presence of independent desires really mean that friendship for the good because of the bad is just idle talk? Might there not be two causes of friendship? This suggestion is somewhat problematic because it would require addressing whether the two different causes of friendship do indeed result in the same thing. And, as the first discussion with Lysis revealed, Socrates is looking for a general account of friendship, not just a multiplicity of manifestations. In order to create a general account from these two different causes one would need to demonstrate that there is a necessary connection. something which, it seems, Socrates (or is it Menexenus?) is not prepared to do.

After establishing that the neither-good-nor-bad desires the neither-good-nor-bad without any connection to the good or the bad, Socrates asks, "Now surely (…) that which desires desires whatever it is in want of. Isn’t that so? (221de)" The friend desires
what it lacks, but this conception of lack is not the same kind of lack as previously discussed, it exists independent of the good or the bad. The neither/nor desires what it lacks as οἰκείον, ‘akin’ or ‘one’s own’. 44 “And it comes to be in want of whatever it is somehow deprived of (221e).” Does this suggest that the friend loves something which it originally had but now, for some reason, lacks? Or does it simply suggest that the wholeness of the neither/nor is also a part of something greater, to which we also belong? The former possibility is reminiscent of Aristophanes’ speech in the Symposium, where ἐρως is the longing we feel for our other half, from which we were split as punishment by the gods. Aristophanes claims that what we long for in the other is really our desire to make ourselves whole again. The difference between this account and Aristophanes’ account, though, is that for Socrates the lack is not the result of a punishment, and does not cause suffering for us. 45 What are we to make of this? Could Socrates be describing something along the lines of what he promised to Lysis, without Lysis having understood the full import of what was promised: Socrates first deprived Lysis of what was his own (his father’s love), but with the promise that it would be returned to him through wisdom or knowledge. What was his own would be returned to him, no longer as his own but as a universal: his father’s love would be his, just as the love of his neighbour, all of Athens, or even that of the great King. They would be his entirely. The distinction between Lysis

44 Bolotin translates οἰκείον as ‘akin’, though he notes that οἰκείον can also be understood to mean ‘one’s own’. While it seems that what Socrates is getting at in this passage is better revealed by using ‘one’s own’, the similarities between ‘like’ and ‘akin’ in the following passage are more obvious than the similarities between ‘like’ and ‘one’s own’, which his probably why Bolotin chose to translate throughout as ‘akin’. In order to allow the passage to retain its meaning in both instances without awkwardness, I will use the greek term oikeion.

45 In Aristophanes’ account the wholeness was not tied to the good, as it was our hubris which caused the punishment.
and the others would be significantly blurred. One's own is returned to one not as distinct or particular but in a general form.

The identity between epitumia, eros and philia is now described by Socrates as for what is oikeion, and Lysis re-enters the discussion by agreeing, along with Menexenus that they do all seem to share this identity. "It appears, then, Menexenus and Lysis, that passionate love, friendship, and desire happen to be for what is akin, as it seems (221e)." But is philia in the same relation to oikeion as eros? Is it not that with philia the love of one's own is not the longing for a union with the beloved that would eliminate the distinctness between lover and beloved, as it is with eros? As Bolotin points out, "Despite the tendency to identify oneself with the other, and to love the whole which they comprise, the love of one's kindred remains also, somehow, the love of one being for another (1979:184)." Menexenus and Lysis, however, do not appear to be concerned with maintaining a distinction between eros and philia.

When Socrates further concludes that Lysis and Menexenus, as friends to each other, must be "in some way by nature akin to each other (221e)" , the two agree with Socrates on this score as well. At this point Socrates is still referring to 'oikeion' as 'that which it is in want of'. However when he continues to discuss eros, philia, and epitumia together he alters the understanding of oikeion to mean also what is on 'one's own wavelength' (see Benardete, 2000:229):

"And therefore," I said, "if someone desires another, boys, or loves him passionately, he would never desire, not love passionately, nor love [as a friend] unless he happened to be akin in some way to his passionately beloved – either in his soul, or else in some character of his soul, or some of its ways, or some aspect of it (222a)."
Menexenus, again, agrees, but Lysis, Socrates tells us, is silent. What Socrates argues is that oikeion is what is lacking and what is the same: what is consistent or homogenous with what desires it. But it is possible that what is lacking, though it must in some way ‘fit’ that which desires, is not entirely the same as that which desires it; the desire for wholeness does not mean that all the parts are equal or identical. Socrates elides this possibility. He can now argue that oikeion, like his previous argument regarding what is like, is useless. But not before unsettling Lysis with more talk about passionate lovers:

Well,” I said, “it has come to light as necessary for us to love what is akin by nature.”

“It seems so,” he said.

“It is necessary, therefore, for the passionate lover (erastei) who is genuine, and not pretended, to be loved (philesthai) by his favourite(s).” [222a]

The homogeneity of the lover and beloved means that the true love is one that should necessarily be reciprocated by the beloved. Their belonging together, as the basis for the love, deems that the love will be reciprocated. It does not seem possible for A to belong with B without B also belonging with A. Lysis and Menexenus have trouble assenting that this conclusion is true, though Socrates does not provide any possible suggestions as to what difficulties the boys may be having with this conclusion. It may have something to do with Socrates putting philia and eros on a par with each other: it may have given them cause to consider eros more carefully particularly if their experience of eros has thus far been restricted to that of the beloved.

It is worth questioning, also, why Socrates places so much emphasis on the passionate lover, and on erotic love in this passage. Eros, philia and epithumia are all seen to have the same object, which makes it questionable as to how distinct they are from each other. Socrates may simply be furthering his demonstration to Hippothales –
Hippothales is said to have “radiated all sorts of colors as a result of his pleasure (222b)” because of this conclusion - on the other hand one wonders if Socrates being pleased at Lysis’ *philosophia* may have inspired in him a desire to cultivate this love.

At any rate, Socrates states that he apparently desired to step back from the argument, and upon doing so felt the need to enquire about the distinction between the like and *oikeion*:

“Lysis and Menexenus, if what is akin differs in some respect from the like, we might be saying something, in my opinion, concerning what a friend is. But if it happens that like and akin are the same, it isn’t easy to reject the previous argument, which says that what is like is useless to its like insofar as there is likeness. And it is out of tune to agree that what is useless is a friend. Do you wish, then,” I said, “Since we are drunk, as it were, from the argument, for us to grant and to declare that what is akin is something other than the like?”

“Very much so.” [222bc]

Socrates’ assumption, that it is out of tune to agree that what is useless is a friend brings us back to his original discussion with Lysis, where it was apparently established that his parents love him insofar as he is useful to them. But it is this assumption that seems to fly in the face of so many relations typically considered to be based in *philia*. *Philia* seems to make usefulness irrelevant; it seems to create a sense of self-sufficiency. But this is precisely what Socrates denies: *philia* itself does not free us of our neediness; in fact, it is because of our neediness that we love what is useful to us. Therefore what is useless could not be a friend.

At any rate the assumption of usefulness means that *oikeion* and like cannot be the same if their understanding of the friend is going to hold; but Socrates has already created a situation where what is lacking must be equal to that which lacks it. So, when he presents the option of concluding that what is good is *oikeion* to everyone, and what is
bad is alien, or that bad is *oikeion* to bad, good is *oikeion* to good, and the neither/nor is *oikeion* to the neither/nor, Lysis and Menexenus choose to go with the latter option (222cd). After all, how could the good be *oikeion* to the bad, when we ourselves see that the bad seem to consistently choose the bad over the good, or at least have no sense of their own good? In addition his previous claim, that "one would never desire, nor love passionately, nor love [as a friend] unless he happened to be akin in some way to his passionately beloved (222a)" and that one which is loved necessarily loves in return makes the bad being *oikeion* to the good problematic. It seems that, should what Socrates outlines be correct, the whole of the problem with the bad not choosing the good has to do with their ignorance of their need for the good (what was previously understood as the bad kind of ignorance in the case of the neither/nor). Philosophy then, seems to be central. But how precisely might this be the case? Is it the realisation that wisdom or knowledge is good, or is it the realisation that ignorance is bad? It is, after all possible to be ignorant but to live with sufficient competence so as not to encounter any significant problems. Is it, like Socrates' longing for the friend, only a matter of personal and particular desires: one might desire cocks or quails, another might desire wisdom or knowledge?

In choosing that each is *oikeion* to each the boys have fallen back into the same problems they encountered in their earlier argument, where only he who is good is a friend to the good. And following from the previous discussion about likes, where only he who is good can be like Socrates asks: "If we declare what is good and what is akin to be the same, then isn't only he who is good a friend, [a friend] to the good (222d)?"
this point it apparently has to be acknowledged that the argument about oikeion as the friend has also been refuted:

“What, then, might we still make of the argument? Or is there clearly nothing? Well, in any case I want to count up all the things which have been mentioned, as those who are wise in the law courts do. For if neither the loved ones, nor those who love, nor those who are like, nor those who are unlike, nor those who are good, nor those who are akin, nor as many other things as we have gone through – for I, at least, don’t remember any more because of their multitude – if nothing among these is a friend, I no longer know what to say.” [222e]

Socrates fails to remember the very argument which was his own original proposal: that of the neither-good-nor-bad as a friend of the good, which was only disposed of because desire was also revealed as an independent cause of friendship. Of course desire as an independent cause of friendship was contingent on the possibility of neutral beings who have neutral desires, something which is certainly contestable.

At any rate, Socrates narrates that he was prepared to “set in motion someone else among the older fellows”, but was prevented by the servants of the boys, who overstepped their position and insisted that they leave for home. These intruding outsiders, whom Socrates identifies as both foreign and drunk, and who were obviously asserting themselves in a way that breeched standards of propriety, prevailed over the attempts of Socrates and some others to have the group remain. Socrates describes them as being like “daemons”, who like his own daemon as described in the Apology of Socrates and in the Theages, “always signals me to turn away from what I am going to do but never urges on (Theages, 128e).” That Socrates identifies the slaves as being like daemons seems to suggest that their actions are justified; that Socrates and the others are in the wrong for having this discussion, or alternatively, that whatever it was that
Socrates was about to ‘set in motion’ with someone else in the group would be better left unsaid. Socrates, however, does not tell the reader what it was he was going to ask this other person (who was this person?) or in what sense these daemonic-types were acting like daemons.

Socrates’ last words, to the boys – and to us – are these:

“Now, Lysis and Menexenus, we have become ridiculous – I, an old man, and you. For these fellows will say, as they go away, that we suppose we’re one another’s friends – for I also put myself among you – but what he who is a friend is we have not yet been able to discover.” [223b]

Their inability to pursue the discussion further – though it was not exactly promised – will lead to the result that they will be thought ridiculous by others. Of course, this seems to suggest that there is or was potential for them to come to some kind of account of the friend, perhaps something Socrates wanted to leave open to the boys. It is striking that Socrates claims others will say that they consider themselves friends: he does not say that others will say that they are now friends. And it is through the mouths of others that that their supposed status will be stated: where it is not about who actually loves or is loved but about how things appear or seem.
this? Socrates’ demotion of the friend begins with transferring the trust we put in friendship to knowledge. Lysis will have not only the love of his father, but universal love should he become wise. The neutral body does not love health out of some natural inclination for it (or a natural repulsion against disease), but because of the presence of evil, which in turn requires recognition of the evil, or the knowledge of the doctor. It is only through the knowledge of the doctor that the body becomes healthy.

The discussion of the neither/nor seems to make the most sense when considered with regard to philosophy. The importance of the kind of presence of the bad, which Socrates stresses, is best understood in terms of ignorance. We turn to philosophy when we become aware of our ignorance: when we are ignorant of our ignorance we consider ourselves to be self-sufficient, perhaps even complete. We believe we know what we do not know, and there is no desire for philosophy. But to become aware of one’s ignorance is not strictly speaking to have knowledge of one’s ignorance; it is rather to become aware of the problem of knowledge: the desire for knowledge is the desire to understand the problem of knowledge.

Is philosophy the friend which Socrates has always longed to acquire or is philosophy rather the way in which he has been seeking the friend? We recall that Socrates wants what is from the start the friend, though the friend generally understood is made, not acquired as such. If it is wisdom which is the friend, or knowledge of ignorance, philosophy is the only way in which Socrates understands one or himself to be able to approach it, and he can only approach it insofar as he understands it as a problem. But being condemned by the Athenians the means to the friend became the friend itself, though it still maintained its position as a means for Socrates as he did not consider his
own good to have been compromised by his condemnation. In philosophy the
particularity associated with *philia*, whereby the father would make much of wine for the
sake of holding his son of highest importance, does not lose its position within the
hierarchy of goods. It seems then, that with philosophy Socrates is able to assimilate
philia and eros.

Are we to consider Socrates' love as peculiar or particular to him, or does it
indeed have some bearing on our own consideration of philia? Can Lysis and Menexenus
remain friends as they were prior to this conversation with Socrates? Is it true that
friendship requires knowledge of the friend? At any rate Socrates has shaken Lysis'
sense of self-sufficiency by making him aware of his ignorance. And as for our own
experience as readers, Socrates has revealed our ignorance to us as well, but has left us
with additional questions to those which Lysis has been left with.
Bibliography


