

5

Plato's *Lysis*: The Structural Problem

DAVID B. ROBINSON

The *Lysis* is one of five short Platonic dialogues which address themselves entirely to a question of definition. Besides the *Lysis* these dialogues are the *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Hippias Major* and *Euthyphro*; all of these ask a question of the type "What is x?" and make this question their sole concern (unlike one or two longer dialogues in which a question of this type appears in conjunction with other questions of a different type). All these five dialogues were put by Ritter on the grounds of style into the earliest of his three groups of Plato's works; Ritter's establishment of these three groups¹ can be followed with reasonable confidence, and his placing of these five dialogues may be taken to be confirmed by Xenophon's and Aristotle's statements that Socrates had been interested in problems of definition. Plato in writing these dialogues each consisting solely of a search for a definition was no doubt following up the interest of his master. This is not to say that either the substance or the method of the argument in these dialogues is directly derived from Socrates himself; that is something we shall never know.

We shall never know either whether Plato wrote these five dialogues deliberately as a group. Were they meant to complement each other and provide a continuous study of methods of definition? Or was the attack on certain concepts by means of a direct search for their definitions simply a device which Plato returned to on separate occasions when one or other of these concepts aroused his attention

¹ C. Ritter, *Platon* (Munich 1910), Vol. 1, pp. 236-37.

for its own sake? The truth I think must lie somewhere between these alternatives; Plato was both genuinely anxious to investigate these concepts for their own sakes by discovering their definitions, and also at the same time consciously experimenting with methods of approaching satisfactory definitions. For this reason each of these dialogues would be best studied not only in conjunction with other places where Plato discusses the same concept, but also in conjunction with the other definition-seeking dialogues.

It seems possible that some traces of a development in Plato's conscious conception of definition might be discovered; if this were possible it would provide some alternative to Ritter's later "stylistic" attempt to subdivide his previously established first group of dialogues.² Ritter himself was very tentative about this further attempt; and it is certainly not as trustworthy as his broader division. But I remain very tentative too³—the task of taking each dialogue strictly on its own and estimating precisely how much it says for itself is necessarily prior to any possibility of comparing dialogues.

The most obvious similarity of general structure between these dialogues is that, though each attempts to discover a definition of a particular concept, none of them succeeds; each of them after asking "what is x?" concludes with the admission "But we have not been able to find out what x is." The regularity with which this conclusion, or lack of conclusion, is reached and frankly announced makes it hard to believe that Plato quite simply viewed his attempts at definition as one after another dogged by failure. Plato is therefore charged with the crime of Socrates; he is held to have been ironical, and to have withheld from us his real thoughts. Those whom Socrates refuted assumed that Socrates himself knew the right answer but would not reveal it. Readers of the "aporetic" dialogues assume that Plato was not sincere in saying that he had failed to obtain a particular definition, that he must have had in mind a satisfactory definition which for one reason or another he does not state. Now those who accused Socrates of irony were wrong; Socrates in his earnest search

² C. Ritter, "Unterabteilungen innerhalb der zeitlich ersten Gruppe Platonischer Schriften," *Hermes* 70 (1935), pp. 1-30.

³ Two points might be made: (1) Despite their final *aporiai*, *Lys.*, *Lach.* and *Charm.* seem more seriously concerned to offer positive suggestions towards defining their subjects—friendship, courage and self-knowledge—than *Euthyphro* and *Hippias Major* towards theirs; the latter pair seem to make negative points their main business throughout; (2) *Lysis* contains no methodological remarks other than 213d1-2 and the final sentence. The other dialogues are all richer in this respect, and *Euth.* and *Hippias Major* admit terminology such as *ἰδέα*, *παράδειγμα*, *οὐσία* and *πάθος*. This disinclines me to follow those who put the *Lysis* late in the first period; viewed purely as a definition-dialogue it might rather be the earliest of the five.

for the truth was passionately sincere in asserting his own ignorance. Socrates of course was not a skeptic, but Socratic ignorance was as conscious and as thorough-going a philosophical attitude as Cartesian "doubt." Socrates was fully able to face the possibility that every suggestion he had so far heard was open to serious difficulty. Are we then perhaps also wrong in assuming that Plato's negative conclusions are due to irony on his part? It is perfectly possible that the Platonic dialogues ending in *aporia* ought to be taken by the letter to mean what they say, namely that though a number of definitions may be suggested, serious objections stand in the way of all of them. Plato wrote much more positive-seeming dialogues at some periods later in his life; but that is no reason why his early *aporai* may not have been genuine. Estimating the degree of irony in Plato's works is of course a well-known and very wide-ranging problem. I merely restate it here because I suspect that for these five dialogues a contribution to solving it might be obtained from the examination I have already asked for of Plato's theory of definition. I suspect it would be found that Plato set standards for acceptable definitions which made them genuinely difficult to discover, and that the negative conclusions were due not to irony but to the rigor of Plato's demands.

This however may seem to promise more than I have to offer. I shall concentrate in this paper on the *Lysis* alone, which asks *τί ἐστὶν τὸ φίλον*; General conclusions will have to be preceded by detailed discussion of how Plato attacks this particular concept. To plunge then *in medias res* —

For a few moments we must be lexicographers and attend quite simply to the meaning of the words *φιλεῖν*, *φίλος* and *φιλία* as they occur in Greek outside Plato and especially outside the *Lysis*.⁴

Let us start with the verb *φιλεῖν*. In the first of its normal senses this is a fairly usual word for "liking" persons. It can denote quite strong affection, but it is clearly weaker than *ἐρᾶν* (Xen. *Hiero* 2, *ὥστε οὐ μόνον φιλοῖο ἄν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐρῶ*), and is without any suggestion of sexual attraction. On the other hand it may be quite weak and mean only to be politically "on the side of."

The second main sense is rather different; *φιλεῖν* can be the word for being fond of, practising or pursuing certain activities; being fond of (and indulging in) banqueting and song; or rather differently, making a practice of certain kinds of behavior — *αἰσχροκέρδεια*, for instance.⁵

⁴ A fuller lexicography of *φίλος* will be provided elsewhere.

⁵ E.g. Homer, *Od.* XIV. 83; Theognis 67, 385, 739; Sappho 58. 25; Pindar, *Pyth.* 9. 9; Soph., *Ant.* 312, 1056, 1059. Note here and below that to parallel some of Plato's uses of *φιλεῖν* and *φίλος* one has to turn to poetic usage.

Nearly all cases of *φιλεῖν* are covered by these two senses; but rather rarely *φιλεῖν* can denote general approval of types or classes of people and things. Archilochus says οὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγόν—“I don’t like a tall general.” Simonides couples *φιλέω* with *ἐπαίνημι*: τοὺς δ’ ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω, ἐκὼν ὅστις ἔρδη μηδὲν αἰσχρόν.⁶

The rather surprising gap among the normal uses of *φιλεῖν* is that it does not seem ever to mean “to like” *individual*, particular *objects*. In English one says “I like that picture” of the particular picture on the wall; this in Greek could not be *φιλῶ τήνδε τὴν γραφήν*, unless perhaps the picture was of a beloved person. *φιλεῖν* is certainly not the word for commonplace “liking” of things. This might perhaps rather be *ἀρέσκει μοι*.

Now to turn to the adjective *φίλος*. Here we have to deal not only with a range of varying meanings and applications, but also with three logically distinct senses marking active, passive and symmetrical (or reciprocal) relationships. Let us take the passive sense first.

φίλος in its passive sense could often be paraphrased by the passive participle from *φιλεῖν*, that is to say *φιλούμενος*. Its first meaning in its passive sense is of people, where it means “dear” or “beloved,” “regarded with” varying degrees of “affection.” In Plato’s *Symposium* Socrates begins a speech by addressing Agathon as ὦ φίλε Ἀγάθων (199c3) and ends with ὦ φιλούμενε Ἀγάθων (201c8). The second meaning of the passive sense of *φίλος* is as applied to types of activity or pursuit, *δαίς*, *ἔρις*—much the same as the second meaning of *φιλεῖν*.⁷ Thirdly, what is approved or valued for general reasons can be called *φίλον*: the Muses at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis sang ὅττι καλόν, φίλον ἐστί, τὸ δ’ οὐ καλὸν οὐ φίλον ἐστίν (Theognis 17). At various places in tragedy τὸ ὄσιον, τὸ δίκαιον, νεότης and ἀλκή are called *φίλα*—general qualities valued for various reasons.⁸ Once τὸ *φίλον* is a noun; the aged Oedipus is warned by the chorus not to trespass in the grove at Colonus but τὸ *φίλον* σέβεισθαι, to respect the wishes, in fact the religious scruples, of his hosts the Athenians.⁹ This application to general characteristics meeting with approval is close to the third use noted before of the verb *φιλεῖν*.

The parallelism between the uses of *φιλεῖν* and *φίλος*-passive continues in that *φίλος*-passive is in the same way unusual in application to *particular* impersonal objects. It is not infrequently found of impersonal objects in tragedy, but always denotes a strong emotional

⁶ Archilochus 114 (West); Simonides 542. 27–28 (Page).

⁷ *Od.* VIII. 248–49; *Il.* V. 891, I. 107.

⁸ *Eur.*, *El.* 1351–52, *Her.* 637–38, *Ion* 481–82.

⁹ *Soph.*, *O. C.* 184–87.

bond with or valuing of the object: *φίλη πατρίς*, *φίλον δῶμα* are common; Hecuba can call Hector's shield *φίλον*, Philoctetes refers to his *τόξον φίλον*.¹⁰ But *φίλον* is not the word for any ordinary object that one happens to like. People one likes, activities one pursues, qualities one approves of, special objects one values emotionally, are *φίλα*, but not ordinary objects one has a moderate liking for.

Let us turn now to a sense of *φίλος* which must be marked off as logically distinct from the passive sense. This is the common meaning which we translate as "a friend." Xenophon says *πάντων κτημάτων κράτιστον . . . φίλος σαφῆς καὶ ἀγαθός* (*Mem.* II. 4). This cannot be the passive sense of *φίλος*. Xenophon does not mean "the best of all possessions is a man one likes who is unfailing and good." We value an unfailing friend not merely because we like him but also because he will be prepared to help us. Under "friend" the Oxford Dictionary adopts Johnson's definition "One joined to another in *mutual* benevolence and intimacy." Johnson derived this from Hobbes and Hobbes from Aristotle on *φιλία* in *Rhetoric* II (1381a1-2), but it remains the standard English definition of "a friend," and it emphasizes a vital part of the meaning of the term. Friendship is necessarily mutual and constitutes a logically symmetrical relationship: if A and B are friends then A is B's friend and B is A's friend; if A is a friend of B then it follows that B is a friend of A. This is true of friendship in Greek also, and in the sense in which it means "a friend" *φίλος* is a logically symmetrical term, separate from both the active and the passive senses. Now if friendship is thought to be based on any active feeling or service felt by one party for another, then it must be remembered that there will only be a *friendship* proper if the feeling or service of the one party is reciprocated by the other. One-sided relationships do not amount to friendship. This is a matter of fact which is reflected in the meaning of the words "friend" and *φίλος*. Xenophon in his chapters on friendship in *Memorabilia* II often mentions reciprocity as a characteristic of friendly services: *πολλάκις ἂν πρὸ αὐτοῦ τις οὐ δῆνυσσε, ταῦτα ὁ φίλος πρὸ τοῦ φίλου ἐξήρκεσεν* (II. 4. 7). I might add here that the ordinary Greek, including Xenophon, thought in terms more of mutual service than of mutual affection as the basis of friendship. Xenophon never uses the verb *φιλεῖν* in discussing the relationship between friends (the one occurrence is in a matter of homosexual attraction¹¹); the ordinary Greek word for the attitude of mind of one *φίλος* to another is *εὖνοια*; this is stated

¹⁰ Eur., *Tro.* 458, *I. A.* 1229, *Tro.* 1222; Soph., *Phil.* 1004, 1128.

¹¹ This doubtless means that Xenophon reserved *φιλεῖν* for fairly strong affection, but still not the same as *ἔρωσ*.

by Aristotle and confirmed by usage (including a place in Menander's *Dyskolos*).¹² So the apparent etymological link between φιλεῖν and φίλος has disappeared in usage as regards φίλος in its symmetrical sense. It is also worth saying that the symmetrical sense of φίλος in the meaning of "a friend" is naturally unusual in the neuter, since only persons can be friends; but it can arise in certain idioms (see below).

The active sense of φίλος may perhaps have been derived from the sense we have just discussed. The title of "friend" is often conferred or denied according to whether the "friend" gives active assistance as he should, and this leads to relatively frequent occurrences of the word φίλος where the emphasis is on active manifestations of friendship. From this kind of emphasis in what are uses of φίλος in its reciprocal sense, there does seem to be derived a separate sense of φίλος which is exclusively active. This must be the explanation of cases which resemble Eur. *Tro.* 789 ἀναιδεία φίλος, which must mean φιλῶν ἀναίδειαν, "making a practice of shamelessness" (cf. *Hel.* 1263). Some apparent cases can be explained as cases of φίλος meaning "friend" but carrying an emphasis on the active display of friendly service or affection. Others are genuinely "active" uses.¹³

On the noun φιλία we can be very brief. What must be remembered is that it is the noun from φίλος = "a friend," and not from the verb φιλεῖν. φιλία is always used of mutual relationships of friendship or alliance. If it is followed by what looks like an objective genitive, it in fact means "friendship with," not "liking for"; Democritus fr. 98, ἐνὸς φιλίῃ ξυνετοῦ κρέσσων ἀξυνέτων πάντων, says that friendship with one wise man is better than friendship with all stupid men, not (as Liddell and Scott suggest) that it is better to like one wise man than to like all stupid men. One exception (outside the *Lysis*) is Plato, *Rep.* 581a, where φιλία τοῦ κέρδους, "love of gain," is attributed to the part of the soul which is φιλοκερδές; this is an abnormal use dragged in for the etymological play.¹⁴

I have spent a lot of time on this purely philological inquiry for two reasons; firstly, the main discussion in the *Lysis* is done almost entirely by the use of the word φίλος, now in one sense, now in another. Let me give an example of the difficulties this can create

¹² Aristotle, *E. N.* 1155b32; Eur., *Ion* 730–32; Plato, *Prot.* 337b1; Men., *Dysk.* 720.

¹³ Examine *Il.* XXIV. 775; Eur., *Or.* 424, *Hipp.* 91–93, *El.* 265. Occasional attempts to deny this sense are largely misled by the inadequacy of *LSJ*. It is of course perfectly obviously present in the *Lysis* itself.

¹⁴ In Homer φιλότης was a euphemism for sexual relations, but this disappeared later, except in the Lesbian poets (see Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* [Oxford 1955], p. 10) and Pindar. It has gone from tragic lyric.

for the reader; at *Lysis* 219b we meet the formula φίλον τοῦ φίλου τὸ φίλον γέγονεν. This could mean either “the friend is the friend of the friend” or “the liking likes the liked” or “the liked is liked by the liking” (what is liked is liked by what likes). In any given context in the *Lysis* the reader has to decide for himself what is the appropriate sense in which to take the present occurrences of φίλος. This he can only do by observation of the examples which are cited of the relationship at present under discussion. This might seem to be mainly a linguistic problem of dealing with the Greek text; but the second problem raised by the ambiguity of the word φίλος is of greater philosophical importance. Plato’s main philosophical question in the *Lysis* is τί ἔστιν τὸ φίλον; He is trying to define the concept of τὸ φίλον. But which is the sense of τὸ φίλον in which he is trying to define it? Probably at least two concepts could be suggested to a Greek by the expression τὸ φίλον; firstly taking φίλον in sense I, the passive sense, the general notion of “what is valued or pursued or approved”—remember ὅτι καλὸν φίλον ἐστί. Secondly (since the neuter may also be used in Greek to express the concept named by an adjective which itself only occurs in the masculine or feminine), τὸ φίλον could be derived from φίλος in sense II and denote the concept of “friendship.” Which concept is Plato trying to define: “that which is the object of value or pursuit” or “friendship”? Again, the reader can only answer this by careful observation of the discussion Plato provides, and especially of the examples he describes.

The dramatic setting of the dialogue itself is a meeting of Socrates with some young men at a gymnasium, one of whom, Hippothales, wants to show off to Socrates his boy-favorite. Now this setting has led many interpreters into thinking the dialogue is primarily about pederasty; but this it certainly is not. The discussion starts with a little homily delivered by Socrates to “humble” Hippothales’ beloved Lysis, who has been “puffed up” because Hippothales has been singing his praises. This little homily is of the well-known Socratic tone, recommending Lysis to learn his lessons well and acquire as much knowledge as possible, since this is the way to make everybody his friends;¹⁵ the implication I think is that Lysis has been used to

¹⁵ It is as erroneous to believe that Socrates really thought that Lysis’ parents did not love him, insofar as he was useless, as to believe that the Persian king would ever have trusted him with his empire. Gregory Vlastos, in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton 1973), pp. 6–9, failed to allow for the exaggerations of this little homily—though his main argument, as he saw, could be supported elsewhere in the *Lysis*, e.g. at 215b and 217a sq. The problem remains acute. Plato clearly *knew* of unselfish affection, but failed to account for it in his theory. See the final sections of this paper. D. K. Glidden in *Classical Quarterly* 31 (1981), 39–59, is even more misled by this passage.

acquiring "friends" too easily by his beauty alone. At this point Lysis is rejoined by his boy-comrade Menexenus. The pair have already declared to Socrates that they are friends, which they obviously are in a quite different sense from any in which Hippothales and Lysis are "friends." This perfectly genuine example of friendship between the two boys is the real starting point of the main discussion. Socrates appeals to them, since each has the other as a firm friend, to explain to him how one man becomes the friend of another. (There is no difficulty in seeing that so far φίλος means "friend" throughout.)

At this point, 212a–213d, there follows a rather puzzling discussion which many interpreters have explained away as a parody of contemporary sophistry. These interpreters may I think be partly correct in guessing Plato's intention; but the argument is worth examination for its own sake. Socrates starts by asking Menexenus "When one man φιλή another, which of them becomes the other's φίλος; is the one who φιλή the φίλος of the φιλούμενος, or is the φιλούμενος the φίλος of the one who φιλή; or doesn't it make any difference?" After our examination of the word φίλος it will be clear what kind of logic-chopping can be made to arise from questions like this. What happens is roughly as follows. Menexenus allows Socrates to interpret him as believing that if one man φιλή another, then both are φίλοι. Menexenus in fact is thinking of friends as always coming in pairs. But isn't it possible, says Socrates, that one man may like another without being liked in return? Ah well, they aren't friends (φίλοι) in that case, says Menexenus. So unless they both like each other, says Socrates, neither is a φίλος. But what about men who are φίλιπποι or φίλοινοι or φιλόσοφοι, asks Socrates. They like all these things—horses, wine, wisdom—without the liking being returned; but surely all these things are φίλα to them (that is to say "valued by them"). Oh yes, says Menexenus. So to become a φίλος all you have to do is to be liked, become φιλούμενος. But in that case if I am liked by a man I myself hate, he becomes my enemy just by being hated by me, and I become his friend by being liked by him even though he is my enemy. But being friends with one's enemy is absurd and impossible. The only remaining alternative then is that one becomes a φίλος not by being liked but by liking; and this leads to the same absurdity: I might like someone who hated me, and that would not make us friends. So now what can we say? Men are not φίλοι because they

It is quite different arguing that a twelve year old may not want what is best for him from arguing (Stoic fashion? or not even that) that τὸ οὐκ εἶναι is an adult's unconscious purpose. Much that Glidden proposes is suggestive, but not to be found in the *Lysis*, and perhaps not in Glidden's form elsewhere in Plato either.

like other men, nor because they are liked by them, nor because they both like and are liked. This is a swift but I think accurate summary of this bewildering passage. Many interpreters have alluded to the play on the active and passive senses of φίλος; von Arnim¹⁶ quite rightly pointed out that there is also play on the reciprocal sense, or some of the statements would not be at all puzzling. Some more recent interpreters have said that there is in fact no proof that those who both like and are liked are not φίλοι, and have argued that the whole passage is designed to prove that reciprocity is necessary in friendship. But Plato does refute this too by showing that objects or persons can be φίλοι, meaning "liked," even if they do not return liking. What in fact happens is that Plato first rejects an explanation of the reciprocal sense of φίλος by pointing out that there is a passive sense, then dismisses the passive sense by playing on the reciprocal sense, and finally dismisses the active sense by the same play on the reciprocal sense. Now this is "antilogical" with a vengeance; but it is really a very adroit piece of logical manipulation of the ambiguity of the word φίλος, so adroit that it is certainly a temptation to suspect that Plato here at least must have had his tongue in his cheek. It could doubtless be argued that construction of paradoxes to exhibit ambiguities was a method invented by Zeno (though this is unlikely to be true, in my opinion). It could be suggested that in the absence of any technical terminology of logic, this kind of paradox-construction was the only way open to Plato of displaying such a notion as that of symmetrical relationship. It might be, then, that we have here a deliberate analysis of the meaning of the word φίλος constructed by Plato himself by offering paraphrases of each sense of φίλος in terms of the participles from the verb φιλεῖν. When Plato says (213c5) εἰ μήτε οἱ φιλοῦντες φίλοι ἔσονται μήτε οἱ φιλούμενοι μήτε οἱ φιλοῦντές τε καὶ φιλούμενοι, what we are to take him to mean is roughly the opposite, namely that φίλοι can mean either φιλοῦντες or φιλούμενοι or φιλοῦντές τε καὶ φιλούμενοι.¹⁷ This would be quite a workable schematic analysis of the three logically distinct senses of φίλος.

It will be better if I say now that I do not myself believe that Plato did mean this passage to be read in this way. If Plato was fully aware of all the ambiguities latent in the word φίλος we would expect him to keep clear of them himself and steer the reader clear of them in the rest of the dialogue. Whether he does so or not we must discover by examining the succeeding discussion, and only then can we return

¹⁶ H. von Arnim, *Platos Jugenddialoge* (Leipzig and Berlin 1914), pp. 42–44.

¹⁷ I. M. Crombie draws back from adopting this view: *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines* (London 1962), Vol. 1, p. 20.

to decide upon this first section. All I want to add now on this passage is this; there is one point of view from which Plato's rejection of all his paraphrases of φίλος is justified. Each paraphrase could stand for φίλος in *one* of its senses; none of them is the equivalent of φίλος in *all* its senses. Now this is the point on which the construction of the passage hangs, even if it is meant ironically. Each paraphrase is rejected because another sense of φίλος can be produced which this paraphrase does not represent. The only reason for this can be an assumption that φίλος has some one basic meaning. If one is setting oneself the aim of obtaining one single equivalent of φίλος in all its senses, then none of these suggestions will do and a negative conclusion is justified. This is certainly Plato's ostensible aim here; and I think it may also be his real aim. However, we must proceed to the rest of the dialogue, which for a short time is less bewildering.

I shall summarize most of the argument fairly briefly, and omit discussion of several interesting but incidental problems. First Plato deals with two suggestions he derives from earlier writers, poets as well as philosophers, about the nature of friendship. For the most part it is clear enough that the section from 213d to 216b tackles τί ἐστὶν τὸ φίλον as a problem about mutual friendship between men. First of all we must see whether men who are like each other—ὅμοιοι—become friends. But clearly bad men cannot be friends with each other; so the suggestion seems only to be half true. But it may have been meant that only good men were ὅμοιοι because only good men are consistent in their behavior. But good men cannot be friends *because* of their likeness to each other (I cannot find any way of acquitting Plato of shifting uses of ὅμοιος hereabouts), since a man who is like another will not be able to do anything for the other which the other cannot do for himself. So perhaps good men are friends not because of their likeness to each other but precisely because of their goodness. But goodness implies self-sufficiency, and the self-sufficient man will not need friends, so even good men will not be friends with each other.

So Socrates tries the other approach, and inquires (215c–216b) whether men who are unlike each other are friends. Hesiod said potter quarrelled with potter, and cosmologists have suggested that opposites attract each other. But friends and enemies are opposites, among others, say the ἀντιλογικοί; and the just man cannot be friends with the unjust man, or the temperate man with the licentious man, or the good man with the bad man. (This only shows that not all opposites are friends, and not that all friends may not be opposites, but Plato rejects "oppositeness" so presumably he was looking for a single sufficient cause of friendship.)

So far Plato has shown that neither good men nor bad men are friends among themselves, nor can a good man and a bad man be friends. Precisely these same paradoxical conclusions about friendship are put into the mouth of Critobulus by Xenophon in *Memorabilia* II; but in Xenophon the arguments used to establish these conclusions are quite different from Plato's. What to infer from that I cannot discuss for the moment.¹⁸ The most important arguments to remember out of those put forward by Plato so far are those showing that good men cannot be friends; firstly, that is, because in so far as they are alike they cannot do each other any service, and secondly because being self-sufficient they have no *need* of any help.

Now if there were *only* good men and bad men in the world, the conclusions so far reached would have exhausted all the possibilities, and friendship would be completely impossible. Socrates is now made to put forward a hunch of his own (216d ff.). He suggests that there are three *γένη*, kinds, the good, the bad, and the neither-good-nor-bad (this last I shall call the "intermediate" for short, though Plato usually uses the full formula). The bad by its nature excludes itself from all relationships; so we must look to relationships between the good and the intermediate. Instances of these are as follows. Whereas the healthy body does not need medicine, the body, which in itself is neither good nor bad, needs medicine, which is good, when it is threatened by disease, which is bad. Similarly—and this is a very famous Platonic tenet—the wise man does not need wisdom so does not philosophize, any more than the man who is completely sunk in ignorance. But the man who is neither already wise nor completely ignorant but can still recognize his own ignorance is the man who pursues wisdom.

These are examples of relationships between the intermediate and the good. These relationships are still described by Plato by use of the word *φίλον*; and at 218b7 Socrates is made to exclaim *νὺν ἄρα . . . παντὸς μᾶλλον ἐξηυρήκαμεν ὃ ἔστιν τὸ φίλον καὶ οὐ*. But there are beginning to be points which should make the cautious reader pause. The example of the sick man's need of help at first suggests that he will strike up a friendship with a doctor, but quite soon it is no longer the doctor who is described as *φίλος* in this example but the art of medicine which is described as *φίλον*. At 217a it is further established that *ὑγίεια*, health, is *φίλον*. This is not a way of saying a

¹⁸ It would be pleasant to be able to believe that Plato and Xenophon were recording direct reminiscences of a discussion with Socrates, but this paradox may have been or become fairly commonplace. It is equally unsafe to conclude that Xenophon had read the *Lysis*, though of course he may very well have done. We have no evidence for the relative dates.

sick man needs to become the friend of a healthy man. This would do him no good at all. What he needs is health itself. Now one cannot be "friends with" health because only persons can be friends and health is not a person. This should be enough to warn us that though Plato is still discussing relationships which can be described in terms of the word *φίλος*, he is no longer describing relationships which are themselves friendships even if it is thought to be implied that they lead to friendships. Two points confirm this. Throughout the discussion as far as 221d–e all the relationships discussed are what may be called "one-sided." Socrates' whole suggestion of a relationship between the good and the intermediate is based on the premise that the good attracts the intermediate. There is nowhere any suggestion that the intermediate exercises a reciprocal attraction on the good; so we may suspect that the relationship Socrates is thinking of is not reciprocal. Finally, perhaps the most startling point of all is that though *οἱ ἀγαθοί* have earlier been shown not to be *φίλοι*, not to be friends, in this section first of all various *ἀγαθά* such as medicine and health are called *φίλα*, and then at 220b7 the suggestion is resumed (in some sense) that *τὸ ἀγαθόν* is *φίλον*. This can only avoid being flatly inconsistent with the earlier conclusion if *φίλον* is now being used in a different sense.

There is an excusable temptation at this point to abandon the *Lysis* altogether as a riotous muddle. But the situation is perhaps less desperate than it may seem. From 216c to 221d the discussion is perfectly clear and unconfused so long as it is read as an attempt to answer the question *τί ἔστιν τὸ φίλον*; taking *φίλον* in its passive sense. This is an inquiry into what objects are *φίλα* in the sense of being valued or pursued or approved. I shall translate the question *τί ἔστιν τὸ φίλον*; in this sense as "what is the object of pursuit," since this I think suits most of the examples Plato mentions. I hope to make sense, then, of the rest of the dialogue by treating it as discussing for most of the time no longer "what is friendship"? but "what is the object of pursuit"? Even though the terminology seems unchanged, the examples discussed force us to read it in this way. I shall return later to the problem of why Plato gives us no warning of his change of topic.

The passage from 218d to 220b is one of considerable interest which I shall have to leave without detailed discussion. Plato suggests that anything that is pursued must be pursued *ἐνεκά του καὶ διὰ τι*—for the sake of something and because of something; that is to say for some further end and on account of some prior cause. This introduces the means/end distinction, and Plato argues that there cannot be an infinite regress of objects pursued as means, but that

some object of pursuit must ultimately be in view as an end. He then attempts a rather alarming linguistic revision by claiming that only the object pursued as an end is *really* "an object of pursuit," whereas the objects said to be pursued as means to an end are only "objects of pursuit" *ῥήματι*, in a manner of speaking. There is however a close parallel to this in the passage at *Gorgias* 467–68, where it is claimed *à propos* of the concept of *βούλεσθαι*, "to want," that we do not *really* want what we only want as a means; we only *really* want what we want as ends and since the only things that are ends are *ἀγαθά*, the only things we can really want are *ἀγαθά*. Plato in the *Lysis* up to 220b develops his notion of the "object really pursued as an end" without telling us what this object is, but then at 220b7 seems to suggest it might be *τὸ ἀγαθόν*. Now various particular *ἀγαθά* have been ruled out because they were only pursued as means (this is *not* the same as in the *Gorgias*), so if some *ἀγαθά* are *not φίλα* but *τὸ ἀγαθόν* is *φίλον* perhaps we have to take *τὸ ἀγαθόν* here to mean the quality of goodness itself as opposed to the good things in which it is present.¹⁹ The only further remark I want to make now about this passage is that Plato states no reason why he should think, as he apparently does, that there is only one object really pursued; his regress argument proves not that there is *only one* end but that there must be *at least one* end.²⁰

The last sections of the dialogue, from 221b to the end, become alarmingly condensed; again I shall have to omit discussion of many of the difficulties. *τὸ ἀγαθόν* is shown not to be the object of pursuit by the device of imagining a world in which there was no evil. In such a world there would be no need to pursue the good; but there would still be objects which were pursued, such as food and drink,

¹⁹ I leave this remark for the time being as it stands. I never intended to follow those who find a fully developed Theory of Forms here. G. Vlastos (*Platonic Studies*, pp. 35–37) has disposed of this view. Terence Irwin, on the other hand (in *Plato's Moral Theory* [Oxford 1977], pp. 92–100), appears to believe that not only a *πρῶτον φίλον* but also a *πρῶτον ἀγαθόν* is implied. That in itself is perhaps plausible, though it is not the case, *contra* Irwin, that Plato in the *Lysis* says that e.g. health is not *good* in itself. But in view of Plato's approach in *Meno* 87d–89a, *Euthydemus* 278e–281e and *Republic* II. 357b–58a, it seems more plausible that for Plato the *πρῶτον ἀγαθόν* would have been *ἐπιστήμη* rather than *εὐδαιμονία*. The difference of *Rep.* 357–358 from Aristotle, *E. N.* I. vii has often been observed. Even *Gorgias* fails to show Plato calling *εὐδαιμονία* the *πρῶτον ἀγαθόν*. Plato perhaps recoiled from using *ἀγαθόν* in a sense in which it was manifestly incompatible with *ὠφέλιμον*. I have argued this in a paper still to be revised. I apologize for brevity here.

²⁰ Aristotle is accused of this same error in *E. N.* I. i and *E. E.* I. vii. In *E. N.* he may be protected by various other arguments, e.g. that for a single science of *πολιτική*.

the desires for which can sometimes be neither good nor bad.²¹ So the real cause of pursuit must be *ἐπιθυμία*, desire; now desire is for what one lacks; one lacks what has been taken away from one; what has been taken away from one is one's own, *οἰκέιον*, so what one desires and therefore what one pursues is that which is one's own, *τὸ οἰκέιον*. At this point Plato suddenly applies this conclusion to the dramatic context and observes that since Menexenus and Lysis are *φίλοι* they must be *οἰκέιοι*. This new turn must rest upon the move from "*τὸ φίλον* is *τὸ οἰκέιον*" to "*οἱ φίλοι* are *οἰκέιοι*"; strict consistency would require us to translate this move as that from "what is pursued is what is one's own" to "people pursued are one's own (possessions)" or perhaps "people who pursue each other belong to each other" (strictly speaking, "as possessions"). But in fact of course *οἱ φίλοι εἰσὶν οἰκέιοι* would be a normal Greek expression for "friends have some affinity to each other," probably implying some congeniality or matching of temperament. Now Plato no doubt meant this to be his conclusion; certainly he goes on to suggest that *οἰκειότης* was such that if one person was attracted to another by *οἰκειότης*, then since *οἰκειότης* is necessarily symmetrical the attraction must be mutual. But the method by which Plato drags in this conclusion seems to be no better than a step from "*τὸ φίλον* is *οἰκέιον*" to "*οἱ φίλοι* are *οἰκέιοι*" in which he changes not only the gender but also the sense of both the words *φίλος* and *οἰκέιος*. In particular the sense of *οἰκέιος* in which a possession which has been taken away from one is *οἰκέιον* = "one's own," is not normally a symmetrical sense: my possessions belong to me but I do not belong to them. So this part of the argument really looks like a not strictly logical attempt by Plato to return from the discussion of pursuit, during which the notion of *τὸ οἰκέιον* has entered in, to the discussion of friendship, where *τὸ οἰκέιον* will provide an attractive solution if taken in a different sense.²² I shall return to discuss this second change of topic. For the moment let us finish the summary of the dialogue: the suggestion that *οἰκέιοι* are friends is tried out in two ways, firstly by equating *οἰκέιοι* with *ὅμοιοι*; but we already know that *ὅμοιοι* cannot be friends; then *οἰκέιοι* are equated with *ἀγαθοί*; but we thought we had proved that *ἀγαθοί* could not be friends either.²³ So, says Socrates, here we are, three

²¹ And sometimes (presumably) not waiting to be caused by the bad.

²² Stoic theories of *οἰκείωσις* seem to trade on more than one sense of *οἰκέιος*, probably varying between symmetrical and non-symmetrical.

²³ There is very possibly also a rapid suggestion, not formally refuted, that the good is *οἰκέιον* to the intermediate. But if Plato took this seriously, he would have been left with the continuing problem about reciprocity if he wished to apply this sense of *οἰκειότης* to the explanation of friendship. C. O. Brink, "Plato on the Natural" (*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 [1958], pp. 193–98) and Glidden fail to see

friends, and we don't know what a friend is. οὐπω δὲ ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ φίλος οἰοί τε ἐγενόμεθα ἐξευρεῖν. This is the regular conclusion to this set of dialogues. Here the only softening of the failure is what may be a hint that Plato thought something more could be done, where Socrates says "I intended to bring one of the older people present into the discussion" (223a1). But I am not inclined to believe that Plato is hinting that any adult reader can find an easy solution to all the problems of the dialogue. Plato has left himself and us with real problems.

In examining the course of the argument from 213d to the end I have suggested that Plato is discussing two distinct topics: firstly mutual friendship between men, and secondly, the pursuit by men of things such as wisdom and health, or later, of food and drink. Plato never gives any explicit indication that he thinks of himself as changing at any point from one topic to another. He starts quite clearly with friendship, but only the examples given at 217a–b and 218a reveal that he has moved to the topic of "pursuit"; and the final return to the topic of friendship is extremely abrupt. This is confusing for the English reader; and I am not sure that it was any easier for a contemporary Greek reader, who could not clear things up by translating the various senses of φίλος into different English words. But if we grant that Plato may have expected his readers to follow all this, did Plato see a connection between his two topics? Is "pursuit" meant to be closely relevant to friendship, or is this just an informal chat which casually crosses from one topic to another without insisting on logical relevance? I fancy it would be more pleasing to find a unity of aim throughout the dialogue.

Here it will be helpful to turn to Aristotle. Aristotle in *E. E.* VII and *E. N.* VIII and IX discusses friendship with a wealth of sociological and psychological observation which is on a completely different level from anything Plato was aiming at in the short compass of the *Lysis*. But throughout his discussions Aristotle works rigorously within the framework of a logical analysis which he presents at the beginning of each of the versions. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* this framework is stated at 1155b17–1156a6. Aristotle observes briskly τάχα δ' ἂν γένοιτο περὶ αὐτῶν . . . φανερόν γνωρισθέντος τοῦ φιλητοῦ: the problems about friendship might be cleared up if we discovered what it is that is φιλητόν, what it is that is liked or approved. The qualities which attract liking, φίλησις, are τὸ ἀγαθόν, τὸ ἡδύ and τὸ χρήσιμον. But τὸ χρήσιμον is only a means to one of the other two qualities, so it is

that Plato usually *rejects* the view that τὸ οἰκείον is ἀγαθόν (though not, perhaps, the view that τὸ ἀγαθόν is in some sense οἰκείον).

the good and pleasant which attract liking as ends in themselves—*φιλητὰ ἂν εἴη τὰγαθόν τε καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ὡς τέλη*. Then, to borrow a sentence from the Eudemian version, “just as in the case of inanimate objects we can like a thing for each of these qualities, so we can like a man for each of these qualities” (1236a10–12). Aristotle is comparing our *φίλησις* of impersonal objects with our *φίλησις* of men; *τὸ φιλητόν*, what attracts liking, includes the same qualities both in things and in men.²⁴ Then, returning to the Nicomachean version, “there being these three qualities which cause men to like what they like, one does not talk about friendship in the case of liking inanimate objects, because there is no returned liking. . . . It is where good will (*εὖνοια*) of person to person is mutual that there is friendship” (*εὖνοιαν γὰρ ἐν ἀντιπεπονθόσι φιλίαν εἶναι*, 1155a38). Aristotle thus has the following account of friendship; we like men for the same reason that we like things, because they have certain qualities. But things cannot return our liking for them, whereas it is precisely this mutual and returned “liking” which constitutes friendship between men. So to explain the way in which friendships can spring up and be maintained we must always investigate separately what reason causes each one individually of a pair of friends to like the other. Explaining why one man alone likes another does not show grounds for talking of a friendship, unless the second also has a reason for liking the first. There must always be *φίλησις* on both sides; each party separately must be *φιλητός* to the other.

This analysis of Aristotle’s will give us a helpful means of assessing Plato’s discussion. Aristotle investigated *τὸ φιλητόν* in both persons and things before going on to concentrate on friendships between persons: he believed in fact that *φίλοι*, friends, were pairs of *φιλητοί*. Now *τὸ φιλητόν* is in fact Aristotle’s equivalent for Plato’s *τὸ φίλον*-passive. Aristotle (in *E. N.*, though not yet in *E. E.*) has used, and perhaps indeed coined, an unambiguously passive verbal adjective from *φιλεῖν*, and he has explained carefully the connection between *τὸ φιλητόν* and *φίλοι* in the sense of “friends.” Plato has not explained any logical connections and has employed shifting senses of the same word *φίλον*; but if we apply Aristotle’s logical analysis to the *Lysis*, we can begin to see what may have been in Plato’s mind in discussing *τὸ φίλον*-passive. Aristotle thought *φίλοι* (friends) were *φιλητοί*; Plato may have thought similarly that *φίλοι* (friends) were *φίλοι* in the passive sense. So perhaps Plato made a general investigation of *τὸ φίλον* (passive) because he had in mind the same comparison as Aristotle used between things that were *φίλα* and men who were

²⁴ *E. E.* does not yet have the helpful, because clearly passive, form *φιλητόν*.

φίλοι (passive). This would explain why so much of the *Lysis* is about the pursuit of things that are φίλα (passive).

But here we must remember that Aristotle did not identify φίλοι as φιλητοί without qualification; φίλοι are pairs of men of whom each has a quality which makes him φιλητός to the other. Is this point in Aristotle's analysis also present in Plato's mind? The answer I think here must be no. The suggestion Plato sets out at the greatest length about what might be φίλον (passive) is the theory that the good will be φίλον-passive to the intermediate; he mentions this as applied to things. Perhaps by Aristotle's comparison this could be applied to men, so that an intermediate man would be attracted to a good man. But Aristotle would have asked: very well, and how is the good man attracted to the intermediate man? To which Plato would have no answer, since on the one hand only goodness is attractive, and on the other the man who is already good is self-sufficient. Plato has not, in his suggestion that τὸ ἀγαθόν is φίλον to the intermediate, made any provision which would allow this one-way attraction to become an element in a mutual friendship.

Now it may be that Plato was not after all investigating τὸ φίλον (passive) with a view to explaining τὸ φίλον = friendship; but this destroys the unity of purpose which we are trying to find in the dialogue. It seems more likely that Plato does have part of Aristotle's later framework in mind, that is to say he thought of φίλοι "friends" as φίλοι (passive), but that he did not keep in mind, as Aristotle did, that friendship had to be based on mutual attraction and reciprocated liking.

It looks very much as though Plato had not seen that this further provision of Aristotle's was necessary because he had not attended to the fact that φίλος = "a friend" was a different notion and a different sense of φίλος from φίλος-passive. He rested on the assumption that "friends" were φίλοι in exactly the same sense as objects could be φίλα, and that nothing more was needed for the explanation of one sense of φίλος than for the other. In view of the fact that the word is the same in Greek, and also in view of the absence of any recognition of the real dangers of ambiguity anywhere in Greek thought before the *Sophist*, this is perhaps not too surprising. So insofar as I have suggested Plato was making Aristotle's assumption that friends were φιλητοί, or for Plato φίλοι-passive, he was doing this unconsciously because he had never seen the distinction, not as Aristotle did, in order consciously to link friendship with the attraction denoted by the verb of φιλεῖν.

At this point we must recall one problem that was left hanging in the air. We must return to the question raised about the initial section

of the discussion at 212b–213d. It might perhaps be argued that this initial discussion is a deliberate analysis by Plato of the distinct senses of the word *φίλος*, and that this was meant to act as a clue to the reader by which he might follow the changes of topic and the interrelations between the arguments in the rest of the dialogue. It might be maintained that in suggesting one identification of *φίλοι* as *φιλοῦντές τε καὶ φιλούμενοι* Plato was showing himself fully conscious of the symmetrical sense of *φίλος* and the reciprocity of friendship. The rest of the dialogue would then be intended for the careful reader to sort out for himself; the value of the various suggestions in application to different topics would be clear after brief thought.

In answer to this it can be said that the only reader to have used the dialogue in this way appears to have been Aristotle. If these were Plato's intentions, many learned commentators have missed the point completely; only a few²⁵ have realized the full extent of the ambiguity of *φίλος*, and none, even if they saw some of the elements of ambiguity illuminated in 212b–213d, have applied what they learned there to distinguishing the topics of the rest of the dialogue. Those scholars who have succeeded in discovering the different senses of *φίλος* underlying the discussion have very largely been following Aristotle. If Plato did intend the Aristotelian framework to be discovered by his readers out of his "ironical" construction of a casual conversation, then surely (to apply R. Robinson's comment on this kind of view of Plato's early dialogues) "the degree of irony thus attributed to him is superhuman."²⁶ If this was irony it took an Aristotle to see behind it. If it is argued that a contemporary Greek reader would have been much more sensitive to Plato's usage of *φίλος* than a modern interpreter can be, against that must be weighed the advantage to a modern interpreter of being forced to face the difficulties of translating *φίλος* into different words in his own language corresponding to its various senses; furthermore modern interpreters should be in general much more conscious than the Greeks were of the existence of dangers to language and philosophy lying in ambiguity. The difficulties of disentangling the strands of the *Lysis* might very well have been greater to the average Greek reader than to us today, even supposing the average Greek reader was likely in the first place to think of words as able to have more than one sense. Finally, if Plato was being ironical in first distinguishing the senses of *φίλος* and

²⁵ Notably von Arnim (above, note 16).

²⁶ R. Robinson, "Plato's Consciousness of Fallacy," *Mind* 51 (1942), pp. 97 ff. = *Essays in Greek Philosophy* (Oxford 1969), p. 32. My arguments here owe much to his. Other views are, I think, implausible, however disappointing this may be. But there are degrees of difference between unconscious transitions and radical confusions.

then leaving it to the reader to follow the thread of the dialogue without further signposting, it must be said that he constructed a highly teasing maze for the purpose of this exercise. In ordinary non-philosophical Greek contexts anything so elaborately puzzling as the *Lysis* must have been rare.

The alternative interpretation of the connection between 212b–213d and the rest of the dialogue is that Plato genuinely thought his first attempt puzzling and unhelpful, and rejected all the suggestions contained in it; he then proceeded to discuss the question *τί ἔστιν τὸ φίλον*; with more attention to the facts of the matter and less to what he suspected were purely verbal quirks. Even if Plato had seen that 212b–213d was a sound analysis of the ambiguity of the word *φίλος*, he might have thought it of no importance. In the *Euthydemus*, when the ambiguity of *μανθάνω* has first been played upon by the two sophists and then explained by Socrates, Socrates goes on to observe (278b2) *ταῦτα δὴ τῶν μαθημάτων* (scil. *περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος* (277e4) *παιδιά ἐστιν . . . παιδιὰν δὲ λέγω διὰ ταῦτα, ὅτι εἰ καὶ πολλά τις ἢ καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα μάθοι, τὰ μὲν πράγματα οὐδὲν ἂν μᾶλλον εἰδείη πῆ ἔχει, προσπαίξειν δὲ οἷός τ' ἂν εἴη τοῖς ἀνθρώποις διὰ τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων διαφορὰν ὑποσκελίζων καὶ ἀνατρέπων*. Discussion of the application of words is merely an entertainment, *παιδιά*, and does not show us *τὰ πράγματα πῆ ἔχει*, how things are. Plato may similarly in the *Lysis* too have ruled out the possibility of getting any help from verbal inquiry, and proceeded at 213e to the serious task of finding out *τί ἔστιν τὸ φίλον*; in the sense of discovering as a matter of empirical fact what the phenomenon of friendship consists in. 212b–213d, quite apart from the unsatisfactoriness of its “antilogical” results, was only an attempt at purely verbal definition, at attaching the name *φίλος* to one or other of three already recognized classes of men. Plato may well have thought the real task was not to bother about the application of labels to phenomena already distinguished, but to pursue the “real” definition of the factors which in practice create friendships. If he discriminated between 212b–213d and the rest of the dialogue in this way, it is possible to understand how he may completely have disregarded the genuinely important results of the first inquiry in his attack on the second.

In rejecting his first attempt at definition as purely verbal and unimportant, Plato missed what might have shown him that there were two separate phenomena to be investigated in his subsequent inquiry, which could either be completely separated or given a systematic relation to each other, but could not be completely assimilated. One-way pursuit may be taken as a basic element in friendship, but is not in itself a sufficient description of friendship, and in some

cases may be of a kind which does not lead to friendship at all. In his search for the one basic element making anything φίλον, Plato's earnest desire to be satisfied with no mere partial explanation led him to miss a difference which exists in the phenomena as well as in the words. As a consequence of this difference no one simple explanation will be found, but either two separate explanations or one complex explanation such as Aristotle's are necessary.

Now I might perhaps restate my view that Plato's aporetic dialogues are not aporetic purely as a device of irony, but as a result of real difficulties Plato got into over definition. His difficulties, as I hope has emerged, are in the *Lysis* at least due to his not realizing the dangers of ambiguity in his *definiendum*. I suspect this is also one source of his difficulties over τὸ σῶφρον in *Charmides*, τὸ ὄσιον in the *Euthyphro* and over τὸ καλόν in *Hippias Major*.²⁷ I would suggest that Plato on the best philosophical grounds actually led himself away from any chance of recognizing ambiguity by his own admirable insistence on not accepting partial definitions. It is true that a definition covering only a few cases of a general concept is inadequate; Plato therefore was anxious to obtain comprehensive definitions in terms of a single necessary and sufficient condition expressed by a statement of equivalence. His explicit statement of this requirement of his methodology in the early dialogues is found at *Euthyphro* 6d-7a, where Socrates insists that all ὄσια must have something in common; μὴ ἰδέα . . . τὰ ὄσια ὄσια, and accepts Euthyphro's suggestion that this ἰδέα is τὸ τοῖς θεοῖς προσφιλές only if this gives an equivalence such that ὄσιον ≡ τοῖς θεοῖς προσφιλές. Such a requirement is difficult enough to meet for a word having a wide range of strength and weakness of meaning within a single logical sense, but quite impossible to satisfy for a word such as φίλος which has several senses each having a logically distinct application. There are indeed moments when Plato seems to hanker after not merely a single analysis, but a single exact synonym for any *definiendum*.

This will no doubt have seemed an unduly arid exposition of nothing but the logical confusions of a dialogue which contains a number of interesting substantial arguments. I can perhaps add briefly that underlying the logical confusions of the *Lysis* Plato seems to have had a substantial difficulty about the nature of the good. Here of course we have to make subjective guesses about which of his points he placed most weight on; but at the final twist of the argument, where Plato says "we thought we had disproved the notion that good

²⁷ It may well be that ὄσιον, σῶφρον and καλόν are ambiguous in very different ways from φίλον (and from each other).

men could be friends," it has often been guessed that Plato thought it really ought to be possible to prove that good men were friends. This is quite likely; Aristotle certainly thought the highest friendship was that between good men. But Plato has earlier in the dialogue spent more time than on any other suggestion developing the idea that the good is pursued by men because they need it, not having yet achieved it. This too, although dismissed here, seems to be a serious belief of Plato's; men for Plato only need to realize that the true object of *all* their desires is none other than the good itself, and then they will pursue this one true aim. But in this case Plato was in a real dilemma, since basing pursuit of the good on the need for it felt by the not-yet-good is precisely a theory which implies the self-sufficiency of the already good, and so precludes friendship between good men. I hope you will have seen that Aristotle took the logical framework for his theory of friendship from the *Lysis* (not without some clarification); on points of substance Aristotle chose to believe in the friendship of good men at the cost of having to explain at some length why the good man is not self-sufficient. But Plato was at all times anxious to prove that our desire for the good was based on our real natural need for it, and furthermore that attainment to the good would be the full satisfaction of all our desires. This placed him in the real, and not "ironical," dilemma, of not being able to believe that men who had achieved goodness could continue to need friends. Confused though the argumentation of the *Lysis* may be, there are underlying it real problems about the part friendship can play in man's pursuit of the good.

University of Edinburgh

