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Lysis 1

Lysis

Socrates relates a conversation he had in a wrestling-school

I was making my way from the Academy straight to the Lyceum, by the road outside the town wall,—just under the wall; and when I reached the little gate that leads to the spring of Panops, [1] I chanced there upon Hippothales, son of Hieronymus, and Ctesippus of Paeania, and some other youths with them, standing in a group together. Then Hippothales, as he saw me approaching, said: Socrates, whither away, and whence? From the Academy, I replied, on my way straight to the Lyceum. Come over here, he said, straight to us. You will not put in here? But you may as well. Where do you mean? I asked; and what is your company? Here, he said, showing me there, just opposite the wall, a sort of enclosure and a door standing open. We pass our time there, he went on; not only we ourselves, but others besides,—a great many, and handsome.

And what, pray, is this place, and what your pastime? A wrestling school, he said, of recent construction; and our pastime chiefly consists of discussions, in which we should be happy to let you have a share. That is very good of you, I said; and who does the teaching there? Your own comrade, he replied, and supporter, Miccus. Upon my word, I said, he is no slight person, but a qualified professor. Then will you please come in with us, he said, so as to see for yourself the company we have there? I should be glad to hear first on what terms I am to enter, and which is the handsome one. Each of us, he replied, has a different fancy, Socrates. Well, and which is yours, Hippothales? Tell me that. At this

[1] i.e., of Hermes, the "all-seeing"

question he blushed; so I said: Ah, Hippothales, son of Hieronymus, you need not trouble to tell me whether you are in love with somebody or not: for I know you are not only in love, but also far advanced already in your passion. In everything else I may be a poor useless creature, but there is one gift that I have somehow from heaven,—to be able to recognize quickly a lover or a beloved. When he heard this, he blushed much more than ever. Then Ctesippus remarked: Quite charming, the way you blush, Hippothales, and shrink from telling Socrates the name; yet, if he spends but a little time with you, he will find you a regular torment, as he hears you repeat it again and again. He has deafened our ears, I can tell you, Socrates, by cramming them with

"Lysis": let him be a trifle in liquor, and as likely as not we start out of our sleep fancying we hear the name of Lysis. The descriptions he gives us in conversation, though dreadful enough, are not so very bad: it is when he sets about inundating us with his poems and prose compositions. More dreadful than all, he actually sings about his favorite in an extraordinary voice, which we have the trial of hearing. And now, at a question from you, he blushes! Lysis apparently, I said, is somebody quite young: this I infer from the fact that I did not recognize the name when I heard it. That is because they do not usually call him by his name, he replied; he still goes by his paternal title, [2] as his father is so very well known. You must, I am sure, be anything but ignorant of the boy's appearance: that alone would be enough to know him by. Let me hear, I said, whose son he is. The eldest son, he replied, of Democrates of Aexone.

Ah well, I said, Hippothales, what an altogether noble and gallant love you have discovered there! Now please go on and give me a performance like those that you give your friends here, so that I may know whether you understand what a lover ought to say of his favorite to his face or to others. Do you attach any weight, Socrates, he asked, to anything you have heard this fellow say? Tell me, I said; do you deny being in love with the person he mentions? Not I, he replied; but I do deny that I make poems and compositions on my favorite. He is in a bad way, said Ctesippus; why, he raves like a madman! Then I remarked: Hippothales, I do not want to hear your verses, or any ode that you may have indited to the youth; I only ask for their purport, that I may know your manner of dealing with your favorite. I expect this fellow will tell you, he replied: he has an accurate knowledge and recollection

[2] i.e., "son of Democrates" (see below)

of them, if there is any truth in what he says of my having dinned them so constantly in his ears. Quite so, on my soul, said Ctesippus; and a ridiculous story it is too, Socrates. To be a lover, and to be singularly intent on one's boy, yet to have nothing particular to tell him that a mere boy could not say, is surely ridiculous: but he only writes and relates things that the whole city sings of, recalling Democrates and the boy's grandfather Lysis and all his ancestors, with their wealth and the horses they kept, and their victories at Delphi, the Isthmus, and Nemea, [3] with chariot-teams and coursers, and, in addition, even hoarier antiquities than these. Only two days ago he was recounting to us in some poem of his the entertainment of Hercules,—how on account of his kinship with Hercules their forefather welcomed the hero, being himself the offspring of Zeus and of the daughter of their deme's founder; such old wives' tales, and many more of the sort, Socrates,—these are the things he tells and trolls, while compelling us to be his audience. When I heard this I said: Oh, you ridiculous Hippothales, do you compose and chant a triumph song on yourself, before you have won your victory? It is not on myself, Socrates, he replied, that I either compose or chant it. You think not, I said. Then what is the truth of it? he asked. Most certainly, I replied, it is you to whom these songs refer.

For if you prevail on your favorite, and he is such as you describe, all that you have spoken and sung will be so much glory to you, and a veritable eulogy upon your triumph in having secured such a favorite as that: whereas if he eludes your grasp, the higher the terms of your eulogy of your favorite, the greater will seem to be the charms and virtues you have lost, and you will be ridiculed accordingly. Hence anyone who deals wisely in love-matters, my friend, does not praise his beloved until he prevails, for fear of what the future may have in store for him. And besides, these handsome boys, when so praised and extolled, become full of pride and haughtiness: do you not think so? I do, he said. And then, the haughtier they are, the harder grows the task of capturing them? Yes, apparently. And what do you think of a hunter who should scare away his quarry in hunting and make it harder to catch? Clearly he would be a poor one. And hence to use speech and song, not for charming but for driving wild, would be gross fatuity, would it not? I think so. Then take care, Hippothales, not to make yourself guilty of all these things by your verse-making; and yet

[3]The Pythian Games were held at Delphi, the Isthmian near Corinth, and the Nemean at Nemea, between Corinth and Argos.

I fancy you will not like to allow that a man who damages himself by poetry can be a good poet, so long as he is damaging to himself. On my soul, no, he said; of course it would be most absurd. But this is the very reason, Socrates, why I impart my feelings to you, and ask you for any useful advice you can give as to what conversation or conduct will help to endear one to one's favorite. That is not an easy thing to tell, I replied; but if you will agree to get him to have a talk with me, I daresay I could show you an example of the conversation you should hold with him, instead of those things that your friends say you speak and sing. There is no difficulty about that, he said. If you will go in with Ctesippus here, and take a seat and talk, I think he will come to you of his own accord; he is singularly fond of listening, Socrates, and besides, they are keeping the Hermaea, [4] so that the youths and boys are all mingled together. So he will come to you but if he does not, Ctesippus is intimate with him, as being a cousin of Menexenus; for Lysis has chosen Menexenus for his particular friend. So let Ctesippus call him if you find that he does not come of himself. That is what I must do, I said. Whereupon I took Ctesippus with me into the wrestling school, and the others came after us. When we got inside, we found that the boys had performed the sacrifice in the place and, as the ceremonial business was now almost over, they were all playing at knuckle-bones and wearing their finest attire. Most of them were playing in the court out-of-doors; but some were at a game of odd-and-even in a corner of the undressing room, with a great lot of knuckle-bones which they drew from little baskets; and there were others standing about them and looking on.

Among these was Lysis: he stood among the boys and youths with a garland on his head, a distinguished figure, deserving not merely the name of well-favored, but also of well-made and well-bred. As for us, we went and sat apart on the opposite side—for it was quiet there—and started some talk amongst ourselves. The result was that Lysis ever and anon turned round to observe us, and was obviously eager to join us. For a while, however, he hesitated, being too shy to approach us alone; till Menexenus stepped in for a moment from his game in the court and, on seeing me and Ctesippus, came to take a seat beside us. When Lysis saw him, he came along too and sat down with Menexenus. Then all the others came to us also; and I must add that Hippothales, when he saw a good many of them standing there, stood so as to be screened by them, in a position where he thought Lysis would not catch

[4] The festival of Hermes, who was specially honored in wrestling schools.

sight of him, as he feared that he might irritate him; in this way he stood by and listened. Then I, looking at Menexenus, asked him: Son of Demophon, which is the elder of you two? It is a point in dispute between us, he replied. Then you must also be at variance, I said, as to which is the nobler. Yes, to be sure, he said. And moreover, which is the more beautiful, likewise. This made them both laugh. But of course I shall not ask, I said, which of you is the wealthier; for you are friends, are you not? Certainly we are, they replied. And, you know, friends are said to have everything in common, so that here at least there will be no difference between you, if what you say of your friendship is true. They agreed. After that I was proceeding to ask them which was the juster and wiser of the two, when I was interrupted by somebody who came and fetched away Menexenus, saying that the wrestling-master was calling him: I understood that he was taking some part in the rites. So he went off; and then I asked Lysis: I suppose, Lysis, your father and mother are exceedingly fond of you? Yes, to be sure, he replied. Then they would like you to be as happy as possible? Yes, of course. Do you consider that a man is happy when enslaved and restricted from doing everything he desires? Not I, on my word, he said. Then if your father and mother are fond of you, and desire to see you happy, it is perfectly plain that they are anxious to secure your happiness. They must be, of course, he said. Hence they allow you to do what you like, and never scold you, or hinder you from doing what you desire? Yes, they do, Socrates, I assure you: they stop me from doing a great many things.

How do you mean? I said: they wish you to be happy, and yet hinder you from doing what you like? But answer me this: suppose you desire to ride in one of your father's chariots and hold the reins in some race; they will not allow you, but will prevent you? That is so, to be sure, he said; they will not allow me. But whom would they allow? There is a driver, in my father's pay. What do you say? A hireling, whom they trust rather than you, so that he can do whatever he pleases with the horses; and they pay him besides a salary for doing that! Why, of course, he said. Well, but they trust you with the control of the mule-cart, and if you wanted to take the whip and lash the team, they would let you? Nothing of the sort, he said. Why, I asked, is nobody allowed to lash them? Oh yes, he said, the muleteer. Is he a slave, or free? A slave, he replied. So it seems that they value a slave more highly than you, their son, and entrust him rather than you with their property, and allow him to do what he likes, while preventing you? And now there is one thing more you must tell me. Do they let you control your

own self, or will they not trust you in that either? Of course they do not, he replied. But some one controls you? Yes, he said, my tutor [5] here. Is he a slave? Why, certainly; he belongs to us, he said. What a strange thing, I exclaimed; a free man controlled by a slave! But how does this tutor actually exert his control over you? By taking me to school, I suppose, he replied. And your schoolmasters, can it be that they also control you? I should think they do! Then quite a large number of masters and controllers are deliberately set over you by your father. But when you come home to your mother, she surely lets you do what you like, that she may make you happy, either with her wool or her loom, when she is weaving? I take it she does not prevent you from handling her batten, or her comb, or any other of her wool-work implements. At this he laughed and said: I promise you, Socrates, not only does she prevent me, but I should get a beating as well, if I laid hands on them. Good heavens! I said; can it be that you have done your father or mother some wrong? On my word, no, he replied.

Well, what reason can they have for so strangely preventing you from being happy and doing what you like? Why do they maintain you all day long in constant servitude to somebody, so that, in a word, you do hardly a single thing that you desire? And thus, it would seem, you get no advantage from all your great possessions— nay, anyone else controls them rather than you—nor from your own person, though so well-born, which is also shepherded and managed by another; while you, Lysis, control nobody, and do nothing that you desire. It is because I am not yet of age, Socrates, he said. That can hardly be the hindrance, son of Democrates, since there is a certain amount, I imagine, that your father and mother entrust to you without waiting until you come of age. For when they want some reading or writing done for them, it is you, I conceive, whom they appoint to do it before any others of the household. Is it not so? Quite so, he replied. And you are free there to choose which letter you shall write first and which second, and you have a like choice in reading. And, I suppose, when you take your lyre, neither your father nor your mother prevents you from tightening or slackening what string you please, or from using your finger or your plectrum at will: or do they prevent you? Oh, no. Then whatever can be the reason, Lysis, why they do not prevent you here, while in the matters we were just mentioning they do? I suppose, he said, because I understand these things, but not those others. Very well, I said, my

[5] The *παιδαγωγός* was a trusted slave who was appointed to attend on a boy out of school hours and to have a general control over his conduct and industry.

excellent friend: so it is not your coming of age that your father is waiting for, as the time for entrusting you with everything; but on the day when he considers you to have a better intelligence than himself, he will entrust you with himself and all that is his. Yes, I think so, he said. Very well, I went on, but tell me, does not your neighbor observe the same rule as your father towards you? Do you think he will entrust you with the management of his house, as soon as he considers you to have a better idea of its management than himself, or will he direct it himself? I should say he would entrust it to me. Well then, do you not think that the Athenians will entrust you with their affairs, when they perceive that you have sufficient intelligence? I do. Ah, do let me ask this, I went on: what, pray, of the Great King? Would he allow his eldest son, heir-apparent to the throne of Asia, to put what he chose into the royal stew, or would he prefer us to do it, supposing we came before him and convinced him that we had a better notion than his son of preparing a tasty dish? Clearly he would prefer us, he said. And he would not allow the prince to put in the smallest bit, whereas he would let us have our way even if we wanted to put in salt by the handful. Why, of course.

Again, if his son has something the matter with his eyes, would he let him meddle with them himself, if he considered him to be no doctor, or would he prevent him? He would prevent him. But if he supposed us to have medical skill, he would not prevent us, I imagine, even though we wanted to pull the eyes open and sprinkle them with ashes, so long as he believed our judgement to be sound. That is true. So he would entrust us, rather than himself or his son, with all his other affairs besides, wherever he felt we were more skilled than they? Necessarily, he said, Socrates. The case then, my dear Lysis, I said, stands thus: with regard to matters in which we become intelligent, every one will entrust us with them, whether Greeks or foreigners, men or women and in such matters we shall do as we please, and nobody will care to obstruct us. Nay, not only shall we ourselves be free and have control of others in these affairs, but they will also belong to us, since we shall derive advantage from them; whereas in all those for which we have failed to acquire intelligence, so far will anyone be from permitting us to deal with them as we think fit, that everybody will do his utmost to obstruct us— not merely strangers, but father and mother and any more intimate person than they; and we on our part shall be subject to others in such matters, which will be no concern of ours, since we shall draw no advantage from them. Do you agree to this account of the case? I agree. Then will anyone count us his friends or have

any affection for us in those matters for which we are useless? Surely not, he said. So now, you see, your father does not love you, nor does anyone love anyone else, so far as one is useless. Apparently not, he said. Then if you can become wise, my boy, everybody will be your friend, every one will be intimate with you, since you will be useful and good; otherwise, no one at all, not your father, nor your mother, nor your intimate connections, will be your friends. Now is it possible, Lysis, to have a high notion of yourself in matters of which you have as yet no notion? Why, how can I? he said. Then if you are in need of a teacher, you have as yet no notion of things? True. Nor can you have a great notion of yourself, if you are still notionless. Upon my word, Socrates, he said, I do not see how I can. On hearing him answer this, I glanced at Hippothales, and nearly made a blunder, for it came into my mind to say: This is the way, Hippothales, in which you should talk to your favorite, humbling and reducing him, instead of puffing him up and spoiling him, as you do now.

Well, I noticed that he was in an agony of embarrassment at what we had been saying, and I remembered how, in standing near, he wished to hide himself from Lysis. So I checked myself and withheld this remark. In the meantime, Menexenus came back, and sat down by Lysis in the place he had left on going out. Then Lysis, in a most playful, affectionate manner, unobserved by Menexenus, said softly to me: Socrates, tell Menexenus what you have been saying to me. To which I replied: You shall tell it him yourself, Lysis; for you gave it your closest attention. I did, indeed, he said. Then try, I went on, to recollect it as well as you can, so that you tell him the whole of it clearly: but if you forget any of it, mind that you ask me for it again when next you meet me. I will do so, Socrates, he said, by all means, I assure you. But tell him something else, that I may hear it too, until it is time to go home. Well, I must do so, I said, since it is you who bid me. But be ready to come to my support, in case Menexenus attempts to refute me. You know what a keen disputant he is. Yes, on my word, very keen; that is why I want you to have a talk with him. So that I may make myself ridiculous? I said. No, no, indeed, he replied; I want you to trounce him. How can I? I asked. It is not easy, when the fellow is so formidable—a pupil of Ctesippus. And here—do you not see?—is Ctesippus himself. Take no heed of anyone, Socrates, he said; just go on and have a talk with him. I must comply, I said. Now, as these words passed between us,—What is this feast, said Ctesippus, that you two are having by yourselves, without allowing us a share in your talk? Well, well, I replied, we must give you a share. My

friend here fails to understand something that I have been saying, but tells me he thinks Menexenus knows, and he urges me to question him. Why not ask him then? said he. But I am going to, I replied. Now please answer, Menexenus, whatever question I may ask you. There is a certain possession that I have desired from my childhood, as every one does in his own way. One person wants to get possession of horses, another dogs, another money, and another distinctions: of these things I reck little, but for the possession of friends I have quite a passionate longing, and would rather obtain a good friend than the best quail or cock in the world; yes, and rather, I swear, than any horse or dog. I believe, indeed, by the Dog, that rather than all Darius's gold I would choose to gain a dear comrade—far sooner than I would Darius himself, so fond I am of my comrades.

Accordingly, when I see you and Lysis together, I am quite beside myself, and congratulate you on being able, at such an early age, to gain this possession so quickly and easily; since you, Menexenus, have so quickly and surely acquired his friendship, and he likewise yours: whereas I am so far from acquiring such a thing, that I do not even know in what way one person becomes a friend of another, and am constrained to ask you about this very point, in view of your experience. Now tell me: when one person loves another, which of the two becomes friend of the other— the loving of the loved, or the loved of the loving? Or is there no difference? There is none, he replied, in my opinion. How is that? I said; do you mean that both become friends mutually, when there is only one loving the other? Yes, I think so, he replied. But I ask you, is it not possible for one loving not to be loved by him whom he loves? It is. But again, may he not be even hated while loving? This, I imagine, is the sort of thing that lovers do sometimes seem to incur with their favorites: they love them with all their might, yet they feel either that they are not loved in return, or that they are actually hated. Or do you not think this is true? Very true, he replied. Now in such a case, I went on, the one loves and the other is loved? Yes. Which of the two, then, is a friend of the other? Is the loving a friend of the loved, whether in fact he is loved in return or is even hated, or is the loved a friend of the loving? Or again, is neither of them in such a case friend of the other, if both do not love mutually? At any rate, he said, it looks as if this were so. So you see, we now hold a different view from what we held before. At first we said that if one of them loved, both were friends: but now, if both do not love,

neither is a friend. It looks like it, he said. So there is no such thing as a friend for the lover who is not loved in return. Apparently not. And so we find no horse-lovers where the horses do not love in return, no quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, or sport-lovers on such terms, nor any lovers of wisdom if she returns not their love. Or does each person love these things, while yet failing to make friends of them, and was it a lying poet who said—"Happy to have your children as friends, and your trampling horses,Scent-snuffing hounds, and a host when you travel abroad?"*Solon 21.2.* I do not think so, he said. But do you think he spoke the truth? Yes.

Then the loved object is a friend to the lover, it would seem, Menexenus, alike whether it loves or hates: for instance, new-born children, who have either not begun to love, or already hate, if punished by their mother or their father, are yet at that very moment, and in spite of their hate, especially and pre-eminently friends to their parents. I think, he said, that is the case. Then this argument shows that it is not the lover who is a friend, but the loved. Apparently. And it is the hated who is an enemy, not the hater. Evidently. Then people must often be loved by their enemies, and hated by their friends, and be friends to their enemies and enemies to their friends, if the loved object is a friend rather than the loving agent. And yet it is a gross absurdity, my dear friend—I should say rather, an impossibility—that one should be an enemy to one's friend and a friend to one's enemy. You appear to be right there, Socrates, he said. Then if that is impossible, it is the loving that must be a friend of the loved. Evidently. And so the hating, on the other hand, will be an enemy of the hated. Necessarily. Hence in the end we shall find ourselves compelled to agree to the same statement as we made before, that frequently a man is a friend of one who is no friend, and frequently even of an enemy, when he loves one who loves not, or even hates; while frequently a man may be an enemy of one who is no enemy or even a friend, when he hates one who hates not, or even loves. [6] It looks like it, he said. What then are we to make of it, I asked, if neither the loving are to be friends, nor the loved, nor both the loving and loved together? [7] For apart from these, are there any others left for us to cite as becoming friends to one another? For my part, Socrates, he said, I declare I can see no sort of

[6] In this argument Socrates makes play, like one of the "eristic" sophists, with the ambiguous meaning of φίλος (friend or dear) and ἐχθρός (enemy or hateful). Beneath his immediate purpose of puzzling the young man lies the intention of pointing out the obscurity of the very terms "friend" and "enemy."

[7] Socrates cannot be said to have disposed of this third proposition.

shift. Can it be, Menexenus, I asked, that all through there has been something wrong with our inquiry? I think there has, Socrates, said Lysis, and blushed as soon as he said it; for it struck me that the words escaped him unintentionally, through his closely applying his mind to our talk—as he had noticeably done all the time he was listening. So then, as I wanted to give Menexenus a rest, and was delighted with the other's taste for philosophy, I took occasion to shift the discussion over to Lysis, and said: Lysis, I think your remark is true, that if we were inquiring correctly we could never have gone so sadly astray.
Well, let us follow our present line no further, since our inquiry looks to me a rather hard sort of path: I think we had best make for the point where we turned off, and be guided by the poets; for they are our fathers, as it were, and conductors in wisdom. They, of course, express themselves in no mean sort on the subject of friends, where they happen to be found; even saying that God himself makes them friends by drawing them to each other. The way they put it, I believe, is something like this:"Yea, ever like and like together God doth draw,"*Hom. Od. 17.218* and so brings them acquainted; or have you not come across these verses? Yes, I have, he replied. And you have also come across those writings of eminent sages, which tell us this very thing—that like must needs be always friend to like? I refer, of course, to those who debate or write about nature and the universe. [8]
Quite so, he said. Well now, I went on, are they right in what they say? Perhaps, he replied. Perhaps in one half of it, I said; perhaps in even the whole; only we do not comprehend it. We suppose that the nearer a wicked man approaches to a wicked man, and the more he consorts with him, the more hateful he becomes; for he injures him, and we consider it impossible that injurer and injured should be friends. Is it not so? Yes, he answered. On this showing, therefore, half of the saying cannot be true, if the wicked are like one another. Quite so. What I believe they mean is that the good are like one another, and are friends, while the bad—as is also said of them—are never like even their own selves, being so ill-balanced and unsteady; and when a thing is unlike itself and variable it can hardly become like or friend to anything else. You must surely agree to that? I do, he said. Hence I conclude there is a hidden meaning, dear friend, intended by those who say that like is friend to like, namely that the good alone is friend to the good alone, while the bad never enters into true friendship with either good or bad.

[8]The attraction of like for like was an important force in the cosmology of Empedocles (c. 475-415 B.C.)

Do you agree? He nodded assent. So now we can tell what friends are; since our argument discloses that they are any persons who may be good. I quite think so, said he. And I also, said I; and yet there is a point in it that makes me uneasy: so come, in Heaven's name, let us make out what it is that I suspect. Is like friend to like in so far as he is like, and is such an one useful to his fellow? Let me put it another way: when anything whatever is like anything else, what benefit can it offer, or what harm can it do, to its like, which it could not offer or do to itself?

Or what could be done to it that could not be done to it by itself? How can such things be cherished by each other, when they can bring no mutual succor? Is it at all possible? No. And how can that be a friend, which is not cherished? By no means. But, granting that like is not friend to like, the good may still be friend to the good in so far as he is good, not as he is like? Perhaps. But again, will not the good, in so far as he is good, be in that measure sufficient for himself? Yes. And the sufficient has no need of anything, by virtue of his sufficiency. [9] Of course. And if a man has no need of anything he will not cherish anything. Presumably not. And that which does not cherish will not love. I should think not. And one who loves not is no friend. Evidently. So how can we say that the good will be friends to the good at all, when neither in absence do they long for one another—for they are sufficient for themselves even when apart—nor in presence have they need of one another? How can it be contrived that such persons shall value each other highly? By no means, he said. And if they do not set a high value on each other, they cannot be friends. True. Now observe, Lysis, how we are missing the track. Can it be, indeed, that we are deceived in the whole matter? How so? he asked. Once on a time I heard somebody say, and I have just recollected it, that like was most hostile to like, and so were good men to good men; and what is more, he put forward Hesiod as witness, by quoting his words—"See potter wroth with potter, bard with bard," "Beggar with beggar,"*Hes. WD 25*and in all other cases it was the same, he said; likest things must needs be filled with envy, contention, and hatred against each other, but the unlikest things with friendship: since the poor man must needs be friendly to the rich, and the weak to the strong, for the sake of assistance, and also the sick man to the doctor; and every ignorant person had to cherish the well-informed, and love

[9] Socrates seems to pass unwarrantably from the limited to the unlimited meaning of "sufficient."

him. And then the speaker pursued his theme to this further and more imposing point—that like could not in the slightest degree be friendly to like, but was in just the opposite case: for it was between things most opposed that friendship was chiefly to be found, since everything desired its opposite, not its like. Thus dry desired wet, cold hot, bitter sweet, sharp blunt, empty fullness, full emptiness, and likewise the rest on the same principle:
for the opposite was food for its opposite, as the like could have no enjoyment of its like. And I must say, my good friend, his argument seemed a smart one, for he expressed it well. But you, I asked—how does it strike you? It sounds all right, said Menexenus, at least on the moment's hearing. Then are we to say that the opposite is most friendly to its opposite? Certainly. Well, I exclaimed, is it not monstrous, Menexenus? Why, at once these all-accomplished logic-choppers will delightedly pounce on us and ask whether hatred is not the most opposite thing to friendship. And what answer shall we give them? Shall we not be forced to admit that what they say is true? We shall. So then, they will demand, is a hating thing friend to the friendly thing, or the friendly to the hating? Neither, he replied. But is the just a friend to the unjust, or the temperate to the profligate, or the good to the bad? I do not think that could be so. But yet, I urged, if one thing is friend to another on this principle of opposition, these things too must needs be friends. They must. So neither is like friend to like, nor opposite friend to opposite. It seems not. But there is still this point to consider; for perhaps we are yet more mistaken, and the friendly has really nothing to do with all this: it may rather be something neither good nor bad that will prove after all to be what we call friend of the good. How do you mean? he asked. For the life of me, I said, I cannot tell: the fact is, I am quite dizzy myself with the puzzle of our argument, and am inclined to agree with the ancient proverb that the beautiful is friendly. [10] It certainly resembles something soft and smooth and sleek; that is why, I daresay, it so easily slides and dives right into us, by virtue of those qualities. For I declare that the good is beautiful: do you not agree? I do. Then I will be a diviner for once, and state that what is neither good nor bad is friendly to what is beautiful and good; and what it is that prompts me to this divination, you must now hear. My view is that there are three separate kinds, as it were—the good, the bad, and what is neither good nor bad; and what is yours? Mine is the same, he replied. And that neither is the

[10] The proverb, of course, used *φίλον* in the sense of dear.

good friendly to the good, nor the bad to the bad, nor the good to the bad; so much our previous argument already forbids. One view then remains: if anything is friendly to anything, that which is neither good nor bad is friendly to either the good or what is of the same quality as itself. For I presume nothing could be found friendly to the bad. True. Nor, however, can like be friendly to like: this we stated just now, did we not? Yes. So what is neither good nor bad can have no friendship with the same sort of thing as itself. Apparently not.

Then only what is neither good nor bad proves to be friendly to the good, and to that only. That must be so, it seems. Then can we rely further on this present statement, my boys, I said, as a sure guide? For instance, we have only to consider a body in health to see that it has no need of doctoring or assistance: it is well enough as it is, and so no one in health is friend to a doctor, on account of his health. You agree? Yes. But the sick man is, I imagine, on account of his disease. Certainly. Now disease is a bad thing, and medicine is beneficial and good. Yes. And a body, of course, taken as body, is neither good nor bad. That is so. But a body is compelled by disease to welcome and love medicine. I think so. Thus what is neither bad nor good becomes a friend of the good because of the presence of evil. So it seems. But clearly this must be before it is itself made evil by the evil which it has; for surely, when once it has been made evil, it can no longer have any desire or love for the good; since we agreed it was impossible for bad to be a friend of good. Yes, impossible. Now observe what I say. Some things are of the same sort as those that are present with them, and some are not. For example, if you chose to dye something a certain color, the substance of the dye is present, I presume, with the thing dyed. Certainly. Then is the thing dyed of the same sort, in point of color, as the substance that is added? I do not understand, he said. Well, try it this way, I went on: suppose some one tinged your golden locks with white lead, would they then be or appear to be white? Yes, they would so appear, he replied. And, in fact, whiteness would be present with them? Yes. But all the same they would not be any the more white as yet; for though whiteness be present, they are not at all white, any more than they are at all black. True. But when, my dear boy, old age has cast that same color upon them, they have then come to be of the same sort as that which is present—white through presence of white. To be sure. So this is the question I have been trying to put to you—whether a thing that has something present with it is to be held of the same sort as that present thing or only when that thing is present in a particular way, but otherwise not? More likely the latter,

he said. So that what is neither bad nor good is sometimes, when bad is present, not bad as yet, and such cases have been known to occur. Certainly. When therefore it is not bad as yet, though bad is present, this presence makes it desire good; but the presence which makes it bad deprives it equally of its desire and its love for the good.
For it is no longer neither bad nor good, but bad; and we found that bad was no friend to good. No, indeed. And consequently we may say that those who are already wise no longer love wisdom, whether they be gods or men; nor again can those be lovers of wisdom who are in such ignorance as to be bad: for we know that a bad and stupid man is no lover of wisdom. And now there remain those who, while possessing this bad thing, ignorance, are not yet made ignorant or stupid, but are still aware of not knowing the things they do not know. It follows, then, that those who are as yet neither good nor bad are lovers of wisdom, while all who are bad, and all the good, are not: for, as we found in our previous discussion, neither is opposite friend to opposite, nor like to like. You remember, do you not? To be sure we do, they both replied. So now, Lysis and Menexenus, I said, we can count on having discovered what is the friendly and what is not. For we say that, in the soul and the body and everywhere, just that which is neither bad nor good, but has the presence of bad, is thereby friend of the good. To this statement they said that they entirely agreed. And, beyond that, I was myself filled with delight, like a hunter, at the satisfaction of getting hold of what I was hunting; when somehow or other a most unaccountable suspicion came over me that the conclusion to which we had agreed was not true. So at once I exclaimed in vexation: Alack-a-day, Lysis and Menexenus! I fear our new-gotten riches are all a dream. How on earth is that? said Menexenus. I am afraid, I replied, that in our search for friendship we have struck up with arguments that are no better than a set of braggarts. How so? he asked. Just consider a moment, I said. When a man is a friend, is he friend to some one or not? He needs be, he replied. Then is he so for the sake of nothing and because of nothing, or for the sake of something and because of something? For the sake of something, and because of something. Is it a friend—that thing for whose sake he is a friend to his friend—or is it neither friend nor foe? I do not quite follow, he said. Naturally enough, said I; but perhaps you will keep up if we try it another way, and I expect that I too will better understand what I am saying. The sick man, we said just now, is a friend to the doctor; is not that so? Yes. Then is it because of disease, for the sake of health, that he is a friend of the doctor? Yes. And disease is a bad thing? Of course. But

what is health? I asked: a good thing, or a bad, or neither?
A good thing, he said. And we were saying, I believe, that the body, being neither good nor bad, was a friend of medicine—that is, of a good thing—because of disease—that is, because of a bad thing; and it is for the sake of health that medicine has acquired this friendship, and health is a good thing. You agree? Yes. Is health a friend or not? A friend. And disease is a foe? Certainly. So what is neither bad nor good is a friend to the good because of what is bad and a foe for the sake of what is good and a friend. Apparently. Hence the friend is a friend of its friend for the sake of its friend and because of its foe. So it seems. Very well, I said: since we have reached this point, my boys, let us take good heed not to be deceived. I pass over without remark the fact that the friend has become a friend to the friend, and thus the like becomes a friend to the like, which we said was impossible. There is, however, a further point which we must examine, if we are not to find our present argument a mere deception. Medicine, we say, is a friend for the sake of health. Yes. Then is health a friend also? Certainly. And if it is a friend, it is so for the sake of something. Yes. And that something is a friend, if it is to conform to our previous agreement. Quite so. Then will that something be, on its part also, a friend for the sake of a friend? Yes. Now are we not bound to weary ourselves with going on in this way, unless we can arrive at some first principle which will not keep leading us on from one friend to another, but will reach the one original friend, for whose sake all the other things can be said to be friends? We must. So you see what I am afraid of—that all the other things, which we cited as friends for the sake of that one thing, may be deceiving us like so many phantoms of it, while that original thing may be the veritable friend. For suppose we view the matter thus: when a man highly values a thing, as in the common case of a father who prizes his son above all his possessions, will such a man, for the sake of placing his son before everything, value anything else highly at the same time? For instance, on learning that he had drunk some hemlock, would he value wine highly if he believed it would save his son's life? Why, of course, he said. And the vessel too which contained the wine? Certainly. Now does he make no distinction in value, at that moment, between a cup of earthenware and his own son, or between three pints of wine and his son?
Or may we perhaps state it thus: all such concern is not entertained for the actual things which are applied for the sake of something, but for that something for whose sake all the rest are applied? I know that we often talk of setting great value on gold and silver: but surely

we are no nearer the truth of the matter for that; what we rather value above everything is the thing—whatever it may prove to be—for whose sake gold and all the other commodities are applied. May we state it so? By all means. Then shall we not give the same account of a friend? In speaking of all the things that are friends to us for the sake of some other friend, we find ourselves uttering a mere phrase; whereas in reality "friend" appears to be simply and solely the thing in which all these so-called friendships terminate. So it appears, he said. Then the real friend is a friend for the sake of nothing else that is a friend? True. So we have got rid of this, and it is not for the sake of some friendly thing that the friend is friendly. But now, is the good a friend? I should say so. And further, it is because of the bad that the good is loved [11]; let me state the case as follows: there are three things of which we have just been speaking—good, bad, and what is neither good nor bad. If but two of these remained after evil had been cleared away, so that it had no contact with anything, whether body or soul or any of the other things that we count neither bad nor good in themselves, would the result be that good would be of no use to us, but would have become quite a useless thing? For if there were nothing left to harm us, we should feel no want of any assistance; and thus we should have to face the fact that it was because of the bad that we felt such a friendly affection for the good, since the good is a cure for the bad, while the bad is an ailment, and if there is no ailment there is no need for a cure. Is not this the nature of the good—to be loved because of the bad by us who are midway between the bad and the good, whereas separately and for its own sake it is of no use? Apparently so, he said. Then our "friend," in which all the other things terminated—we called them "friends for the sake of some other friend"—has no resemblance to these. For they are described as friends for the sake of a friend: but the real friend appears to have quite the opposite character; for we found if to be a friend for the sake of a foe, and if the foe should be removed we have no friend, it seems, any more. I should say not, he assented, to judge by our present argument.

Tell me, I beg of you, I went on, if evil is abolished, will it be impossible any longer to feel hunger or thirst or other such conditions? Or will hunger exist, so long as men and animals exist, but without being hurtful? Thirst, too, and all other desires—will these exist without being bad, because the bad will have been abolished? Or is this a

[11] Socrates here strangely confuses the cause (*τὸ διά τι*) with the object in view (*τὸ ἕνεκά του*), which he carefully distinguished in the case of medicine (219 A).

ridiculous question—as to what will exist or not exist in such a case? For who can tell? Yet this, at all events, we do know—that, as things are now, it is possible for a man to feel hunger as a hurt, and also to be benefited by it. You agree? Certainly. And so, when a man feels thirst or any other desire of the sort, he may have that desire sometimes with benefit, sometimes with harm, and sometimes with neither? Quite so. Now if evil things are abolished, is there any reason why the things that are not evil should be abolished along with the evil? None. So that those desires which are neither good nor bad will exist even when the bad things are abolished. Apparently. Now is it possible for a man, when he desires and loves, to have no friendly feeling towards that which he desires and loves? I think not. Thus certain things will continue to be friendly, it seems, when evil things are abolished. Yes. It cannot be that, if evil were the cause of a thing being friendly, one thing should be friendly to another when evil is abolished. For when a cause is abolished, that thing can no longer exist, I presume, which had this as its cause. You are right. Now we have agreed that the friend has a friendly feeling for something and because of something; and we supposed, just then, that it was because of evil that what was neither good nor bad loved the good. True. But now, it seems, we make out a different cause of loving and being loved. It seems so. Can it really be then, as we were saying just now, that desire is the cause of friendship, and the desiring thing is a friend to what which it desires, and is so at any time of desiring; while our earlier statement about friends was all mere drivel, like a poem strung out for mere length? It looks like it, he said. But still, I went on, the desiring thing desires that in which it is deficient, does it not? Yes. And the deficient is a friend to that in which it is deficient? I suppose so. And it becomes deficient in that of which it suffers a deprivation. To be sure. So it is one's own belongings, [12] it seems, that are the objects of love and friendship and desire; so it appears, Menexenus and Lysis. They both agreed. Then if you two are friends to each other by some natural bond you belong to one another. Precisely, they said.

And in a case where one person desires another, my boys, or loves him, he would never be desiring or loving or befriending him, unless he somehow belonged to his beloved either in soul, or in some disposition, demeanor or cast of soul. Yes, to be sure, said Menexenus; but Lysis was silent. Very well, said I: what belongs to us by nature has been shown to be something we needs must befriend. It seems so, he said.

[12] i.e. things that are proper or congenial to one.

Then the genuine, not the pretended, lover must needs be befriended by his favorite. To this Lysis and Menexenus gave but a faint nod of assent; while Hippothales, in his delight, turned all manner of colors. So then, with the design of reviewing the argument, I proceeded: If there is any difference between what belongs and what is like, it seems to me, Lysis and Menexenus, that we might give some account of the meaning of "friend." But if "like" and "belonging" are the same, it is not easy to get rid of our former statement, that the like is useless to the like in so far as they have likeness; and to admit that the useless is friendly would be a gross mistake. So how if we agree now, I said, since our argument has made us quite tipsy, to say that the belonging and the like are two different things? By all means. Then shall we maintain that the good itself belongs to every one, while the bad is alien? Or does the bad belong to the bad, the good to the good, and what is neither good nor bad to what is neither good nor bad? They agreed that the last three pairs belong together. So here again, boys, I said, we have dropped into the very statements regarding friendship which we rejected at first; for now the unjust will be as much a friend of the unjust, and the bad of the bad, as the good of the good. [13] So it seems, he said. And what is more, if we say that the good and the belonging are the same, we cannot avoid making the good a friend only to the good. To be sure. But this again, you know, is a view of which we thought we had disabused ourselves; you remember, do you not? We do. So what more can we do with our argument? Obviously, I think, nothing. I can only ask you, accordingly, like the professional pleaders in the law courts, to perpend the whole of what has been said. If neither the loved nor the loving, nor the like nor the unlike, nor the good nor the belonging, nor all the rest that we have tried in turn—they are so many that I, for one, fail to remember any more—well, if none of these is a friend, I am at a loss for anything further to say.

Having thus spoken, I was minded to stir up somebody else among the older people there; when, like spirits from another world, there came upon us the tutors of Menexenus and Lysis: they were bringing along the boys' brothers, and called out to them the order to go home; for it was getting late. At first we tried, with the help of the group around us, to drive the tutors off; but they took no notice of us at all, and went

[13] The word "belonging" seems to throw some light on "friend," but even if we distinguish it from "like" it turns out to be just as indifferent to good and bad, and therefore just as remote from the moral significance of "friend."

on angrily calling, as before, in their foreign accent. We decided that they had taken a drop too much at the festival and might be awkward customers; so we gave in to them, and broke up our party. However, just as they were moving off, I remarked: Today, Lysis and Menexenus, we have made ourselves ridiculous—I, an old man, as well as you. For these others will go away and tell how we believe we are friends of one another—for I count myself in with you—but what a "friend" is, we have not yet succeeded in discovering.

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