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Philia as Fellowship in Plato's *Lysis*

Andrew Payne [i]
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6265-534X
apayne@sju.edu

[i] Saint Joseph's University – Philadelphia – USA.

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Abstract: Socrates in the *Lysis* discusses *philia* and the conditions under which two or more people can be said to engage in this relationship. Many commentators take Socrates to be attempting to discover how human beings enter into the relationship of friendship, a relationship characterized by reciprocal affection, altruistic concern and personal intimacy. Other readers of the *Lysis* see in the dialogue's investigation of *philia* a discussion of desire and attraction at the most general level. On this view, *philia* is one species of the general human

desire for good. The present paper develops a third reading of *philia*. *Philia* is a type of partnership or fellowship where affection and intimacy are not central features of the relationship. The fellowship involves at least one party who possesses wisdom while other members of the fellowship seek to benefit from wisdom. Thus *philia* is a characteristically human response to the need for wisdom. The members of such a fellowship share a common desire for a good which gives purpose to their association, and because of their common desire to benefit from this good the members can be described as fellows or partners in the pursuit of this good.

Keywords: friendship, desire, wisdom, fellowship, association.

Socrates in the *Lysis* discusses *philia* and the conditions under which two or more people can be said to engage in this relationship. Many commentators take Socrates to be attempting to discover how human beings enter into the relationship of friendship. Here friendship is a relationship featuring reciprocal affection, personal intimacy, and altruistic concern of each friend for the other. Socrates engages the two boyhood friends Lysis and Menexenus in a discussion of *philia*, and he does this in order to show Lysis' lover, Hippothales, how a lover can establish himself on terms of friendship with his beloved. Call this the Personal Friendship reading of *philia*, as seen in Gadamer, 1980; Haden, 1983; Gonzalez, 1995; and Nichols, 2006. Other readers of the *Lysis* see in the dialogue's investigation of *philia* a discussion of desire and attraction at the most general level; *philia*, affection or liking or desire for another person, is one species of the general human desire for good. Call this the Specific Desire reading of *philia*, as represented by Reshotko, 1997; Penner and Rowe, 2005; and Wolfsdorf, 2007.

This paper presents a third account of *philia*[1] in the *Lysis*. *Philia* is found in partnerships and fellowships where affection and intimacy

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[1] A note on terminology is in order. I will leave the term *philia* untranslated, since translations such as friendship or affection presuppose particular answers to the

are not central features of the relationship. Organizations such as Friends of the Modern Art Museum provide examples from the contemporary world of this sort of relationship. The members share a common desire for a good which gives purpose to their association, and because of their common desire to benefit from this good the members can be described as fellows or partners in service to this good. In contrast to the Personal Friendship interpretation of *philia*, the present account does not require reciprocal affection, personal intimacy, or altruistic concern in those who partake of the relation. In contrast to the Specific Desire interpretation, which takes *philia* to be one species of the natural phenomenon of desire, *philia* as fellowship holds between human beings in virtue of their sharing in a relationship structured by wisdom, not simply in virtue of their desire for good.[2]

To be successful, this reading of the *Lysis* must help us to make sense of the twists and turns of the dialogue. In order to come to grips with this perplexing work, I offer the following analysis of *Lysis* into

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central question to be examined: is *philia* best understood on the model of friendship, a relationship characterized by reciprocal affection and altruistic concern, or on the model of desire, or on some other model? The ubiquitous term '*philos*' will be translated as 'friend' when used as a noun and as 'dear' or 'friendly' when used as an adjective; *to philon* will appear as 'the friend'. The verb '*philein*' will be translated with forms of the verb 'to love', where the relevant sense of the English verb is concern for those near and dear to us; Socrates asks Lysis at 207d5-6 whether his parents *philein* him, and it seems natural to translate this as a question about whether his parents love him.

[2] This interpretation is based on an analysis of the *Lysis* and the arguments Socrates employs in this dialogue. Even so, I note that there is a loose fit between this interpretation and a widely accepted account of *philia* in the society of ancient Greece. As Konstan, 1997, 2-6 notes, the most common contemporary conception of *philia* among classicists asserts that for the Greeks *philia* was a beneficial relation embedded in an extensive web of social obligations. Heath, 1987, 73-4 writes that *philia* "is not, at root, a subjective bond of affection and emotional warmth, but the entirely objective bond of reciprocal obligation; one's *philos* is the man one is obliged to help, and on whom one can (or ought to be able to) rely for help when oneself is in need." See also Finley, 1977 and Millett, 1991 for further amplifications of this theme. As he follows the arguments where they lead him, Socrates in the *Lysis* arrives at a similar conception of *philia*. Similar patterns of association in search of wisdom are discussed in Tecuşan, 1990.

seven sections. In the first section, 203a-207b, Socrates encounters Ctesippus and Hippothales and learns that Hippothales has fallen in love with Lysis. At 207b-210e, the second section, Socrates enters into conversation with Lysis in order to show Hippothales how one can strike up an association with a boy with whom one is in love. Next, Socrates shifts conversation-partners and speaks with Menexenus; this third section stretches from 211a-213d and focuses on how people become friends and what conditions characterize such people. After failing to discover how people become friends and which sorts of people are friends, Socrates in the fourth section (213d-216c) switches back to Lysis as his main conversation-partner. Here the conversation takes as its starting point the opinions of poets and those who pursue inquiry into nature, such as the claim that like is friend to like and the claim that what is opposed is friend to its opposite. The discussion focuses on whether the properties of the friends allow us to explain the fact that some people are friends, and again it is unsuccessful. In the fifth section, 216c-222b, Socrates develops his own description of *philia*. *Philia* exists between someone who is neither good nor bad (NGNB) and someone or something good. *Philia* arises for the sake of something good, a "first friend," and it arises on account of (*dia*) something. At first Socrates proposes that *philia* arises on account of the presence of the bad, but then he changes his mind and says that it arises on account of desire for the good. This desire for the good is responsible for *philia* with another person who belongs to us. In the sixth section, 222b-e, this account of *philia* is examined critically. Socrates and his two interlocutors are unable to distinguish between what belongs to a person and what is like that person, and thus the conversation arrives at an impasse: the previous objections to the claim that like is friend to like seem also to hold against the claim that *philia* unites two people who belong to each other. Finally, in the seventh and closing section, 223a-b, the guardians of Lysis and Menexenus break up the conversation. They take the boys home while Socrates remarks that he and the boys have become friends even as they are unable to determine what the friend is (*hoti estin ho philos*) which structures their association.

This compressed summary of the *Lysis* conveys the episodic, stop-and-start character of the conversation. Socrates switches conversation partners frequently, from Hippothales to Menexenus, then to Lysis, back to Menexenus, and then back to Lysis. A satisfactory interpretation of the dialogue will point out how these different conversations, all of which have something to do with *philia*, form a unified whole in which no part is mere window-dressing. A satisfactory interpretation will also provide an intelligible motivation for Socrates' argumentative moves, some of which are quite dubious at first sight. He and Lysis agree that the latter's parents do not love him since they do not allow him to drive the family chariot; he argues to Menexenus that two people loving each other is not enough for the two to qualify as friends; and he proposes as a central example of friendship the relation between a sick man and a doctor. A successful reading of the dialogue will explain why Socrates would make such questionable claims, even if we do not affirm them at the end of the day.

The first section of the *Lysis*, 203a-207b, introduces what I take to be the key to the dialogue: Socrates treats *philia* as a particular sort of association: a fellowship centered on the pursuit of beneficial knowledge of some kind. This theme is introduced when Hippothales in effect invites Socrates to join a recently-formed fellowship or club (*hetaireia*). Hippothales asks Socrates to digress from the straight line he is following to the Lyceum and suggests that he pass the time at the wrestling-school of Mikkos, Socrates' companion (*hetairos*: 204a5). Although the place is used for practice in wrestling, Hippothales tells Socrates that the real attraction is the beautiful youths present and that the real occupation is time spent in discussion. These discussions include for Hippothales the poems he composes about his beloved Lysis, poems which he uses to torment his companions after having had a bit to drink. Based on these indications, we can speak of Mikkos' wrestling-school as the setting for a club formed by Hippothales, his friend Ctesippus, and the other young men who gather at Mikkos'~~s~~ school. Such clubs in fifth-century Athens were venues for wealthy men in ancient Athens to meet outside the structure of the family in order to share pursuits such

as physical exercise, to hold symposia, to celebrate religious rituals, and in some cases to support prominent politicians and political parties. Mikkos' school is a place where young men including Hippothales and Ctesippus gather to practice wrestling and to offer ritual sacrifice (206e2). Hippothales, Ctesippus and their friends share another activity shared by members of Athenian *heteireiai*, namely the symposium; as Ctesippus is eager to tell Socrates, Hippothales sings his poetry composed in honor of Lysis at their drinking-parties. [3] Members of such clubs were often termed "friends," *philoi*. When Hippothales asks Socrates to pass some time at Mikkos' palaistra, he is asking him to take part in the activities of this social group.

Whatever Hippothales' conception may be of the group and its activities, Socrates re-orients it towards a partnership aimed at utilizing his expertise in erotic matters. Once Ctesippus identifies Hippothales' beloved as the youth Lysis, Socrates proposes to give instruction on how Hippothales should treat his beloved: "Now come on and perform for me what you've performed for your friends here, so that I can see if you know what a lover ought to say about his boyfriend to his face, or to others" (204e10 – 205a2).[4] Of course

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[3] See Calhoun, 1913 for an overview of texts in Athenian literature attesting to the role of clubs in everyday social life and in the political activity of Athenian men. Humphreys, 2004, 231-32 speaks of clubs as existing at a prepolitical level in the activities of young men in the gymnasium and the symposium, precisely where we see the association formed by Hippothales and Ctesippus in the *Lysis*. Rhodes, 1986, 139-140 situates *hetaireiai* within the larger context of conflict between prominent politicians and their associates. I note that Plato seems to portray Socrates as holding a nuanced attitude towards *hetaireiai*. Clubs built around exercise and discussion were acceptable to Socrates, as he associates himself with Mikkos in the *Lysis* and with Chairephon in the *Apology* (*Ap*. 20e8) as *hetairos*. At the same time, he steers clear of clubs centered on political conflict, such as the *hetaireia* to which Chairephon belonged and with which he went into exile to escape the rule of the Thirty in 404 BCE. Socrates says at *Ap*. 36b6-9 that he is unlike the many because he has given no thought to such things as wealth, household affairs, political offices, and the political clubs (*synomosiai*) and factions that have arisen in Athens.

[4] Except where noted, quotations from the *Lysis* are taken from Stanley Lombardo's translation in Cooper, 1997.

Hippothales fails the test; he praises Lysis in a way that amounts to self-congratulation and in the process only makes Lysis harder to deal with. Once he has seen the error of his ways, Hippothales asks Socrates for help:

> "What different advice can you give me about what one should say or do so that one becomes friendly with one's prospective boyfriend?" (206c2-3)[5]

Socrates responds to this question by promising to engage Lysis in a conversation which will serve as a model for Hippothales. The resulting association or fellowship between Hippothales and Socrates is one in which Socrates employs his knowledge or divine insight into erotic affairs to provide benefit to Hippothales by helping him to achieve friendly relations with Lysis.[6]

The ensuing conversation with Lysis in the second section of the dialogue, 207b-210e, features Socrates attempting to convince Lysis to seek associations or fellowships of the sort sketched above. This section begins with Socrates questioning Lysis about his relations with his parents. Do they love him? If so, don't they want him to happy, and if they want him to be happy, why do they not allow him to do whatever he wants, including driving his father's chariot? These questions drive Lysis to agree that his parents do not love him. Clearly not every agreement reached between Socrates and Lysis in this section represents unvarnished truth. The fact that Lysis' parents do not allow him to use the family chariot for drag-racing whenever

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[5] Here I alter Lombardo's translation slightly, giving the adjective *prosphiles* as 'friendly'.

[6] Does Socrates have knowledge about love and *philia* in the *Lysis*, or does he have a divine insight that does not qualify as knowledge? He offers himself as a model for Hippothales in dealing with one's beloved and he says that he knows (*oida*) that Hippothales is in love with Lysis. At the same time, he says that the ability to identify lover and beloved is something given by God, and at 216d3-5 he characterizes his account of *philia* as a prophetic utterance. The latter option seems preferable, in that it is consistent with Socrates' account of himself in the *Apology* as one who lacks wisdom about any great thing and who benefits frequently from the use of prophecy (*Ap*. 31d, 40a). In either case, Socrates offers authoritative and reliable guidance to Hippothales in dealing with someone like Lysis.

he wishes is not a sign that they do not love him. However, a model for *philia* takes shape in this section which will surface again later in the dialogue. Given that Lysis is wise in areas such as medicine, household management, and cooking, others who lack wisdom will allow him to act on their behalf because their association with him will help them achieve goods that they desire. By associating with Lysis and seeking the guidance of his wisdom, they will be able to achieve the good things they desire. These associations can include citizens in Athens electing Lysis to political office or the Great King of Persia taking him on as physician to heal his son. In all cases, *philia* involves at least one member of the association using wisdom to promote a desired good. That good may directly benefit only one member of the association, as in the case of a doctor healing a sick patient, or it may benefit all members, as when Lysis uses his wisdom to rule the city of Athens successfully. Strong affiliation with others results from this wisdom, affiliations signaled by the Greek term *oikeion*, literally 'being of the same household' and having the sense of being related or belonging to a person. All things and persons will belong to the one who is wise, while nothing and no one will belong to the one who is not wise (210a9-c4). The sort of belonging in question here involves the free use of property, as when Lysis' neighbors will turn over their households for him to manage, but it involves also relations of trust and obedience which allow the person with wisdom to act freely. The Great King will allow Socrates and Lysis to sprinkle ash in the eyes of his son because he trusts their wisdom. Without wisdom, even Lysis' mother and father will not be friendly to him:

> "But if you become wise, my boy, then everybody will be your friend, everybody will feel close to you, because you will be useful and good. If you don't become wise, though, nobody will be your friend, not even your father or mother or your close relatives" (210 d1-4).

Important here is that Socrates brings Lysis to see his need for wisdom and his need for instruction from others that will help him attain wisdom. This need for an association directed toward wisdom,

and not the grandiose schemes for world domination that Socrates elaborates, is the main result of this second section. Goodness is not defined, neither here nor elsewhere in the *Lysis*, but we see to whom Socrates will apply the terms 'good' and 'wise': a person who is an expert in craft-knowledge, such as a cook, doctor, or household manager. The associations that Socrates recommends to Lysis turn on at least one party to the association having such wisdom.[7] Valuable affiliations and a sense of belonging to one's companions result from possessing such wisdom; without wisdom such belonging is impossible.

In the third section of the dialogue Socrates broaches the topic of associations and fellowships from a different perspective. Once Socrates has established himself on friendly terms with Lysis, the boy encourages him to converse with Menexenus. Socrates complies, and begins by telling Menexenus that he passionately desires to acquire a good friend and that he is fond of companions (*philetairos*: 211e8). With this in mind, Socrates asks Menexenus how one person becomes dear or friendly to another. For the rest of this section, Socrates examines an intuitively appealing answer to this question: being a friend arises from the loving that holds between people. He

[7] One possible objection to this picture of associations and fellowships runs as follows. On the present picture, *philia* is structured as a fellowship existing between one party who is wise and the other members of the fellowship who are not wise. But fellowships in ancient Greek culture, *hetaireiai*, existed between men who were equals. When Socrates builds into his conception of *philia* an imbalance between the wise and those who lack wisdom, he is treating *philia* as something distinct from a traditional Greek fellowship. In reply to this objection, I allow that fellowships as we see them in Homer are typically associations of equals; here we may think of Telemachus and his young companions who journey from Ithaka to Pylos and Argos in the opening books of the *Odyssey* to seek report of Odysseus. See Konstan, 1997, 31-33 for an overview of the category of *hetairos* in Homer. But fellowships in Athenian culture were not exclusively associations of equals. Mikkos as an expert teacher of wrestling will hold a superior position over his students. In Athenian politics, fellowships formed to support the careers of particular politicians. Such politicians as Pericles or Alcibiades would then hold a superior position in relation to their "friends". See Mitchell, 1997, 42-6 for an account of fellowships as oriented on a vertical axis toward a political leader. A Socratic fellowship of unequals fits this pattern, though the purpose of the fellowship is not physical exercise or political power but the pursuit of wisdom.

asks whether person A loving person B is enough to account for being a friend, either with the lover A being the friend or the beloved B being the friend. Both of these options are rejected, since they are compatible with A's love for B being met with B not loving or hating A. And in a perplexing passage at 212d-213d which closes this third section of the dialogue, Socrates considers and quickly rejects the natural response to these scenarios, namely that a friend arises out of reciprocal affection when A loves B and B loves A.

In the passage 212d-213d, Socrates explores from different angles the idea that *philia* exists even when reciprocal loving is absent. First, he attempts to construct a *reductio ad absurdum* argument against the claim that *philia* requires reciprocal affection by drawing attention to alleged cases of *philia* in which people are friendly to some non-human object that does not love them back. Socrates queries Menexenus as follows:

> "So nothing is a friend of the lover unless it loves him in return."
>
> "It doesn't look like it."
>
> "So there are no horse-lovers unless the horse loves them back, and no quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, or exercise-lovers. And no lovers of wisdom unless wisdom loves them in return." (212d1-8)

The proposal that there are no horse-lovers or dog-lovers and that the horses and dogs in question are not dear to those who love them is rejected on the basis of a quotation (perhaps tendentiously interpreted by Socrates) from Solon.[8] Socrates and Menexenus agree that the poet spoke the truth when he said

[8] According to Socrates, the happy man is blessed because he has children, horses and hounds who are *philoi*, even though they may not love him back. An equally natural reading of the fragment takes *philoi* as modifying children only, so that the happy man has children who are *philoi* and in addition has horses and hounds within his household. Here Socrates interprets the syntax of a poem in such a way that it corresponds to his sense of what is true, with marked consequences for the meaning of the poem. Compare *Prt*. 340b-347a, where Socrates gives a non-

> Happy the man who has as friends his children and solid-hoofed horses,
>
> His hunting hounds and a host abroad. (212e3-4)

As Socrates reads this fragment, Solon speaks the truth when he refers to children, horses and dogs as friends, even though these do not all return the love directed at them. That one's children count as dear even if they do not reciprocate one's love is the gist of the remaining discussion is this third section; an unruly child will react with anger and hatred when disciplined, although in a sense a parent's willingness to discipline the child is a sign of love and marks the child as dear to the parent.

At first sight Socrates' rejection of reciprocal loving as the ground for friendship looks specious. Assuming that we do care for things and persons that do not love us back – horses, ~~or~~ exercise, children, health, or wisdom – why should that defeat the claims of reciprocal loving to be the ground of human friendship? In reply, two points can be made in defense of Socrates' position. First, Socrates is engaged in the project of seeking a single answer to his question "How does one person become a friend of another?", an answer which will apply to every case of friendship. Thus, any case of friendship which does not fit the bill of exhibiting reciprocal loving will defeat reciprocal loving as a suitable answer to Socrates' question. This is so even if some or even most friendships between humans arise out of reciprocal loving. Socrates seeks an answer to his question that will apply to friends who engage in reciprocal loving and also to friends who do not, assuming that there are such.

Second, Socrates is drawing on the conception of friendship as fellowship when he rejects reciprocal loving as a necessary element in being a friend. He insists that people who are horse-lovers or exercise-lovers or philosophers count as friends, even though their

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standard interpretation of Simonides' Scopas lyric while putting forward Socratic theses on the convergence of wisdom and virtue and the impossibility of doing wrong willingly. See Pappas, 1989 and Trivigno, 2013 for helpful discussions of Socrates' idiosyncratic readings of poetry.

love for horses or exercise or wisdom is not reciprocated. Those who form an association or fellowship organized around pursuit of some good will support each other and help each other to benefit from that good. One example of such fellowships from the *Lysis* is the fellowship gathered around Mikkos for the purpose of practicing wrestling; members of this association would qualify as lovers of exercise (*philogymnastai*: 212d7). The associations that Socrates recommends to Lysis in the second section of the dialogue, associations devoted to gaining and benefiting from wisdom of various types, would be composed of the lovers of wisdom (*philosophoi*) mentioned also at 212d7. The association or bond between fellow lovers of these goods should be recognized as one sort of friendship even though the goal of their association does not love them back and even though the friends' liking for each other depends on their awareness that they are devoted to that ultimate purpose that is served by their association.

Consider an example of such a fellowship or association, the Friends of the Wissahickon. The Wissahickon Creek is a stream in southeast Pennsylvania, arising roughly twenty miles north of Philadelphia and flowing south to empty into the Schuylkill River. It passes through parts of Philadelphia; with its wooded valley it forms part of the public park system of Philadelphia. The Friends of the Wissahickon is a volunteer organization whose mission is "to conserve the natural beauty and wildness of the Wissahickon Valley and to stimulate public interest therein" (Accessed on 8/13/20 at https://fow.org). Individuals who belong to the Friends of the Wissahickon and who work together to achieve this good will likely see themselves as sharing a bond based on this common effort. They will value each other as useful partners in the attempt to preserve and maintain the good of access to nature in an urban setting. They will value especially highly those who have specialized skills useful in this attempt: management of riparian ecologies, urban planning, and public relations. Thus we have an instance of the model Socrates presents in the first two sections of the *Lysis*, where *philia* is an association in which knowledge or wisdom is used to promote some good which serves as the purpose of the association. The qualities

which we typically associate with personal friendship – friends liking each other for their own sake, affective bonds between friends, altruistic desire for the good of the other – are not necessary or central features of this sort of association.

With this understanding of Socrates' conception of *philia* as fellowship, we can see the flaws in the Personal Friendship model of *philia*. According to these versions of the Personal Friendship model, *philia* is a human relationship marked by reciprocal affection, affective disposition towards the friend, and altruistic concern. On this view, *philia* in the *Lysis* is fairly close to what we mean today by the relation of friendship. But as Socrates discusses *philia*, it is conditional on the possession of wisdom; at least one of the members of the fellowship must possess some knowledge of the good promoted by the fellowship. To cite the most extreme result of this train of thought, even Lysis' parents will love him only to the extent that he is wise. In addition, Socratic *philia* does not require reciprocal affection between friends. As we saw in the third section of the *Lysis*, people can be friends to a thing or person that does not love them back. Reciprocal liking may well develop between members of such a fellowship, but this reciprocal affection is derived from shared devotion to the overall purpose of the fellowship, the good which structures the association. Members of the fellowship need not share affective bonds, and their concern for each other need not be an altruistic care for the other's well-being independent of any concern for one's own well-being. The members of a fellowship may be motivated to promote the good of their fellows as a result of their common membership in the association. Socrates mentions such a case when he speaks of parents whose children are dear to them, as shown by disciplining the child. In such a case altruistic concern and affection is present, at least on the part of the parent. However, this is not a universal feature of Socratic *philia*. The central feature of Socratic *philia* is each member of a fellowship being directed by wisdom in the pursuit of the good of the fellowship.

When Socrates does present the closest thing we find to a developed account of *philia* in the *Lysis*, the result fits closely with

the model of fellowship described thus far. In the fifth section, 216c-222b, Socrates speaks of *philia* as existing between two parties, one of which is classified as neither good nor bad (NGNB) and one of which is good. *Philia* arises for the sake of something and on account of something, and thus understanding a particular case of *philia* entails specifying these explanatory factors. His chief example to illustrate this sort of *philia* is the relation between a sick person and a doctor. The sick person's body is afflicted by disease and so does not have its proper excellence, health, but as long as it has not been fully corrupted by disease it can still be healed and so falls in the category of neither good nor bad. The sick person is friends with the doctor for the sake of health, and this case of *philia* is essentially conditioned by the need for health. The friendship described here would not arise if both parties are healthy (217a). The sick person and the doctor become *philoi* on account of the presence of disease, something bad, in the body of the sick person. Although this example suggests that *philia* in general arises on account of something bad, Socrates modifies this aspect of his account at 220b-221d: the cause of *philia* is not the presence of bad, but desire for what is good. Even if all bad things were to disappear, this would leave intact those desires which are themselves neither good nor bad. These desires would ensure that *philia* exists even when nothing bad is present in our lives.

In part by reflecting on this fifth section of the *Lysis*, some scholars have developed the Specific Desire interpretation of *philia*. Socrates proposes in the fifth section that all *philia* is a matter of something NGNB entering into relationship with something good, where the motive is either the presence of something bad or desire for what is good. Speaking of this passage, Naomi Reshotko makes the following claim:

> "While little insight into [*philia*] is gained by analyzing this piece of text in light of any notion which restricts [*philia*] to humans, the text is quite understandable as an exposition of the nature of desire and attraction" (Reshotko, 1997, 4).

On the Specific Desire reading, *philia* as Socrates discusses it has no special relation to human beings; it can hold between animals and the good that they desire, and presumably also between plants and the water which provides them what they need (Reshotko, 1997, 5). A second feature of the Specific Desire model is its treatment of human *philia* as one species falling under a more general concept of belonging. According to the Specific Desire model, *philia* as such is not limited to humans, but humans do engage in *philia* with each other. The example of the sick person being friends with the doctor for the sake of health is an example of such human *philia*. Here the general desire for the good expresses itself in a particular relation between human beings which furthers or promotes their good. The relation of human *philia* to *philia* as such is the relation between one particular sort of belonging and a more general condition of belonging which holds between a thing that desires and that which it desires.[9]

The main flaw in the Specific Desire interpretation of *philia* is that it leads to an overly broad account of which things and persons can partake in *philia*. In keeping with a basic tenet of Socratic moral psychology, we affirm that all humans desire the good, whether they be bad, good, or neither good nor bad. All humans and indeed all living things will have some orientation towards the good which belongs to them and which is the object of their desire. Thus, the Specific Desire interpretation posits *philia* as a desire for good that is continuous with and one manifestation of the desire that all things in nature exhibit for the things that meet their natural needs, what belongs to them. Yet Socrates explicitly excludes the bad from *philia*, which holds only between the NGNB and the good. An indication of the motivation for this exclusion appears at 214b-c, when Socrates

[9] See Wolfsdorf, 2007, 244: "It should be emphasized that in *Lysis* [*epithymia*] is treated as a condition more general than what we call desire. In the same way that what we call friendship is conceived of as one manifestation of the broader condition of [*philia*], so what we call desire is conceived of as one manifestation of the broader condition of [*epithymia*]." For Wolfsdorf the general condition of *philia* broader than human *philia* is the condition of belonging; a thing which desires is matched to something belonging to it, the object of its desire.

first introduces the sayings of those who are wise about the universe and nature. Their investigations suggest that like is friend to like, but Socrates notes that this idea can be at best only halfway true:

> "To our way of thinking, the closer a wicked man comes to a wicked man and the more he associates with him, the more he becomes an enemy. Because he does him an injustice. And it's impossible for those who do an injustice and those who suffer it to be friends" (214 b8-c3).

Here the harmful actions of the bad make them unsuitable for the association that is *philia*, regardless of whether they desire what is good and regardless of whether they desire what belongs to them.

In the fifth section of the *Lysis*, Socrates provides a particular ground for this exclusion of the bad from *philia*: the bad have been corrupted to the extent that they are unable to profit from the wisdom that is central to *philia*, and so their participation in *philia* would be pointless. The NGNB are afflicted by the presence of bad and have need of wisdom, while the bad are those who have been so affected by badness that they are themselves bad. This distinction between two ways of experiencing badness is explained by reference to the distinction between ~~of~~ a young man whose hair appears white but is not white because of the presence of white lead applied to the hair and an older man whose hair is white due to old age. The white in the hair of the youth can be washed out and the hair restored to its natural color, while the white in the hair of the old man cannot be so removed by any amount of washing. Similarly, a person whose body is afflicted by the presence of disease may still be healed. Such a person qualifies as NGNB and may enter into *philia* with a doctor. The person who suffers from a terminal disease cannot enter into philia with a doctor, presumably because the doctor's wisdom is unable to benefit the terminally ill patient. This result – no philia between a terminally ill patient and a doctor – seems not to be based upon the desire for health, which a terminally ill patient may surely experience, but upon the fact that the therapeutic use of medical knowledge is no longer possible in the case of a terminally ill patient.

An association with a doctor offers no benefit to the terminally ill. What is needed for *philia* is not simply the desire for good but the capacity to enter into an association guided by wisdom. *Philia* is at home among human beings, some (but not all) of whom recognize their need for wisdom. The Specific Desire reading of *philia* does not give us reasonable grounds for restricting *philia* in this way to those who can benefit from the use of wisdom.

The representatives of the Specific Desire reading are of course aware that Socrates excludes the bad from *philia*; the important question is whether they are able to explain the exclusion without departing from the idea that *philia* is essentially one species of desire. Reshotko states that the bad are not involved in *philia* because no one desires what is bad. (1997, p. 7, n. 8). This is true, but no one desires things that are NGNB. Even so the NGNB participate in philia, and thus we still need an explanation for the exclusion of the bad. She also explains the exclusion of the bad from *philia* by noting that the bad have been corrupted to such an extent that they have no attraction to what is good (Reshotko, 1997, 8). This cannot be the reason, though; all humans desire what is good, even if the bad act on this desire in harmful ways. Wolfsdorf explains the exclusion by observing that Socrates treats *philia* consistently as a beneficial relation (Wolfsdorf, 2007, 238). The bad will be harmful to others, and so they cannot participate in *philia*. This is certainly true, but it indicates that *philia* entails more than a desire for what is good. It is the harm that the bad will do to their fellows in *philia* which excludes them from this relation, and not simply the nature of desire. Penner and Rowe face the problem of explaining Socrates' exclusion of the bad from *philia* by, in effect, emptying the category of the bad. They propose that all humans will fall under the category of the NGNB. The bad would have to be so affected by lack of wisdom as to fail to see the need for it and hence to fail to desire it:

> "But if the bad don't desire the good, and all desire is for the good, as Socrates is already proposing, then they don't desire at all. If it's hard to think of humans that don't have any desires, then there won't be any

> bad people around…" (Penner and Rowe, 2005, p. 106, n. 24).

But in fact the *Lysis* gives us a particular example of one who is bad: Hippothales is a bad poet, and he so misses the point of Socrates' conversation with Menexenus and Lysis as to assume that Lysis is bound by his admissions to become his boyfriend. Hippothales is a person who, though he is ignorant, is not motivated to escape from ignorance. He is an example of the bad person who is incapable of genuine *philia*. At the same time he desires the good and the beautiful in the person of Lysis. His exclusion from *philia* is better explained by his inability to enter into an association oriented toward wisdom than by placing him in the category of the NGNB.

The defender of the Specific Desire interpretation of *philia* may raise an objection against this account of the way in which Socrates excludes the bad from *philia*. On my account, bad people share in the universal human desire for good but cannot share in *philia* because they cannot benefit from an association guided by wisdom. Yet this overlooks two passages in which Socrates states that the bad do not desire the good and for this reason are not friends to the good. At 217b-c, while discussing the effect of disease on the human body, Socrates notes that a body suffering from disease is neither good nor bad and becomes friend of the good, a doctor:

> "But clearly this is before [the body] becomes bad itself by the bad it is in contact with. Because once it has become bad, it can no longer desire the good or be its friend." (217b-c)

A similar point is made at 217e-218a about something which badness has come to possess: "But the presence that makes it be bad deprives it of its desire as well as its love for the good." These passages suggest that it is the presence or absence of desire for the good that is crucial for *philia*, not association with wisdom.

In reply to this objection, I propose that we understand the category of bad people who are unable to partake in *philia* as those people who, due to ignorance, repeatedly and by choice act on

harmful desires. This is how Socrates introduces the notion of the unskilled lover and the bad poet at 205e-206b. As he points out Hippothales' failings, Socrates contrasts the skilled lover who does not praise his boyfriend until he has caught him with the unskilled lover whose excessive praise only succeeds in making the boy harder to catch. It is a poor poet whose use of poetry leads only to harm to himself. In this context Hippothales, the unskilled lover, desires the same thing as the skilled lover: the good and the beautiful as reflected in his beloved. But his self-deluded ignorance leads him only to harm himself by depriving himself of *philia* with Lysis. And in the fifth section of the *Lysis*, when Socrates imagines a counterfactual world which contains nothing bad, it is harmful desires that have vanished (221a-b). *Philia* still exists because people who are neither good nor bad may still be ignorant and will still need the benefits of wisdom. But such a world will contain no one who is bad in the sense of sharing the ultimate desire for good but refusing to acknowledge his need for wisdom and consequently acting on harmful desires. This conception of the bad who do not enter into *philia* allows us to preserve the unity of Socrates' understanding of desire in the *Lysis* and in such dialogues as the *Meno* and the *Gorgias*. In the latter dialogues Socrates argues that all desire is for the good, even if some desires lead to harm for those who act on them out of ignorance (*Men*. 77a-78a, *Grg*. 467a-468e). If we accept that Socrates holds this conception of desire in the *Lysis* as well, then the crucial component of human *philia* is not desire for the good – even the bad have that much – but entering into an association guided by wisdom.

One apparent advantage of the Specific Desire interpretation of *philia* is that it offers a straightforward interpretation of Socrates' claim at 221d that desire is the cause (*aitia*) of *philia*. He makes this claim as a result of the revision he makes in his account of *philia* starting at 220b. Previously he had said that *philia* is present on account of the presence of evil; a sick person is friend to a doctor on account of the presence of sickness in the body. But Socrates reflects further:

> Haven't we agreed that the friend loves something, and loves it on account of something, and didn't we think then that it was on account of bad that what was neither good nor bad loved the good? … But now it looks like some other cause of loving and being loved has appeared…. Then can it really be, as we were just saying, that desire is the cause of friendship, and that what desires is a friend to that which it desires, and is so whenever it does so? (221 c5-d4)

Here it seems clear that *philia* operates out of desire for the good. Even so, it need not follow from this that *philia* for Socrates here is a manifestation of the same desire or attraction that nonhuman animals and even plants share. We could understand the claim that desire is the cause for *philia* as the claim that desire for some particular good leads humans to adopt a policy or set up institutions which promote that good. For instance, at *Protagoras* 322e-323a, Protagoras observes that political assemblies allow all citizens to contribute to debates concerning political excellence and justice.

> "… [F]or they think that this particular virtue, political or civic virtue, is shared by all, or there wouldn't be any cities. This must be the explanation [*aitia*] for it, Socrates." (*Prt*. 322e-323a)

In addition, in the *Hippias Major* at 296e-297a Socrates speaks of the beneficial and the fine being the cause of the good, where what is fine, such as intelligence (*phronesis*) is the maker or producer of the good, something different from it. These examples show how desire for good may use wisdom to cause something distinct from it. Here desire does not stand to *philia* in the relation of genus to species or determinable to determinate.

What does Socrates mean when he states that desire is the cause of *philia*? My proposal is that desire for good things brings humans to engage in associations and fellowships which allow wisdom to steer human action towards the good. In the crucial fifth section of the *Lysis*, where Socrates sets out his account of *philia*, this is the model that structures the examples he employs: the sick person is friend to the doctor for the sake of health, and the father desires wine

and a cup to hold the wine for the sake of healing the son who has drunk hemlock. The genuine lover must be loved and accepted in *philia* by his boyfriend. Here desire for good is the cause of a friendship by motivating humans to enter into associations. If the desire for the good is not brought within the bounds of such an association, then Socrates' account of *philia* would be vulnerable to the objection raised in the third section, namely that desire and love for another is necessary but not sufficient for *philia*. Contrary to the suggestion by Reshotko that we understand *philia* in the *Lysis* with concepts that bear no special relation to human beings, *philia* here seems to be the sort of association in which wisdom guides human action. This sort of association, which Plato portrays for us in different guises from the beginning of the Lysis to the end, is tailored especially for humans as opposed to other kinds of animals and the divine.

I began by describing two opposed interpretations of *philia* in the *Lysis*, the Personal Friendship and the Specific Desire interpretations. These offer competing answers to the question of how Socrates wishes to reform his contemporaries' understanding and practice of *philia*. The first interpretation emphasizes the need for reciprocal affection and concern for the well-being of the beloved, while the second encourages us to reconceive *philia* as one instance of a pattern found throughout nature. I suggest that both interpretations should be rejected because they not do justice to the way in which Plato dramatizes and, through Socrates' words, describes *philia* as a type of human association formed to benefit from wisdom. Unlike the Personal Friendship model, *philia* here does not require reciprocal affection, emotional intimacy, and love of the other for his or her own sake. And unlike the Specific Desire interpretation of friendship, *philia* is a uniquely human response to the human deficiency in wisdom.

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