

Philosophy and the Ordinary: On the Setting of Plato's *Lysis*

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PLATO'S DIALOGUES often begin in the ordinary. This can be seen both as a departure from the traditions of Presocratic literature and as a part of the Socratic philosophical inheritance.¹ If one takes seriously the idea that the dialogue's philosophical content is inseparable from its dramatic form,² this beginning in the ordinary is not merely a literary device—the vestige of a dramatist turned philosopher—

¹ Cicero famously claimed, “Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and to place it in cities, and even to introduce it into homes and compel it to inquire about life and standards and goods and evils” (*Tusc.* 5.10). By depicting philosophy as beginning in an ordinary setting, Plato may be seen as responding to this feature of Socrates' philosophical practice. Though our evidence from other authors of Socratic dialogues is scant, one arguably finds an ordinary setting in e.g. Xenophon's *Symp.* (1–2) and Aeschines' *Alcibiades* (fr.2 Dittmar). By contrast, the extant Presocratic literature is clearly set apart from the ordinary world, by its otherworldly subject matter, its often poetic mode of expression, and its extraordinary and forbidding diction. The proem to Parmenides' hexameter poem (fr.1), for example, depicts a youth carried on a chariot led “by wise horses” and “maidens” on the “far-famed road of the god” to the “gates of the paths of Night and Day” in order to meet the Goddess, who confirms that he is on a path “far indeed ... from the steps of men”: see G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1993) 242–244.

² As a modern principle for reading Plato, this idea can be found in F. Schleiermacher, *Introduction to the Dialogues of Plato*, transl. W. Dobson (New York 1973) 14; for elaboration and defense see also F. J. Gonzalez, “Introduction,” in *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies* (London 1995) 1–22.

but rather a meaningful part of Plato's philosophical dramas. Proclus identified three interpretive attitudes of ancient commentators toward the philosophical significance of the dramatic prologues: (1) they are irrelevant to the philosophical content and can be safely ignored; (2) they are somewhat relevant, but only for the presentation of moral attitudes, and interpreters should try to connect the moral attitudes to the philosophical content; and (3) they are integral and interpreters must connect the prologue to the philosophical content.³ Like Proclus, I will be endorsing (3); however, I will not be claiming, as does Proclus, that the prologue has symbolic or allegorical significance.⁴ Rather, I claim that the significance is pedagogical and

³ Procl. *In Pm.* 658–659 (ed. V. Cousin, *Procli Philosophi Platonici Opera Inedita* [Frankfurt am Main 1962]). Dillon, in his commentary in G. R. Morrow and J. M. Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton 1987) 47 n.40, cites parallels in *In Tim.* to argue that the first position is that of the Middle Platonic commentators, like Severus; the second, that of Porphyry; and the third, that of Iamblichus. For ancient perspectives on the significance of Plato's prologues in general, see H. Tarrant, *Plato's First Interpreters* (Ithaca 2000) 39–41. The contemporary interpretative consensus seems to grant only marginal relevance to the prologues. We do have some anecdotal evidence for the significance of prologues. Plato was reputed to have reworked the opening line of the *Resp.*—celebrated by Demetrius (*Eloc.* 21)—several times: Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 25.209; Diog. Laert. 3.37; Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.64. Cf. A. Swift Riginos, *Platonica: the Anecdotes concerning the Life and Writings of Plato* (New York 1976) 185–186. Tarrant (39) takes this anecdote as good evidence that Plato was seen as having exerted much effort in his prologues but wonders whether the effort was “philosophically or stylistically motivated.” I think the answer must be “both,” even if one admits that the literary aspects serve the philosophical purpose of the dialogue. Otherwise, one may be approaching the whole question with a false dilemma in hand.

⁴ Proclus takes the rather extreme view that the dialogue is a miniature cosmos, with each having a part analogous to the Good, Nous, the soul, and nature respectively (*In Alc.* 10). Adducing the image of organic unity in *Phdr.* 264C, he also claims that each dialogue is “a living being harmonious in all its parts” (*In Pm.* 659). In practice, this means that Proclus looks for symbolic and allegorical meaning for every detail of the prologue: see for example his own lengthy analysis of the prologue of the *Pm.* (659–722). For an alternative view of the significance of organic unity for Plato's philo-

metaphilosophical, and that this significance is tied to human *self-knowledge*.⁵ By giving his dialogues an ordinary setting, Plato aims to get his audience to see the relevance of the philosophical conversation to their own ordinary lives, and thereby to show that philosophy is itself rooted in and tied to the ordinary.⁶ Put differently, Plato wants to illustrate that we *already possess* an intrinsic motivation to pursue philosophical knowledge and that our ordinary concerns open up into deeper philosophical questions. He thus provides his readers with both an occasion for self-knowledge and a philosophical framework for conceptualizing it.

In §I, I will first elucidate what I mean by an “ordinary setting” by building on Bakhtin’s analysis of serio-comical genres.⁷ Then, in §II, using the *Lysis* as my case, I will show how Plato, in the prologue of the dialogue (203A–207D), begins by situat-

sophical writing see F. V. Trivigno, “Putting Unity in Its Place: Organic Unity in Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Literature and Aesthetics* 19 (2009) 153–182. While Proclus’ position seems excessive, it should be noted that my view is not incompatible with the presence of allegorical meaning and thus does not rule out Proclus’ allegorical analyses.

⁵ Proclus does acknowledge what I would call the pedagogical aims of both the dialogue as a whole and the prologue as well (*In Alc.* 1–20, esp. 18–19). He makes self-knowledge both the starting point of philosophy and the aim of the dialogue with respect to its audience. However, in his zeal to find *symbolic* significance in every detail, he misses the way in which the dialogue reproduces the actual world as a way of occasioning self-knowledge in the audience. For a defense of the idea that Plato’s dialogues can have metaphilosophical significance, see C. L. Griswold, “Plato’s Metaphilosophy: Why Plato Wrote Dialogues,” in N. Smith (ed.), *Plato: Critical Assessments I* (London 1998) 221–252. As he defines it, “metaphilosophy is the effort to philosophize about *how* we reason about things and so to understand, ‘before’ we reason about them, what we can and cannot know” (223).

⁶ Since the practical and pedagogical aim of the dialogue concerns the moral attitudes of the interlocutors as they reflect those of the audience, my reading incorporates the kind of significance endorsed in (2). Proclus himself claims that, on his understanding, (3) incorporates (2) (*In Prm.* 659).

⁷ M. M. Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, transl. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin 1981) 3–40.

ing the philosophical conversation in a world recognizable to and accessible to its audience.⁸ This ordinary world, I contend in §III, opens up into an extraordinary world—of philosophical dialectic—which transcends the ordinary while remaining tied to and oriented by it. Finally, in §IV, I argue that this movement serves two functions: one pedagogical and one metaphilosophical. First, the setting allows the audience to see the relevance of the philosophical conversation about love and friendship to their own lives in order to motivate a turn toward philosophy.⁹ Second, the setting reveals something deeper and more interesting about Plato's conception of philosophy, namely, that philosophy is itself rooted in and tied to the ordinary. In one sense, this thesis is banal; however, in another, it is quite radical: for it allows one to see Platonic philosophy, not as a rejection of our ordinary embodied experience, but rather as the deepest expression of it.¹⁰ In the conclusion, §V, I

⁸ I take the *Lysis* as my case study for three reasons: first, Plato provides rich and lively details in the dialogue's prologue. Second, it has already been demonstrated that the explicit *themes* of the prologue are connected to the dialogue's main action: see F. J. Gonzalez, "How to Read a Platonic Prologue: *Lysis* 203a–207d," in A. N. Michelini (ed.), *Plato as Author: The Rhetoric of Philosophy* (Leiden 2003) 15–44; T. Penner and C. J. Rowe, *Plato's Lysis* (Cambridge 2005) 3–11, 189–192. Third, the prologue is simple and not multi-layered like the prologues of *Prt.*, *Thl.*, and *Symp.*, where the main philosophical action is narrated by one character to another; I can thus focus on the main narrative itself and delay questions of the significance of the meta-narrative.

⁹ On the importance of the reader's response to Plato's dialogues see M. H. Miller, "Platonic Mimesis," in T. M. Falkner, N. Felson, and D. Konstan (eds.), *Contextualizing Classics: Ideology, Performance, Dialogue: Essays in Honor of John J. Peradotto* (Lanham 1999) 253–266; J. Gordon, *Turning toward Philosophy: Literary Device and Dramatic Structure in Plato's Dialogues* (University Park 1999).

¹⁰ The picture of Plato pointing up towards the heavens, as in Raphael's *School of Athens*, comes in part as a result of a too narrow interpretive focus on the grand metaphysical visions of disembodied souls that one finds in several dialogues, in particular the *Phd.* I am in no way denying the relevance and philosophical importance of these passages; rather, I am trying

end by anticipating a couple of objections.

I

In his essay “Epic and Novel,” Bakhtin argues that the serio-comical genres, which include the Socratic dialogue and, for example, Roman satire, constitute the “first step in the development of the novel” (22). His analysis of these genres focuses on their *familiarizing* tendencies, that is, how they create an ordinary world; the familiarity of the ordinary stands in stark contrast to the idealization and distance characteristic of the worlds of epic and of tragedy (21–26). Here I will elucidate four typical features of an ordinary setting. The first two come directly from Bakhtin’s account: an ordinary setting (1) is spatio-temporally familiar and (2) is marked by contingency. The other two features I establish through an adaptation of Bakhtin’s method of analysis, that is, by using tragedy to set the ordinary into relief: it thereby becomes clear that the ordinary setting also (3) emphasizes our bodily limitations¹¹ and (4) dramatizes mundane human concerns.

First, the setting is spatio-temporally familiar, as opposed to awe-inspiring and distant. Bakhtin observes that the time of epic is the “absolute past,” whose world “is completed, conclusive, and immutable” as well as “sacred and sacrosanct”; by contrast, the starting point for understanding serio-comical genres is “contemporary reality,” which lacks this distance and the sacred character of a completed, traditional past (22). The physical space of the setting is commonplace and accessible to

to restore some balance, as it were, by connecting these passages of extraordinary significance back to their roots in the ordinary.

¹¹ In *Rabelais and His World*, transl. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington 1993), Bakhtin also makes the connection between the body and the ordinary in his notion of grotesque realism, a comedic trope—used very often by Aristophanes—whereby everything abstract and noble is reduced to the lowest material level. For Bakhtin, this is part of the carnivalesque subversion of the dominant social norms and power structures. Plato, however, reverses the order Bakhtin’s movement by beginning with the body in order to show its potential for nobler pursuits.

ordinary people—it is not the lofty and exalted world of tragedy, accessible only to its own great and distant heroes. Put another way, the action of a Socratic dialogue is set in the house of Callias, perhaps, but never in the house of Atreus.

Second, the world of the setting is marked by chance, as seemingly arbitrary and unexpected factors play determining roles. Bakhtin claims that “[i]t is canonical for this [serio-comical] genre that even an accidental and insignificant pretext can ordinarily and deliberately serve as the most immediate starting point for a dialogue; the ‘todayness’ of the day was emphasized in all its randomness (accidental encounters, etc.)” (25–26). By contrast, tragedy is throughout governed by necessity, both because the tragic protagonist lacks freedom in some important sense and because the mythic material prescribes the outlines of the narrative in advance.

Third, in an ordinary setting, the physical embodiment of the people who populate the setting is depicted and often emphasized. Part of what makes the characters familiar is the presentation of their embodied physicality, especially in the common ways the body limits or compels us. Consider how comedy familiarizes its characters by showing them tripping, farting, or sexually aroused. By contrast, the great feats of athletic or martial prowess depicted in epic poetry serve a distancing function, as such accomplishments are beyond the ability of mere mortals.

Finally, the concerns, troubles and anxieties of the characters in the setting are ordinary or typical, like caring for relatives, as opposed to grandiose, like conquering Troy. The representative motivations of the characters in this setting are familiar and typically unambitious. The concerns are ones that an audience can relate to with neither jealousy nor admiration. By contrast, the noble deeds and glorious ambitions of an Agamemnon or an Odysseus are far removed from ordinary life—admirable perhaps but only at a great distance. Furthermore, the people of the setting are themselves ordinary in the sense that they are the *sort of people* one might have run into on the street. One finds a Meno, or even an Alcibiades—Socrates’ late fifth century contemporaries who would be well known to

Plato's early fourth century audience—but never an Ajax or an Oedipus of the sacred and distant past.

II

With this analysis of the ordinary setting in hand, I now turn to the *Lysis*. Abstracted from the rest of the dialogue, the prologue of the *Lysis* resembles a vignette from everyday life; those who have noticed this have emphasized the influence of mime on Plato.¹² Here I simply want to show that the prologue of the *Lysis* reveals an ordinary setting.

First, the setting of the *Lysis* is spatio-temporally familiar. The very first sentence of the dialogue situates Socrates' initial encounter with Hippothales and Ctesippus by a little gate near the fountain of Panops (203A1–5):¹³

ἐπορευόμεν μὲν ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας εὐθὺς Λυκείου τὴν ἔξω τείχους ὑπὲρ αὐτὸ τὸ τεῖχος· ἐπειδὴ δ' ἐγενόμην κατὰ τὴν πυλίδαν ἢ ἢ Πάνοπος κρήνην, ἐνταῦθα συνέτυχον Ἴπποθάλει τε τῷ Ἱερωνύμῳ καὶ Κτησίππῳ τῷ Παιανιεῖ καὶ ἄλλοις μετὰ τούτων νεανίσκοις ἀθροῖσι συνεστῶσι.

I was walking from the Academy straight to the Lyceum on the road just outside and under the city wall. When I reached the little gate near Panops' spring, I happened to meet Hippothales, Hieronymus' son, and Ctesippus of Paecania, and they were standing together in a group with some other youths.

Socrates is bid by Hippothales to come “here” twice—*δεῦρο* is placed emphatically at the beginning of two sentences (203B3, 203B6). The location is then further specified both by “showing [Socrates] some kind of enclosed area with an open door just across from the wall” and by explaining that the boys spend

¹² See e.g. J. McDonald, *Character-Portraiture in Epicharmus, Sophron, and Plato* (Sewanee 1931); M. Haslam, “Plato, Sophron, and the Dramatic Dialogue,” *BICS* 19 (1972) 17–38; J. H. Hordern, *Sophron's Mimes* (Oxford 2004) 26–27. The connection between mime and the Platonic dialogue was first made by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1447). It was also endorsed by Bakhtin (“Epic and Novel” 21), who considered mime to be a serio-comical genre.

¹³ For the Greek text I follow J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera* III (Oxford 1922). All translations are my own.

their time, mostly conversing, at “a newly built wrestling school” (203B6–204A3). There is nothing particularly awe-inspiring about the gate, the fountain, or the school for that matter.

After Socrates agrees to go inside in order to demonstrate for Ctesippus the proper way to speak to one’s beloved, the spatial setting is specified further by the description of the boys playing knucklebones (206E3–9):

εἰσελθόντες δὲ κατελάβομεν αὐτόθι τεθυκότας τε τοὺς παῖδας καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰ ἱερεῖα σχεδόν τι ἤδη πεποιημένα, ἀστραγάλιζοντάς τε δὴ καὶ κεκοσμημένους ἅπαντας. οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ ἔπαιζον ἔξω, οἱ δὲ τινες τοῦ ἀποδυτηρίου ἐν γωνία ἠρτίαζον ἀστραγάλοις παμπόλλοις, ἐκ φορμίσκων τινῶν προαιρούμενοι· τούτους δὲ περιέστασαν ἄλλοι θεωροῦντες.

When we came inside, we found that the boys had performed the sacrifices there and that, since the ritual matters were nearly finished, they were all playing knucklebones still dressed up in their ritual attire. While many of them were playing outside in the courtyard, some others in the corner of the undressing room were playing odd and even with a great many knucklebones, which they pulled out of some little baskets. Still others stood around watching them.

Having finished with the sacrifice and religious celebration, the boys thus return to their ordinary amusements. Socrates and the others position themselves at a distance “on the opposite side of the room” where it is quiet in order to carry on a conversation (207A3–5). When Lysis and Menexenus finally do come over, somehow drawn to Socrates’ conversation, a small crowd forms around Socrates; Hippothales “using the crowd as a screen, took up a position where he thought Lysis wouldn’t see him, fearing that he might irritate the boy” (207B5–7). We are not meant to think that there is anything special about the courtyard or the room, but we do get a vivid depiction of the seductive spatial dynamics of the main players in the drama. Indeed, what this scene depicts (young children playing games, a lover avoiding the notice of his beloved, etc.) is perfectly

commonplace.¹⁴

The precise dramatic date of the *Lysis* is uncertain, but the fact that it takes place during the festival of Hermes (206D1) would likely have revealed the month, if not the day, to a fourth-century audience.¹⁵ The temporal setting is thus ordinary as well. In the *Lysis*, time intrudes on the philosophical discussion and limits it in a way familiar from our own lives. In epic and tragedy, by contrast, literary conventions free authors from the constraints of time, allowing for its swift passage and the efficient sequencing of major events. In tragedy, for example, a choral song is being sung “while” some important action is taking place offstage. In Plato’s *Lysis*, we find no such literary device and time proceeds normally, as it were.¹⁶ The

¹⁴ In *Plato’s Philosophers* (Chicago 2009), Catherine Zuckert argues that Socrates’ presence in the wrestling-school “during the *Hermaea*” amounted to “contravening Athenian customs or law” (513) and that “Plato thus depicts Socrates acting in a highly questionable, if not improper, manner” (514). If she is right, then the setting can hardly be described as ordinary. However, Zuckert’s analysis is wrong on several counts. First, the passage she cites (Aeschines’ *In Tim.* 10) says nothing about the presence of adults being forbidden during the *Hermaea*. Second, though the purported legal document quoted at *In Tim.* 12 does forbid adults from participating in the *Hermaea* contests, it too says nothing about their mere presence and, further, like all such documents in this speech, it is universally recognized as a spurious interpolation; on this see N. Fisher, *Aeschines: Against Timarchus* (Oxford 2001) 68. Last, according to the alleged law, no one older than the boys was allowed in the wrestling school at all *on punishment of death*. There is simply no question of this being a law in effect in fifth-century Athens (Fisher 135). The mingling of adults and boys in gymnasia and wrestling-schools seems not to have been uncommon: see K. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London 1978) 54–56.

¹⁵ F. J. Gonzalez, “Plato’s *Lysis*: An Enactment of Philosophical Kinship,” *Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1995) 69–90, at 71; D. Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis 2002) 316–317.

¹⁶ Plato does occasionally have his characters discuss philosophical issues at extraordinary length. For example, Socrates narrates the conversation that is the *Resp.* the day after having had it (327A), and one might imagine that both the original and the retelling might have lasted well into the night and perhaps until the next morning, as the conversation in the *Symp.*

dramatic surroundings reemerge at the end as the discussion concludes because it is late and the young boys must return home to their parents (223A2–5):

κᾱτα, ὡσπερ δαίμονες τινες, προσελθόντες οἱ παιδαγωγοί, ὃ τε τοῦ Μενεξένου καὶ ὃ τοῦ Λύσιδος, ἔχοντες αὐτῶν τοὺς ἀδελφούς, παρεκάλουν καὶ ἐκέλευον αὐτοὺς οἴκαδ' ἀπιέναι· ἤδη γὰρ ἦν ὀψέ.

Just then, like some kind of divine spirits, appeared the tutors of Menexenus and Lysis. Having the boys' brothers with them, the tutors called out to the boys and instructed them to go home. For it was already late.

The κᾱτα indicates the suddenness of the arrival of the guardians and thus the abrupt ending to the conversation. An ending to their discussion is inevitable since the *Lysis* dramatizes a philosophical conversation as engaged in by particular persons: Socrates, Lysis, and Menexenus.

Second, the meeting that is the occasion for the discussion is purely accidental.¹⁷ Socrates, on his way from the Academy to the Lyceum, “happened to meet [συνέτυχον]” Hippothales and Ctesippus.¹⁸ Had Socrates gotten to his original destination, the Lyceum, he might have had an entirely different conversation with someone else. Indeed, Socrates' decision to enter the wrestling-school is clearly influenced by the presence of a great many good-looking boys—another incidental feature of the setting (203B8). Socrates' keen interest in hearing about the most attractive boy causes Hippothales' blushing (204B1–5), and it is this that sparks Socrates' interest most of all and indeed sets the topic for the rest of the dialogue. Thus, the dramatic fact of Socrates and Hippothales' accidental en-

explicitly does (223C–D).

¹⁷ It is accidental from a perspective *internal* to the dialogue's drama. Plato obviously builds such contingency into his dialogues: see C. L. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (University Park 1996) 225.

¹⁸ R. M. Dancy, *Plato's Introduction of Forms* (Cambridge 2004) 26 n.10, notes that the most common opening question in the dialogues is, “where are you coming from?”

counter is a condition of the dramatic action and exerts an influence on the ensuing discussion, i.e., its topic, direction, character, and sophistication.¹⁹

Third, the human body permeates the prologue of the *Lysis*. The bulk of the conversation takes place in an establishment dedicated to bodily improvement: the wrestling school. The physical beauty of the boys inside is what Hippothales uses to lure Socrates into conversation with them. Lysis' beauty, in particular, is what causes Hippothales' presence and provokes Socrates' interest. Further, love's involuntary physical manifestation, blushing, which Hippothales does twice, one time more intensely than the other (204B5, C3), both initiates Socrates' intuition that the former is in love and causes his companion to mock him (204B–D). Ctesippus is shocked by Hippothales' reticence to utter his beloved's name (204C5–D3):

ἐὰν δ' οὗτος καὶ μικρὸν χρόνον συνδιατρίψῃ σοι, παραταθήσεται ὑπὸ σοῦ ἀκούων θαμὰ λέγοντος. ἡμῶν γοῦν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐκκεκώφωκε τὰ ὦτα καὶ ἐμπέπληκε Λύσιδος· ἂν μὲν δὴ καὶ ὑποπίῃ, εὐμαρία ἡμῖν ἔστιν καὶ ἐξ ὕπνου ἐγρομένοις Λύσιδος οἴεσθαι τοῦνομα ἀκούειν.

If this man [Socrates] spends even a small amount of time with you, he will be tortured by hearing you say it so often. As for us, we've all nearly gone deaf, Socrates, from having our ears stuffed with 'Lysis'. And if he's been drinking even a little bit, there's a good chance that we'll be startled out of sleep thinking we hear the name 'Lysis'.

¹⁹ In making this claim about the accidental nature of dramatic prologues, I do not mean to imply that necessity, or even tragic necessity, is entirely absent from Plato's dialogues. Necessity plays a crucial role in the submission of one's own views to the force of argument. More broadly, the impending trial and death of Socrates provides a background of tragic inevitability. To explore this line of thought is outside the scope of this paper; for an account of the tragic aspects of Plato's philosophy, see F. V. Trivigno, "Paratragedy in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 36 (2009) 73–105. On the way in which the setting limits the philosophical possibilities of the dialogue and thematizes human finitude, see D. A. Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Albany 1995) 13–33.

The description of a drunken Hippothales stuffing ‘Lysis’ into his companions’ ears so much that they wake up in the middle of the night imagining they hear the name thematizes bodily limitations in several ways. The auditory senses are overwhelmed by sound, the effect of love on the body is exacerbated by drink, and the peace of the body’s sleep is disturbed by hallucination. At the very end of the dialogue, there is a shoving match between the loud, drunken tutors of Lysis and Menexenus and the group, who unsuccessfully try to drive the tutors away so that they may continue the conversation (223A1–B8).

Finally, Hippothales’ erotic love for Lysis and his obsequious praise of him provide the human context for the ensuing discussion of friendship. Hippothales wants to learn how to talk to his beloved (206C1–3). This is hardly a technical theoretical matter, but an ordinary and practical one. Socrates proposes to demonstrate how to seduce one’s beloved (206C4–7). Recalling his similar claim in the *Symposium* (177D8), Socrates suggests that he is himself wise concerning τὰ ἐρωτικά (206A1), particularly good at recognizing a lover and the object of his love (204B8–C2), and thus well-positioned to teach Hippothales. Socrates’ actual advice seems quite practical indeed (206A1–4):

ὅστις οὖν τὰ ἐρωτικά, ὧ φίλε, σοφός, οὐκ ἐπαινῆ τὸν ἐρώμενον πρὶν ἂν ἔλθῃ, δεδιὼς τὸ μέλλον ὅπῃ ἀποβήσεται. καὶ ἅμα οἱ καλοί, ἐπειδὴν τις αὐτοὺς ἐπαινῆ καὶ αὔξῃ, φρονήματος ἐμπύμπλονται καὶ μεγαλαυχίας.

Whoever is wise concerning τὰ ἐρωτικά doesn’t praise his beloved before he’s got him, for fear of how the future might turn out if he does. And besides, these good-looking ones, when someone praises them, get swelled heads and become filled with pride and arrogance.

Socrates’ discussion with Lysis is meant to be a model seduction scene, that is, an exemplar of erotic love (206C4–7):

ἀλλ’ εἴ μοι ἐθελήσῃς αὐτὸν ποιῆσαι εἰς λόγους ἐλθεῖν, ἴσως ἂν δυναίμην σοι ἐπιδειξάι ἃ χρὴ αὐτῷ διαλέγεσθαι ἀντὶ τούτων ὧν οὗτοι λέγειν τε καὶ ἄδειν φασί σε.

If you would be willing to get Lysis to have a conversation with me, perhaps I might be able to demonstrate for you the kind of thing one must say to him, instead of the things which your friends describe you as singing and saying.

Socrates begins by introducing two familiar kinds of love: the friendly rivalry of Lysis and Menexenus (207B–D) and the nurturing care of Lysis' parents for him (207D–210E). In his initial engagement with the young boys, Socrates draws on their ordinary experiences in order to seduce them into a philosophical conversation, just as Plato, in staging this scene, draws on his readers' experience to seduce them as well. This seduction via the ordinary is not *merely* rhetorical, since part of what is to be understood—both by the boys and by us—is that the ordinary concerns we have require something extraordinary—philosophy—in order to be truly satisfied.

III

The conversation in the *Lysis* does not simply remain in the ordinary, and in this section I focus on the move in the dialogue from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Even as Plato appeals to our experiences of love and friendship in trying to pique our interest, at the same time he takes us beyond them in the dialectical analysis of friendship. In doing so, he challenges his readers to participate actively in a philosophical investigation of friendship. Love and friendship retain their ordinary significance in the prologue, but in attempting to understand and explain them, Socrates and the two boys construct a rather extraordinary philosophical account.²⁰ Here I will briefly show that the different portrayals of friendship generate different models of friendship, which cause serious conceptual difficulties. In trying to cope with such difficulties, Socrates comes to

²⁰ Love may be a particularly appropriate topic, since, in the *Ly.*, the experience of love contains an avenue into the extraordinary. In particular, erotic love *feels* extraordinary and excites a competitive element in us. See R. Jenks, "Varieties of *Philia* in Plato's *Lysis*," *Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2005) 65–80, at 66–68.

the extraordinary notion of the *πρῶτον φίλον* or “first friend,” the friend for the sake of which we value all other friends (219C7–9), but this too is a highly problematic notion.

The three ordinary kinds of friendship introduced in the prologue provide three very different models for friendship. First, Hippothales’ love for Lysis is non-reciprocal, competitive, and unequal: he loves and desires to “possess” a boy younger than himself. Second, Lysis and Menexenus are equals who have a reciprocal and competitive friendship: they love each other but are always trying to “one-up” each other. Third, the love that his parents have for Lysis is cooperative and reciprocal, but unequal: they care for him in a way that he could not care for them because they *know* more than he does (209C). In the course of the discussion, Socrates introduces other ordinary kinds of love: love of animals and even inanimate objects. Dog-lovers and wine-lovers are cases of “friendship” in which there can be no question of equality, competition, or reciprocity.²¹ The differences highlight *conceptual difficulties* for the account of friendship: Is friendship essentially reciprocal or non-reciprocal? Is it competitive or cooperative? Is it between equals or unequals? Is it interpersonal or between persons and non-persons? Who *really* are friends?

These conceptual problems, in the course of the dialogue, generate a radically new notion of friendship: the first friend, which is the good “in which all these so-called friendships terminate” (220B2–3). One of the most promising of the proposed definitions of friendship in the dialogue holds the following (219A6–B2):

²¹ On the wide significance of *φιλία*, see LSJ s.v. See also W. K. C. Guthrie, *Plato, the Man and his Dialogues: Earlier Period* (Cambridge 1975) 136–137; M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge 1986) 354–355; F. Renaud, “Humbling as Upbringing: The Ethical Dimension of the Elenchus in the *Lysis*,” in G. A. Scott (ed.), *Does Socrates Have a Method? Rethinking the Elenchus in Plato’s Dialogues and Beyond* (University Park 2002) 183–198; Jenks, *Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2005) 65–66.

τὸ οὔτε κακὸν οὔτε ἀγαθὸν ἄρα διὰ τὸ κακὸν καὶ τὸ ἐχθρὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φίλον ἐστὶν ἔνεκα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ φίλου.

What is neither good nor bad is friend of the good because of what is bad and an enemy and for the sake of what is good and a friend.

The first friend is introduced to stave off the potential regress problem generated by the ἔνεκα clause (219C5–D2):

ἄρ' οὖν οὐκ ἀνάγκη ἀπειπεῖν ἡμᾶς οὕτως ἰόντας ἢ ἀφικέσθαι ἐπὶ τινα ἀρχήν, ἢ οὐκέτ' ἐπανοίσει ἐπ' ἄλλο φίλον, ἀλλ' ἥξει ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο ὃ ἐστὶν πρῶτον φίλον, οὗ ἔνεκα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα φημὲν πάντα φίλα εἶναι;

Won't it be necessary for us to give up going on in this way and to arrive at some first principle, which will no longer throw us back onto another friend, but will take us to that which is the first friend, something for the sake of which we say that all the others are friends?

The first friend, as an originating principle, seems to refer to something like the idea of the good, or perhaps of beauty (216D2). Such a friendship exists between a person and a non-person and is non-reciprocal and unequal. In one sense, we are very far indeed from where we began with Lysis' and Menexenus' friendship. However, as Socrates makes clear, until one understands the first friend—the friend in the primary sense—one will fail to understand ordinary friendships. This extraordinary new notion emerges from an attempt to understand an ordinary friendship, and, it turns out, is *necessary* in order to explain it. Both our conception of love and of love's ultimate object needs to be radically reoriented if the desires implicit in ordinary love are ever to be genuinely satisfied. We need, in short, to become lovers of wisdom, i.e. to love and pursue the first friend most of all.

The primacy of the first friend generates further and deeper philosophical problems: how to reconcile love of this first friend and love of human friends? It is unclear how, given the primacy of the first friend, to formulate one's relation to other persons. Are human friends to be conceived as cooperative or competitive seekers of the good? Is there an implicit notion of

philosophical friendship? Recall that Socrates himself is providing a paradigmatic seduction speech for Hippothales through his conversation with the boys. This would seem to suggest that Socrates enacts an alternative model of friendship, one which has the pursuit of wisdom at its core. Indeed, at the very end of the dialogue, Socrates declares that they are “ridiculous” since they “believe that they are friends of one another . . . but what a friend is [they] have not been able to discover” (223A). Socrates emphatically declares his support for this claim—“for I count myself in with you”—but he provides no explanation or account of it. Is such philosophical friendship even possible, and if so, is it merely instrumental?²² It is not the purpose of this paper to pursue these difficult philosophical and interpretive questions. Rather, in the next section, I propose a way to understand the *significance* of the move in the dialogue from the ordinary to the extraordinary and the way Plato portrays the ordinary as opening up into the extraordinary.

IV

In my view, by giving his dialogues an ordinary setting and showing philosophical conversation emerge from it, Plato attempts to achieve two aims. First, he aims to get his audience to see the relevance of the philosophical conversation to their own ordinary lives and to provide the motivation for them to turn toward philosophical inquiry and the philosophical life. In other words, his portrayal of the ordinary setting is part of Plato’s *protreptic* pedagogical strategy. Second, through this dialectic between the ordinary and the extraordinary, Plato aims to show that philosophy itself is rooted in ordinary life and remains oriented by it. This is the metaphilosophical implication I mentioned at the outset.

²² For the instrumentalist view, see e.g. L. Versenyi, “Plato’s *Lysis*,” *Phronesis* 20 (1975) 185–198; T. Irwin, *Plato’s Moral Theory* (Oxford 1997) 57. Opposing it, see e.g. G. Lesses, “Socratic Friendship and Euthydemean Goods,” in T. M. Robinson and L. Brisson (eds.), *Plato: Euthydemus, Lysis, Charmides* (Sankt Augustin 2000) 349–357.

Socratic pedagogy typically involved getting others to participate in philosophical conversation by connecting their idiosyncratic concerns with more general philosophical questions.²³ This is likely what is meant by Socrates' avowed ability to recognize the lover. With Menexenus, described as "contentious" (211B8), Socrates asks more pointed philosophical questions. By contrast, with Lysis, portrayed as more shy (207A5–7), Socrates gently draws him out by asking him first whether his parents love him.²⁴ Plato himself faces a more difficult pedagogical problem with his dialogues, that of unknown readers with unknowable reactions. By locating his philosophical conversation in an ordinary setting, with ordinary people, Plato attempts to get his readers to see themselves on stage, as it were, in order to seduce them, as Socrates seduces his interlocutors, into a philosophical conversation.²⁵ By portraying Hippothales as in love,

²³ Socrates seems particularly good at getting others to have a conversation with him: see H. Teloh, *Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues* (Notre Dame 1986); D. Roochnik, "Socrates' Pedagogical Flexibility: Two Case Studies," *Teaching Philosophy* 24 (2001) 29–45. Where he is less successful is in turning his interlocutors toward philosophy. For the larger significance of Socrates' relative failure in this regard, see Trivigno, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 36 (2009) 92–101.

²⁴ See A. Tessitore, "Plato's *Lysis*: An Introduction to Philosophical Friendship," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 28 (1990) 115–132, at 119–121. He claims that "whereas Socrates began his conversation with Lysis in a personal and concrete manner, asking about his family, his exchange with Menexenus is more like a debating contest" (120). See also Teloh, *Socratic Education* 73.

²⁵ See Miller's notion of "mimetic irony" (*Contextualizing Classics* 256–259). Blondell criticizes Miller's notion on the grounds that it would be morally dangerous for the readers to identify with the interlocutors; she claims that readers are meant to disapprove of all but Socrates (*The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* [Cambridge 2002] 88–93). Blondell's criticism misses the mark, I think, by assuming a too strong sense of identification. The reader might identify with the ordinary concerns of the interlocutor without much risk. I doubt that there is any danger in understanding, from a first personal perspective, Hippothales' experience of being in love. Without some such partial identification at work, it is hard to see how Plato's pedagogical aims could get a foothold in his audience. Further, if Plato puts an insur-

for example, Plato can hold a mirror up to those in the audience who have been in love, showing them the ridiculousness of behaving in the manner of the standard suitor and subsequently the need for philosophy both to understand and to fulfill the desires implicit in love. Through this partial identification and rejection of the character, an audience-member can reject the ordinary way of dealing with the experience of love, while at the same time seeing love as having a deeper significance that needs to be explored. In this way, those who are in love are given a reason to engage in philosophical conversation. Of course, Plato cannot directly control the response of his readers, and the success of this strategy is ultimately up to them. To adapt Socrates' phrase, in Plato's dialogues the lover needs to recognize himself as a lover of wisdom.

By dramatizing extraordinary philosophical dialogues in an ordinary setting, Plato reproduces the world as it is for his audience (i.e. spatio-temporally familiar), with events occurring in the way that they typically do (i.e. marked by contingency), with people who are ordinary (i.e. limited by their bodies) and bound up in typically human affairs (i.e. mundane human concerns); he thereby weaves the ordinary and the extraordinary together. More precisely, this means that our ordinary lives *already have* extraordinary significance, but we can only see it when we begin to explore our ordinary lives in a philosophical manner. The converse is also true: extraordinary philosophical notions, like the first friend, have significance for our ordinary lives, even though these notions *seem* rather remote and abstruse. In the *Lysis*, by having his characters begin from their

mountable gap between his readers and the interlocutors, then A. Nehamas may be right that this actually harms Plato's readers: he claims that Plato uses irony "as a means for lulling the dialogues' readers into the very self-complacency it makes them denounce. It is deep, dark, and disdainful" (*The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* [Berkeley 1998] 48). On my view, Plato evades both problems (failing to reach his audience or harming them) by allowing them to partially identify with interlocutors and then to reject certain of their non-philosophical features.

ordinary experience of love and construct an extraordinary account, Plato invites his readers to engage in a philosophical dialogue about love and friendship. He encourages his audience to realize that they *already possess* an intrinsic motivation to pursue philosophical knowledge and that their ordinary concerns open up into deeper philosophical questions. Plato invites us further to think along with, and indeed against, the answers to the philosophical questions posed in the dialogue. To begin to ask and answer such questions is to begin the turn toward philosophy, the reorientation of one's love that the *Lysis* itself encourages.

Plato's pedagogical aim is connected to the metaphilosophical one in the following way: part of turning toward philosophy involves understanding that there is a *deeper* connection between philosophy and ordinary experience—this understanding is indeed necessary if the turn is to be effective. In the *Lysis*, a serious philosophical discussion becomes appropriate because a particular character—Hippothales—is in love, a human experience immediately comprehensible to most, if not all, readers of the dialogue. Hippothales' blushing, which gives him away, is the body's physical manifestation of shame or embarrassment and this suggests that Hippothales, despite his drunken encomia, understands in some basic but imprecise way that there is something amiss with his own response to love, that is, with the way he pursues Lysis.²⁶ To make sense of love—to comprehend this ordinary experience—requires that we analyze it in a precise, rigorous, and philosophical way. Ordinary and philosophical concerns are thus not exclusive but rather contiguous. Philosophy is bound up with the ordinary. The *Lysis* shows that, if one explores an ordinary concern, being in love, with

²⁶ This positive though imprecise epistemic role for the body in acknowledging wrongdoing is not restricted to this dialogue. In *Prt.*, for example, Hippocrates blushes at the suggestion that he would become a sophist (312A), despite admitting to not knowing exactly what a sophist is. The contrast with Protagoras himself, who unabashedly admits to being one, suggests that the boy's moral compass senses something wrong with sophistry.

sufficient enthusiasm and argumentative rigor, one will shortly be doing philosophy, that is, one will be asking what it means to be a lover or a friend. To answer that question requires an extraordinary philosophical explanation of the ordinary phenomenon, but this does not amount to an *escape* from ordinary experience. We can free ourselves from conventional explanations—e.g. “opposites attract”—in order to seek well-grounded philosophical accounts, but Plato’s philosophy never leaves ordinary experience entirely behind. It retains an ordinary dimension in that the rigor of philosophical argument is put in the service of the ordinary experience which motivates it.²⁷ In short, Plato turns us from the ordinary to philosophy *because* philosophy is needed to understand our ordinary experience, or put differently, *who we are* as embodied human agents.

Thus, the dialogue presents a view of the human condition whereby our humanity cannot be understood without philosophy and we, as humans, cannot flourish without philosophy. In highlighting the interconnection between humanity and philosophy—between the ordinary and the extraordinary—Plato provides both a philosophical framework for and an occasion for *self-knowledge*. In a central section of the *Lysis*, while discussing the promising insight of the existence of an intermediate between good and bad, Socrates introduces the philosophers, who “are aware of not knowing what they don’t know” (218A7–B1); they have, in short, Socratic wisdom. He continues: “those who are neither good nor bad love wisdom, while the bad do not love wisdom, and nor do the good” (218B1–3). In one sense, the category of the neither good nor bad applies to a vanishingly small subset of humans, to philosophers, and perhaps only to Socrates. In another sense, it applies to all humans, for if the desire for wisdom is *implicit* in other desires, then all humans are at some level philosophers,

²⁷ Griswold, for example, claims “writing dialogues ... allows Plato to emphasize the view that philosophy cannot remove itself totally from the level of particularity ... The beginning point of philosophizing, namely, ordinary experience, is never left behind” (*Self-Knowledge* 223).

whether they know it or not. Plato's goal, like Socrates' with his interlocutors, is to get us to see this. At the same time, by situating philosophical conversation in an ordinary setting, Plato reveals the ways in which our pursuit of philosophical knowledge will always be limited. The ability to philosophize is constrained by our bodies, which demand daily care and attention, by time, both because our existence is temporal and because the articulation and analysis of arguments requires time, and by the contingent circumstances of our lives, which play an important role in determining our ability, willingness, and desire to address philosophical questions.

In sum, human self-knowledge consists in knowing both what the proper object of human love and aspiration is, i.e. philosophical wisdom, and that our spatio-temporal limitations as embodied human agents ensure our own enduring ignorance. In the *Lysis*, once we become fully good, and achieve wisdom, we no longer need philosophy (218A2–3). To be extraordinary—to be good—eliminates this tension in the human condition and obviates the need for philosophy. The tension between what we have and what we want is also the source of our ridiculousness, as Socrates suggests at the end of the dialogue; but this ridiculousness is not to be mocked, except perhaps by the gods, for it is simply part of what it means to be human.²⁸ By contrast, the blameworthy self-ignorance of thinking oneself wise when one is not—highlighted by Socrates in the *Apology*—is genuinely ridiculous for it can in fact be overcome. We are thus faced with a choice: we can either, like Socrates, bravely face up to and attempt to overcome our endemic ignorance—live the life of philosophy—or we can go through life in total self-ignorance.

V

The *Lysis* does not, in the end, provide its readers with a coherent philosophical account of friendship. All manner of difficulties emerge when Socrates and the two boys try to

²⁸ See Hyland, *Finitude* 128–137.

formulate an account. But that, I suggest, is part of Plato's purpose. By seeing these problems emerge out of the ordinary experience of friendship, the reader can see how the discussion is relevant to her own experience of friendship. These problems operate as a *provocation* to engage the philosophical question of friendship and to attempt to make one's way through the problems generated in order to formulate a coherent account, in short, to do philosophy.²⁹ To be seduced by Socrates, or by Plato for that matter, is not to be provided with *the* philosophical answer, or even necessarily the promise of that answer, but rather to be shown that the *life of philosophy* is the best life for human beings. It is so because only by asking the appropriate philosophical questions might one make any headway at all in better understanding one's ordinary experience and oneself as a human being, in short, in achieving self-knowledge.

What I hope to have accomplished with my analysis of the prologue of the *Lysis* is to provide some support for Proclus' interpretive option (3) above, namely, that the dramatic prologues are integral to the philosophical content and thus cannot be ignored as an inessential literary frame. As my analysis of the *Lysis* shows, the prologue dramatizes the ordinary concerns out of which the ensuing philosophical discussion *emerges*, and the philosophical discussion *remains* tied to and oriented by those concerns. Thus, the prologue is integral in two senses: first, the ordinary setting is important for Plato's pedagogical task and, second, the connection between the ordinary and the philosophical represents an important aspect of human self-knowledge.³⁰

I want to end by anticipating a couple of objections. First, my account of *Lysis* is incomplete. It pays insufficient attention to that for which the prologue gives the context, the claims about

²⁹ See Jenks, *Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2005) 78. On the notion of a provocation, see M. Miller, "Platonic Provocations: Reflections on the Soul and the Good in the *Republic*," in D. J. O'Meara (ed.), *Platonic Investigations* (Washington 1985) 163–193.

³⁰ See Gonzalez, *Plato as Author* 44.

friendship, and fails to do what I myself have suggested Plato wants from his readers, that is, attempt to formulate a philosophical answer to the questions about friendship. However, the goal here has been to show how the theme of ordinary life anchors and motivates the philosophical dialogue—at least this I hope to have accomplished.

Second, someone might accept my analysis of the ordinary setting in all its particulars and maintain, contra my conclusion, that the move to the extraordinary from the ordinary setting is meant to show that philosophy is only possible if one goes beyond the ordinary and leaves it behind. The force of this objection in part depends on what “ordinary” is meant to modify. I would make a distinction between an ordinary concern and the ordinary way of dealing with that concern, which is the practical response—both psychologically, verbally, and in action—to that concern.³¹ I certainly agree that part of what it means to turn to philosophy is to abandon the typical or ordinary ways of dealing with one’s ordinary concerns.³² In that sense, turning to philosophy involves leaving the ordinary behind, but this leaves the ordinary concerns themselves intact. However, assuming that the objector means that ordinary concerns must themselves be abandoned, this alternative reading would be largely consistent with my analysis of the ordinary setting as

³¹ In a controversial and much-discussed passage of the *Grg.* (466A–468E), Socrates distinguishes between what one *really* wants, namely, the actual good, and what one actually desires at any given moment. For discussion of this passage see e.g. T. Penner, “Desire and Power in Socrates: The Argument of *Gorgias* 466A–468E that Orators and Tyrants Have No Power in the City,” *Apeiron* 24 (1991) 147–202. On my view, the ordinary concerns answer to our actual good, and the ordinary desires we form in order to satisfy those concerns need to be altered in order to truly satisfy those concerns.

³² In *Tht.* (173C–174B) the philosopher’s ignorance of the road to the market-place, the ways of the law-courts, the nobility of his neighbors, etc. reflects a judgment about money, political power, and birth as worthless ways of satisfying one’s ordinary concerns; instead, the philosopher investigates human nature to find out what the proper ways are.

such. But there are two reasons to reject such an alternative. First, the alternative reading would fail to account for adequately, or at least would account for less well, why the ordinary *persists* throughout the dialogue. In other words, the objector would have more trouble explaining why, in the *Lysis*, Plato has Lysis whisper in Socrates' ear (211A), why he has Socrates use everyday analogies, e.g. when he claims to want friends more than he wants quails or gamecocks (211D–E), and why he ends the dialogue with a drunken fight (223A). Indeed, on my view, the enduring presence of the ordinary is to be expected, whereas, on the opposing view, it is somewhat puzzling. Second, the connection that Socrates makes in the dialogue between our intermediate condition (being neither good nor bad) and philosophy seems to suggest that transcendence—leaving the ordinary behind—is impossible for humans. Indeed, it is precisely because we are ordinary—neither good nor bad—that philosophy is the appropriate response. To repeat, once we become fully good and achieve wisdom, we transcend the human condition and only then do we no longer need philosophy. This option seems only viable for gods.³³

Last, one might object that I have simply stacked the deck in my favor by choosing to focus on the *Lysis* and that my analysis of the *Lysis* cannot be generalized without further argument. I readily grant this, and I do not have the space to defend the larger claim in full here. However, I will point out that certain features of the ordinary setting do seem to be characteristic of several other dialogues.³⁴ I will only mention a couple here.³⁵

³³ Indeed, when Socrates claims that “the wise no longer love wisdom [i.e. philosophize],” he adds, “whether they be gods or humans” (218A2–4). This strongly suggests that this category is to be restricted to the gods. While it is not implausible to suggest that Plato wants us to be like gods as much as possible, it would be perverse to see him as encouraging us to directly imitate the gods by ignoring our ordinary condition. Indeed, to do so would seem to assume that one already had wisdom, and such blameworthy self-ignorance is as far as one can get from divinity in the *Ap.*

³⁴ I readily concede that not all Platonic dialogues have all the details of an ordinary setting. The *Men.*, for example, begins abruptly and arguably

The *Phaedrus* begins with an accidental meeting between Socrates and Phaedrus, is set just outside the city-walls, and contains vivid descriptions of the scenery as the pair take their leisurely stroll. Adeimantus' group happening upon Socrates and Glaucon on the road between Athens and the Piraeus, and their subsequent move to the house of Cephalus, provides the occasion and setting for the *Republic*. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates runs into a friend and thus recounts his day in the company of sophists at the house of Callias—a day which begins with Hippocrates banging on Socrates' door before sunrise and chatting with him while the latter is still in bed. My analysis of the *Lysis* is, of course, specific to that dialogue and cannot simply be mapped onto other dialogues. The details of each dialogue's prologue—the place and time, the characters and their concerns—will guide the analysis. However, by showing how the prologue of the *Lysis* functions both pedagogically and metaphilosophically, I hope to make some progress in understanding the philosophical rhetoric of Plato's dialogues and to provide a paradigm for understanding Plato's prologues that may be applied to other dialogues.³⁶

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has no prologue whatsoever.

³⁵ For a more extensive accounting of the various settings see McDonald, *Character-Portraiture* 142–158. He considers the dialogues to be “philosophical mimes,” set in scenes from everyday human life (142–143). He provides a very useful survey of the particular dramatic setting of each dialogue.

³⁶ I would like to thank an anonymous reader for *GRBS* for some helpful and instructive comments and Ingvild Torsen, who has helped to improve this paper through its various incarnations.