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FRIENDSHIP'S UNREQUITED LOVES

ABSTRACT

Lewat analisis rinci atas kasus persahabatan misterius Sokrates dan Alcibiades dalam dialog *Symposium* karya Plato, artikel ini memerkarakan valensi etis dan moral persahabatan sejati. Fokus persoalan terletak pada dua pertanyaan: pertama, apakah merusak afeksi demi tujuan ideal lebih tinggi secara etis dan moral dapat dibenarkan?; kedua, apakah hakekat dan karakter persahabatan sejati itu? Artikel ini menemukan bahwa pertama, sikap Sokrates yang melukai hati Alcibiades dengan pretensi menarik hubungan itu ke ideal lebih tinggi secara etis tak bisa dibenarkan karena tindakan Sokrates sendiri tidak membuktikan hal itu, dan asumsi dasarnya pun tak bisa dipertanggungjawabkan. Kedua, meskipun demikian, mematahkan hubungan afektif demi tujuan ideal bisa positif dan mengagumkan secara moral, asal saja dapat ditunjukkan bahwa tindakan itu memang dilakukan dengan tidak mementingkan diri sendiri, dan demi nilai etis lebih tinggi. Ketiga, persahabatan sejati tidak terarah pada kesenangan dan keuntungan, melainkan demi persahabatan itu sendiri, yaitu mengacu pada nilai etis obyektif, tidak eksklusif, tidak menipu, tidak moralistik dan tidak merendahkan martabat.

Key Words:

Unrequited love • Friendship for its own sake • Ethical/moral valency • Morally reprehensible • Affections • Idealistic • Non-corporeal • Personal dignity • True friendship

Some important moral issues are both contemporary and traditional. One good example concerns the general ethical character and the particular moral rights and duties of friendship. This complex subject includes many philosophically interesting issues. But, in the friendly contexts of our common interests in Plato's *Symposium*, I should like to focus here on just one. That issues is the ethical and moral dimensions of the care true friends should have for one another.

This issue is important for many people. I focus on it because I believe that many are not quite sure just what "friendship for its own sake," or what I will be calling here "true friendship" rather than friendship just for pleasure or for advantage, might actually come to. For just how could even the best of friendships be at all worthwhile were they not, in some senses however rarefied, just for pleasure or for advantage?

A shorter, uncorrected version of this text was presented as an invited paper at the Fifth Symposium Platonicum Pragense at the Villa Lanna of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in October 2005. I am grateful to the organizers for their invitation, to the participants for their helpful comments, and to Bambang Sugiharto for considering its publication Melintas

Before critically reviewing a celebrated example of friendship in Plato's *Symposium*, consider briefly a situations many persons are already familiar with in but concrete situation will help me specify in a moment just what my specific aims here are.

A Sorry Story

Two close friends naturally care much about each other, and especially about their mutual well-being. "True Friends, " as they like to say, "always do." And the mutual bond between them is strong and sustained. One friend, however, has come to believe that the other is, well, "too this-worldly." And, freshly concerned for his friends' genuine well-being, he has now resolved, in the altruistic¹ interest of his friend's genuine well-being as he sees it, to turn his friend's attentions definitively away from an exclusively this-worldly view of things to another a more "idealistic"² view of things all together.

To accomplish this ambitious aim, this idealistic friend has settled on equally ambitious means. He intentionally and repeatedly encourages his friend's affections. Moreover, he does so in such ways that his friend's strong friendly feelings give rise gradually to strong erotic feelings as well. And once these erotic feelings have become sufficiently strong, he then

deliberately and abruptly lets his friends down. And so his friend must suffer the familiar physical and psychological frustrations of "unrequited love," a strongly charged love between close friends that is not fully reciprocated.

But why does the idealistic friend act this way? Because he believes on what he has come to know on reliable grounds from his justly esteemed spiritual director that obliging his friend to suffer the frustrations of unrequited love will also create a rare occasion for his friend to sublimating the strongly erotic feelings in their close friendship, he also believes, will enable his their close friendship, of friendship for its own sake.

An old story then--a "**sorry tale of unrequited love**"³ that may help us now understand concretely what I have rather abstractly in mind here. What interests me here are two related issues. One is the question of whether, on "idealistic" grounds only, intentionally frustrating the affections one has deliberately and repeatedly encouraged in one's close friend is morally and ethically permissible. And the other is just what is the nature of friendship for its own sake, of true friendship.

One well-known example of situations where such questions arise is Søren Kierkegaard's well-intentioned, almost Socratic frustration of Regine Olsen's love in mid-nineteenth-century Copenhagen.⁴ Less well-known but perhaps even more instructive is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's well-intentioned but in twentieth-century, pre-war Pekin.⁵ A more recent, perhaps only apparent example, can be found in the rather profound understandings of "unrequited love" in the 1976 and 1978 journals of the distinguished Sinologist, Yves Raguin.⁶

The specific case, however, that I should like us to reconsider critically here is Plato's complex literary and philosophical representation⁷ in his *Symposium* of the reports of Socrates' "idealistic" friendship with Alcibiades and of Socrates' intentional frustration of Alcibiades affections.⁸ Does Socrates intentionally mistreat his close friend Alcibiades in both reprehensible and self-contradictory ways? That is, does Socrates in fact do this friend serious wrong by obliging (*anangkazōn*) his friend to sublimate his very strong feeling?⁹ and, Despite his own moral his friend serious wrong intentionally¹⁰ and what, if anything, does Plato's story suggest about the nature of true friendship¹¹

Socrates' Claim

Just after Alcibiades has finished his unconventional "eulogy" of

Socrates' in the *Symposium*, Socrates', perhaps playfully, provokes a brief three-way exchange among Alcibiades, their host, the famous Athenian tragedian, Agathon, and himself (222b-223b).¹² Socrates' claim that the point of Alcibiades' speech has been "to make trouble" between himself and Agathon (222d; p. 62).¹³

At first glance, Socrates' claim seems half-serious only. For everyone present knows that Agathon already enjoys something rare in Athens, a long-term loving relationship with someone else than Socrates, namely with Pausanias. And Pausanias has also just given his own complex eulogy of love with apparently Agathon himself very much in mind. Socrates, however, goes on to scribe to Alcibiades a complex motive for allegedly making such trouble.

Alcibiades, Socrates' claim, is trying to make trouble between Socrates and Agathon for two reasons. First, Alcibiades believes that Socrates should love Alcibiades only. Socrates also claims (leaving Pausanias out of the picture entirely) that Alcibiades is trying to make trouble because, second, Alcibiades, only and not by Socrates at all. "You did this [namely, tried to make trouble between Agathon and himself]," Socrates says to Alcibiades, "because you think that I should love you and no one else, and that Agathon should be loved by you and no one else" (*ibid*).

So Socrates claims that Alcibiades wants to have an exclusive particular friendship with him (perhaps like that between Agathon and Pausanias which evidently, Socrates' himself does not want. And he also claims that Alcibiades wants to break up Agathon's exclusive relationship with Pausanias in the interests of having the same kind of relationship himself with Agathon. But these desires are quite one-sided. For, on Socrates' account, Alcibiades seems to be the kind of person who insists on exclusive relationships with at least two people, but refuses to commit himself to any such exclusive relationships.¹⁴

Now we know that the active and passive forms of the verb "love" in this passage ("should love you," "should be loved by you") could be glossed with discussions of the specific form and roles of same-sex erotic encounters in different societies (e.g., Boetia versus Elis) in Greek culture of the late fifth and early fourth century, roughly the dramatic dates and the compositional dates of the dialogue.¹⁵ And in his long speech (180c-185e) Pausanias has already interestingly suggested some important distinctions between morally acceptable and morally unacceptable kinds of same-sex relationships.¹⁶ But leaving such matters aside here, we may focus instead on just how Alcibiades could properly be said to be making trouble for

Socrates' budding friendship with Agathon.

After having addressed Alcibiades Socrates goes on immediately to speak directly to Agathon. "But, my dear Agathon," says Socrates, "don't let him succeed in this [that is, in making trouble between me and you]" (*ibid*). The trouble then is someone coming between close friends.¹⁷

Now, suppose that Socrates is right in his assumption that the motive of Alcibiades' entire speech has been to make trouble for Socrates' friendship with Agathon. Is it also the case that Socrates is right about Alcibiades' complex motive as well, namely Alcibiades wanting to keep his own friendship with Socrates an exclusive one from Socrates' side while leaving himself free to cultivate a particular friendship with Agathon? Perhaps Alcibiades has some other motive, or some additional motives, for coming between Socrates' and Agathon.

First, then, with respect to our two concerns here with both the character of Socrates' particular friendship with Alcibiades and with the nature of true friendship, we can keep in mind at least two provisional points. Socrates' claim about Alcibiades' speech and his complex motives suggest that both Socrates and Alcibiades, and not just Alcibiades alone, have certain reserves about their friendship. Further, Socrates' criticism here of Alcibiades' behaviour suggests that true friendship is, at least in some ways, not exclusive.

But we now need, independently of Socrates' interpretation, to look back into Alcibiades' speech for ourselves.

Alcibiades' Accusation

Just before Socrates' addresses Alcibiades and just after ending his speech, Alcibiades offers his listeners a characterisation of his speech, a serious accusation of Socrates' typical behaviour, and a sober warning to Agathon. We should briefly take these points one by one.

The characterisation goes like this. "This is what I have to say, gentlemen, in praise of Socrates'. I've also mixed in some blame as well, and told you how he insulted me" (222a; p.62). Alcibiades' task in his unconventional speech, as commentators have interestingly remarked, was of course to do what everyone else including Socrates has done, namely to offer a eulogy to love as *eros*. In offering as a eulogy to love a eulogy to Socrates ("in praise of Socrates"), Alcibiades opens up the implication that Socrates' is an exemplar of love as *eros*. Whether it is a good exemplar of love as *eros*. Whether it is a good exemplar of love as *eros* remains to be seen.¹⁸

But the speech is not simply a eulogy. Alcibiades has include not just praise of Socrates but also some criticism. Although Alcibiades makes more than one criticism of Socrates, in summarizing his speech here he makes one accusation only. Socrates has “insulted” him (the ambiguous word is *hubris*).¹⁹ Just how Socrates has “insulted” Alcibiades we will come to in a moment.

Beside characterizing his speech as more than a traditional aulogy to *eros* as love, Alcibiades also brings a serious charge against Socrates as perhaps the exemplar of *eros* as love. Moreover, Alcibiades says that Socrates has dealt with him, Charmides, Euthydemus, “and many others” in the same reprehensible way.

The accusation is that Socrates, celebrated everywhere for his relentless pursuit of truth, regularly deceives his closest friends. “he [Socrates] deceives them into thinking he's their lovers and then turns out to be the loved one instead of the lover” (222b; p. 62).²⁰

This accusation, however, is ambiguous. For we are not quite sure just what Alcibiades is accusing Socrates of. Is Alcibiades accusing Socrates of repeatedly deceiving many of his closest friends by strongly encouraging their beliefs that he wishes to develop their loving friendship into an actively sexual relationship, whereas in fact he desires a passively sexual relationship? Or is Alcibiades accusing Socrates rather of repeatedly deceiving these friends by encouraging the same beliefs, whereas in fact, although Socrates desires to develop any sexual relationship with his closest friends at all? Given the stories Alcibiades reports in the course of his speech (“I've...told you *how* he insulted me”my emphasis), it seems reasonably clear that something like the latter interpretation is the more plausible one.

So, once disambiguated, the accusation seems to be that Socrates has repeatedly encouraged many of his closest friends to entertain explicitly sexual desire in his regard, only eventually to frustrate those desire. Whether Alcibiades thinks that Socrates does this deliberately, that is knowingly and intentionally, is nonetheless left unspecified here. Still, this seems to be the case since, as we remember, Alcibiades has reported that Socrates has acted in very similar ways not just with him but many other close friends also.

Second, then, from Alcibiades' perspective, Socrates has undoubtedly conducted his particular friendship with him in reprehensible ways. Moreover, he implies that true friendship does not intentionally arouse expectations that are not meant to be fulfilled.

The Warning

Alcibiades now explicitly warns Agathon about getting further involved in a particular with Socrates. And he encourage Agathon to learn from Alcibiades' own experience of close friendship with Socrates. “I'm warning you, Agathon,” says Alcibiades, “not to be deceived by him, but to learn from what we've suffered and be cautious, and don't, as the proverb puts it, be the fool who only learns by his own suffering” (*ibid*).

What is Agathon supposed to learn? Caution in his relationship with Socrates? Probably not. Of course, Alcibiades clearly does think that Agathon should be cautious in relationship with Socrates, perhaps on the shaky grounds of once a deceiver always a deceiver. Caution, however, is not so much what is to be learned from what Alcibiades and Socrates' many other close friends have suffered in their friendships with Socrates, but the result of what is to be learned.

Exactly what is to be learned Alcibiades does not say. But he does use strong words for what and others have gone through with Socrates. He says they have “suffered”.

But what have they suffered? Presumably, various forms of sexual frustration. But sexual frustration, many would hold, is a weak form of suffering. Is there then, in addition to sexual frustration, something stronger that Alcibiades and many others have “suffered” in their close friendships with Socrates that might justify Alcibiades using such strong words?

So far in merely summarizing his speech Alcibiades has clearly said that Socrates had “insulted” him and many others. Suppose we assume that, from Alcibiades standpoint, Socrates has “insulted” him by unexpectedly, and in complete contradiction to the specific expectations Socrates had deliberately encouraged, sexually frustrating him. That is, Socrates insults Alcibiades by first refusing to take on the customary roles in such erotic friendships, then, after reflection (“he wasn't quick to accept my invitation, but eventually agreed to come” [217; p.56] by acquiescing in Alcibiades' suggested reversal of those roles, only to frustrate Alcibiades even after Alcibiades has audaciously assumed those reversed roles. In the contexts of the times, Alcibiades seems to have a point.

But if Socrates has very probably “insulted” Alcibiades as well as many other close friends, how then has Socrates also “deceptive” them?

Third, then Alcibiades believes that his friendship with Socrates has been deceptive. True friendship, he implies, is not deceptive.

Further Accusations

In his speech Alcibiades accuses Socrates of more than one serious matter (214c-222b; p. 53-62). Right at the beginning, for example, Alcibiades addresses Socrates directly. "you're insulting and abusive, aren't you?" he says (215b; p. 54). That is, Socrates insults people and he abuses them. Presumably, he insults people in different ways, and he abuses them not physically but by abusing their confidence in him.

Later, in referring to Socrates' ability to play the flute, Alcibiades associates Socrates' effect on people with the spell or bewitchment that many of Socrates' friends believed the divine origins of flute music (Marsyas and Apollo) were able to cause. Alcibiades develops his comparison by saying that Socrates produces "the same effect without the use of instruments, by words alone" (215c; p. 54). And he adds that "whenever anyone hears you speak or hears your words reported by someone else... whoever we are woman, man or boy we're overwhelmed and spellbound" (215d; p. 54). That is, Socrates' words bewitch people, cast spells on them, and overwhelm them.²¹

Alcibiades develops this general point about the effect of Socrates' words on people by now specifying the particular effect of those words on himself. Unlike the effect of the words of even such great orators as Pericles, Alcibiades' early guardian, he says, Socrates' words have "disturbed my whole personality and made me dissatisfied with the slavish quality of my life" (215e; p. 54). That is, Socrates has profoundly upset Alcibiades (think of himself and even act as no longer a free man but a slave), and Socrates has thereby thoroughly destabilized Alcibiades as a person in a rigidly hierarchized society.

Alcibiades immediately focuses this criticism sharply on two specific elements of Socrates' common views that his listeners can immediately recognize. He now accuses Socrates specifically of having "made me think that the life I'm leading isn't worth living." And he adds the further accusation Socrates "makes me admit and instead get involved in Athenian politics" (216a; pp. 54-44)

In other words, Socrates gets Alcibiades to see and to admit that he has great defects, that he culpably avoids trying to correct these great defect, that he culpably distracts himself from this essential task by taking up inessential political interests, and that consequently he is living a fundamentally culpable life. That is, Socrates makes his close friend

Alcibiades feel guilty and deserving of blame.

Further, Alcibiades now goes so far in his accusations of Socrates to admit to something quite personal. Moreover, given his notoriously dissolute life and his present appearance of drunkenness and wantonness with the prostitute accompanying him to the party, Alcibiades says he believes that most people would think what he is going to recount as beyond him. For he now says of Socrates: "He's the only person in whose company I've had an experience... of feeling shame with someone; I only feel shame in his company... and whenever I see him, I'm ashamed because of what he's made me agree to" (216a-b; p. 55). Socrates makes him feel shame.

So, Alcibiades accuses Socrates not only of making him feel guilty. He also accuses Socrates of being the only one who has ever made him feel ashamed by forcing him to agree to something unnamed.

Whether true or not, an important point I will come to in a moment, Alcibiades' accusation here seems to be more witty than ironic. For Alcibiades is not being ironic at all. He is not saying the opposite of what he believes to be true. But he is being witty. He is indeed saying what he believes to be true. But he is doing so in such a way as to mislead his listeners into believing the opposite of what is true about Socrates.²²

For, far from forcing Alcibiades to agree to do something shameful that his audience will most likely associate with reversals of the usual customs in loving and being loved, the shameful acts to which Socrates has forced Alcibiades to agree in fact have nothing to do with such customs. They are of another order altogether. This is "the whole truth." And it is what Alcibiades is not saying.

Fourth, then, from Alcibiades' standpoint, Socrates' friendship with him has seriously shamed him by wrongly making him feel guilty of his behaviour. True friendship, he implies, does not give rise to mistaken guilt feelings.

But is Alcibiades telling the truth?

The Truth About Socrates

Is Alcibiades telling the truth not just when he accuses Socrates of causing him unique ("He's the only person...") and totally disorienting ("I act like a runaway slave and escape from him" [216b; p.55]) feeling of shame? But is Alcibiades also telling the truth when he accuses Socrates not just of shaming him but of insulting him, of abusing him, of bewitching him, of casting a spell on him, of overwhelming him, of "disturb[ing] my whole personality," of making him "dissatisfied with the slavish of my life," of

making him admit the slavish quality of my life,” of making him admit that he neglects himself, of deceiving him, of even making him think that his life is not worth living?

If not “the whole truth” (217b; p.56), then Plato does seem to be representing Alcibiades as mostly telling the truth.²³ For one thing, Alcibiades explicitly make a point of his having truthful intentions. “I’ll tell you the truth,” he says directly to Socrates just before beginning his speech. And, in view of Socrates’ reputation for being someone who is always in search of the truth, he even adds the barb: “will you let me do that?” to which Socrates can, for once, but lamely reply while nonetheless insisting on his domineering role in his close friendship with Alcibiades: “But of course I’ll let you tell the truth; indeed, I order you to” (214e; p. 53)

For another, Alcibiades explicitly calls on Socrates himself, whom he is about to accuse of serious wrongdoings, to witness to the truth of what he is going to say. “If I say anything that isn’t true,” Alcibiades says to Socrates, “interrupt, if you like, and point out that what I’m saying is false.” He repeats his intention to tell the truth “I don’t want to say anything that is false” (215; p. 53). And Plato, perhaps to reinforce the verisimilitude of his extraordinarily artful representations of Alcibiades’ apparent drunkenness, has Alcibiades repeat himself when he says a little later on: “Yes, I must tell you the whole truth; so pay careful attention, and, if I say anything that’s not right, Socrates, you must contradict me” (217b; p. 56).²⁴

Further, Alcibiades also says that, although he plans to use a number of image in his speech in praise of Socrates, they “will be designed to bring out the truth and not to make fun” (215a; p. 53).

But Socrates neither interrupts Alcibiades nor contradicts him.

Of course, Plato does represent Alcibiades at the symposium as being very drunk (“He was brought in, supported by the flute girl and some of the other people in his group” [212d-e; p. 50]). Plato also has Alcibiades garlanded with ivy like the wine god, Dionysus. And Alcibiades insists that everyone start taking their wine neat as he does. Alcibiades himself calls attention to his drunken state (“It isn’t easy for someone in my condition...” (Ibid.)) and he adds, emphatically: “If it weren’t for the fact that you’d think I was completely drunk, gentlemen, I’d take an oath on the truth of what I’m saying about the effect his words have had on me...” (215d; p. 54).

Should we then believe a drunken man who insists that he is telling the truth? Probably not. Should we believe the same man who goes on to invite the main person concerned in what he is saying and who is present to

interrupt him if he says anything false, and that person doesn’t do so, and that person is Socrates? We probably should.

Moreover. We note that, at the very end of Alcibiades’ speech, Socrates himself says, although once again perhaps playfully, “I think you’re sober after all, Alcibiades” (222c; p. 62). And indeed, Plato seems to have represented Alcibiades as sober enough to tell the truth, as explicitly declaring his intention to tell the truth, and as actually telling the truth about Socrates.

In short, I think it quite plausible that Plato has represented Alcibiades as telling much of the truth about Socrates and himself, if not the whole truth. That is, quite plausibly Socrates is indeed represented as treating Alcibiades badly in just the ways that Alcibiades recounts in his speech.

Reprehensible Ironies?

But Alcibiades’ accusations against Socrates are even more numerous than we have seen so far. For now Alcibiades goes on to criticize Socrates for treating people ironically. One consequence is that people, and especially Socrates’ close friends like Alcibiades, Charmides, and many others, not without warrant regularly come to believe that Socrates does not take them seriously enough. “He spends his whole life pretending [*eirōneuomenos*] and playing with people” (216e; p. 55), says Alcibiades.

In particular, Alcibiades specifies that in his own case “I thought he [Socrates] was seriously interested in my looks” about which “I was incredibly proud” (217a; p. 56). In fact, Alcibiades suggests, Socrates was not being serious at all but being typically ironic. Alcibiades, however, acting in good faith while believing falsely that Socrates was serious, went on to court Socrates, that is, to pursue in erotic and morally educational friendship as the younger partner with Socrates the older. “...if I gratified him,” Alcibiades says with Socrates present and still silent, “I would be able to hear everything he knew” (Ibid.).

First, Alcibiades tell us, instead of spending his time with Socrates in the presence of the customary supervising attendant, he dismissed the attendant and spent time alone with Socrates. Socrates however disappointed Alcibiades’ hopes to have a loving conversation together, tête à tête. So, next, Alcibiades took another and to wrestle, again in private. Socrates however, despite the customs of ancient Greek wrestling and despite Alcibiades now fervid hopes, made no amorous advances whatsoever.

Alcibiades tells his listeners that he now did not know where he stood. In order to resolve his painful uncertainties, Alcibiades then acted boldly and, as is he were the older of the two close friends and not the younger, invited Socrates to dinner (“I decided to make a direct assault on the man” [217c; p. 56]).

Despite his initial hesitations for reasons we do not know, Socrates finally accepted this completely unconventional invitation. But he left immediately after dinner. And, says Alcibiades, “on that occasion I was ashamed and let him go” (217d; p. 56). Alcibiades then repeated his dinner ploy. And on the next occasion he got Socrates to stay by carrying the conversation on until it was far too late for Socrates to go home. So Socrates settled down for the night on the couch next to Alcibiades' own. Socrates' ironic remarks about Alcibiades' appearance certainly misled Alcibiades into acting in such a way that later he was ashamed of himself.

Alcibiades also reports that, after he had confessed his love to Socrates at dinner in the noblest of terms that Socrates himself could only fully approve of (“Nothing is as important to me as becoming as good a person as possible, and I don't think anyone can help me more effectively than you can in reaching this aim” [218d; p. 58]), Socrates replied in what Alcibiades describes as his “entirely typical,” “highly ironic” manner (218d; p. 58).

“Entirely typical” of Socrates is his picking up on Alcibiades' assertion that Socrates has the capacity to make him a better person. For Socrates immediately puts that assertion into relation with his own views about the good (which, here, are most plausibly Plato's). “If what you say about me is true,” Socrates says alluding to the lessons he has learned from Diotima, “and I somehow do have the capacity to make you a better person [then] you must be seeing in me a beauty beyond comparison and one that's far superior to your own good looks” (218e-219a; p. 58).²⁵

And what is “highly ironic” in Socrates manner in his reply to Alcibiades' confession is, apparently, his ascription to Alcibiades of a metaphysical belief like those of Diotima that, on the evidence of Alcibiades' word so far, he clearly does not hold. The belief at issue is that, besides physical beauty (“apparent beauty”) exemplified positively in Alcibiades' widely acknowledge extraordinary handsomeness and negatively in Socrates' snub-nosed, bulging-eyed pudginess, there is a non-physical beauty, “far superior” to physical beauty, and “beyond comparison” (“true beauty”) (218e; p. 58).

So Socrates here is “ironic just as Alcibiades claims, because he says what he does not mean, namely that Alcibiades is “trying to strike a deal” with him “in which we exchange one type of beauty for another....” (Ibid.)

For Alcibiades just does not see that there are two types of beauty.

And what Socrates says is “highly” ironic, or so it seems to Alcibiades, in that Socrates exaggerates. For he says what he does not mean and then goes on to offend Alcibiades in suggesting that Alcibiades is trying not just to work out a fair exchange, but, even more, is trying to profit from Socrates by exchanging, as it were, bronze for gold (219a; p. 58).

In defense of Socrates here, however, we need to note that, while indeed ironising, Socrates may not be doing so exaggeratedly. Hence, he may not be speaking offensively. For what if not a higher, and physically incomparable beauty is the very beauty of Socrates' supposed acknowledged as having attracted him so strongly to Socrates in the first place.

So, while ironically suggesting that the metaphysically unsophisticated Alcibiades is trying to exchange a lower order physical beauty for a higher-order non-physical beauty, Socrates may be suggesting in no exaggeratedly ironic manner at all that Alcibiades is proposing an unfair exchange for Socrates' ethical and moral knowledge.

Personal irony need not always be personally offensive, as Alcibiades seems here to believe. Thus Alcibiades' accusation that Socrates abuses his close friends by ironising exaggeratedly and thereby not taking them seriously enough is an exaggeration itself and should be dismissed.

Fifth, then, Alcibiades believes that Socrates has not taken his friendship with him seriously enough. And he implies that true friendship is a serious matter indeed.

More Painful than Snakebites

Alcibiades pause dramatically in his speech just here. For Alcibiades wants to emphasize in what follows the effects in him of what he calls both “Socrates' proud action” and also “the words of philosophy.” He can compare this effect only imperfectly with a very painful experience, he says, even for those who have had the experience. And he goes on to compare this effect with having been struck and bitten by a snake.

Again, however, just as in the case of the effect of the flute player, Alcibiades develops the comparison. “I've been bitten by something more painful still,” Alcibiades now says, “and in the place where a bite is most painful the heart or mind, or whatever you should call it. I've been struck and bitten by the words of philosophy, which cling on more fiercely than a snake when they take hold of a young and talented mind, and make someone do

and say all sorts of things,” “shocking things” (218a; p. 57)

What are these words more painful than snakebites, these “words of philosophy”? At the very end of his speech Alcibiades gives us a hint of just what words he has in mind. Commenting on his discussion with Socrates, Alcibiades remarks on how Socrates “seems to be always using the same words to make the same points” (211e; p. 61). He adds that these words of Socrates are “divine,” and that they “contain the most images of virtue” (222a; pp.61-61). Alcibiades then concludes his speech by saying that Socrates' words “range over most or rather all of the subjects that you must examine if you're going to become a good person” (Ibid.). It seems plausible, then, that “the words of philosophy” that have “struck and bitten” Alcibiades like a snake are Socrates' words about becoming a good person.

In short, Alcibiades claims that Socrates has seriously and very painfully wounded him by his philosophical talk. And, again, Plato represents this accusation as very probably true.

Sixth, then, Alcibiades believes that Socrates has abused his friendship with him by painfully speaking with him too often moralistically about how one ought to act if one is to become a good person. True friendship, he implies, is not moralistic.

Action and Non-Action

Alcibiades now details his unsuccessful efforts to seduce Socrates. For despite Alcibiades' confession of his own love for Socrates, his profession of his highest ideal in Socrates terms (“nothing is more important to me than becoming as good a person as possible...”), the customs of the times, even Alcibiades' wrapping Socrates in his own greatcoat and moving onto Socrates' couch with him to spend the night together, Socrates won't budge.

“... when I got up next morning,” Alcibiades swears by the gods to his listeners including the still silent Socrates, “I had no more slept with Socrates than if I'd been sleeping with my father or elder brother” (219c; p. 59 Gill's emphases omitted). So “Socrates proud action” is a non-action. And Socrates' non-action is what has struck Alcibiades so forcefully and so painfully.

Of course Alcibiades does finally get round to singing Socrates' praise by recounting in great detail Socrates' physical endurance during the winter military campaigns in Potidaea, his sobriety with drink even on festive occasions, his extraordinary single-mindedness in going to unheard of lengths in pursuing an intellectual problem to its conclusion (“Socrates had

been standing there thinking about something since dawn” [220c; p. 60]), his remarkable self-possession as in his unhurried, calm, and successful retreat with Laches “when the army a disorderly retreat from Delium” (221a; p. 60).

But, most pertinently, Alcibiades recounts how Socrates enthusiastically supported the generals after the battle at Potidaea in their intention to award him a medal for bravery largely on the basis of his “social status” when it was Socrates who actually deserved such a medal. “During the battle,” he says, “... it was Socrates, no one else, who rescued me. He wasn't prepared to leave me when I was wounded and so he saved my life as well as my armour and weapons” (220e; p. 60). When he wants to, then, Socrates can indeed act.

Before these praised, however, Alcibiades criticizes Socrates a last time. He describes his feelings after Socrates has rebuffed what turned out to have been Alcibiades last advances. Given that his listeners learn just moments later that Socrates had previously saved Alcibiades life in the Potidaea campaign, Alcibiades makes his hearers feel the intensity of his feelings of rejection all the more. For the person who is his closest friend and yet who rejects Alcibiades' love is the very one who had saved his life together with his armour and weapons representing his honour.

Alcibiades Prosecutor

This time Alcibiades addresses his accusations of Socrates to his listeners as if, like Socrates' later accusers, he were addressing himself as a prosecutor directly to a jury deliberating over Socrates' fate.

“...gentlemen of the jury,” Alcibiades expostulates, “I'm calling you that because you've become the jury in the case of Socrates' arrogance!” (219c; p. 59). That is, Alcibiades now accuses Socrates of arrogance.

But, if we think of arrogance to day as “an exaggerated sense of one's own importance or abilities” (ODE), and if we leave aside for the moment any of our usual philological concerns with possible anachronism, then is this accusation justified? What exactly has Socrates done to merit such an accusation?

Alcibiades says that, after bundling Socrates up, throwing his arms around him, and lying “there with him the whole night,” Socrates didn't budge. “After I'd done all this, he completely triumphed over my good looks and despised, scorned and insulted them although I placed a very high value on these looks” (219c; p. 58-59).

This my strike some today as a comical if not quite farcical scene. The scene reminds us of Socrates' final discussion topic with Aristophanes and Agathon just before they drop off to sleep at dawn the morning after the symposium. There Plato has Aristodemus report that Socrates "was pressing them to agree that the same man should be capable of writing both comedy and tragedy, and that anyone who is expert in writing tragedy must also be an expert in writing comedy" (223d; p. 63).²⁶

Many of Plato's readers have found it hard not to think of Plato himself, with the *Apology*, *the Crito*, and *the Phaedo* as the tragedy of what an earlier translator called "The last Days of Socrates," and with scenes like these of Alcibiades complaining in sanctimonious tones of Socrates despising, scorning, and insulting him on his good looks, and neglecting to compliment him, some of his listeners might imagine, on his nose.

On the other hand, Alcibiades might have a point. Is Socrates claiming an exaggerated sense of his own abilities and thereby showing arrogance by claiming that he has the capacity to make people better persons? For that seems to be what he said to Alcibiades after hearing his passionate confession.

But on the evidence of Alcibiades' own present life (not to speak of Plutarch's details about Alcibiades' notorious later life), Socrates would seem to lack that very capacity. For certainly Socrates has failed to make Alcibiades a better person. Alcibiades is still playing Athenian politics, drinking excessively, and womanizing. And he is also now trying to win Agathon's romantic favours as well. Moreover, he is still running away from Socrates for fear of having to examine carefully how he is living his life.

But in fact Alcibiades has got it wrong. Socrates made no such arrogant claim. What Socrates offered was a conditional: "if what you say about me is true and I somehow do have the capacity to make you a better person....." (218d; p. 58; my emphasis). And just moments later he advised Alcibiades to "look more closely, my good friend, and make sure that you're not making a mistake in thinking I'm of value to you" (219a; p. 58).

So Alcibiades' accusation here of Socrates being arrogant, just like his earlier accusation of Socrates ironising exaggeratedly and thereby not taking Alcibiades seriously enough as a person, must also be dismissed.

Shame and confusion

What cannot be dismissed so easily, however, is the matter of personal

dignity.

Just after making the probably true accusation that Socrates' words had deeply wound him and the probably false charge of Socrates being arrogant and of being excessively ironic with his close friends and not taking them seriously enough, Alcibiades praises Socrates again, this time for his virtues. He says how much he "admired his character, his self-control [*sophrosune*] and courage [*andreia*]. Here was some with a degree of understanding and tough-mindedness I'd never expected to find" (219d; p. 59). And he says that he "couldn't be angry" with Socrates (Ibid).

Still, Alcibiades insists that Socrates' rejection had not just injured his vanity, but had hurt him. Socrates' rejection had disturbed his state of mind did you think I was in?... I felt I had been humiliated" (Ibid).

Has Socrates indeed offended Alcibiades by "humiliating him? And has Socrates "Humiliating" Alcibiades actually affected his "state of mind," even "disturbed my whole personality" (215; p. 54)?

If we take it today that to humiliate someone is to "make someone feel ashamed and foolish by injuring their dignity and pride" (ODE), then Socrates has at least humiliated Alcibiades by injuring his pride. He has done so by rejecting Alcibiades' sexual advances. And of course such rejections are offensive. Thus, Socrates certainly has offended Alcibiades.

But, just as in the case of his ironising, Socrates offended Alcibiades in what most would hold to be a minor way only. Whether, in addition, Socrates can be rightly held to have offended Alcibiades in a major way is not yet evident.

Seventh, then, Alcibiades believes that Socrates' friends with has humiliated him. True friendship, he implies, is mutually respectful.

Personal Dignity

Socrates has certainly made Alcibiades make a point of the unique experience of a kind of shame he has experienced with Socrates and with no one else. In speaking so dramatically about his "shame", is Alcibiades now suggesting that his listeners, whom he calls "the jury," consider whether Socrates, by shaming him in an exceptional way, has in fact offended him in a major way? That is, has Socrates, precisely by shaming Alcibiades in a quite singular way, seriously injured Alcibiades by violating his personal dignity?

But just what Socrates has done to Alcibiades to make him feel a special kind of shame, shame that might be linked with his dignity as a

person, is not clear. Was what Alcibiades himself called "Socrates" proud action. His non-action, what he refused to do that caused Alcibiades' special shame? Or was "Socrates proud action" rather Socrates' speaking proud action" rather speaking biting words to Alcibiades ("I've been struck and bitten by the words of philosophy," we remember Alcibiades saying)? Was the "proud action" both, a "proud action" as a non-action and a "proud action" as a verbal performance? His listeners cannot be sure because Alcibiades doesn't tell them clearly enough.

What Alcibiades does report is that, after intentionally encouraging ("he wasn't quick to accept my invitation," we remember Alcibiades saying, "but eventually agreed you come" [217d: p. 56]) such advances in various circumstances, Socrates deliberately rejected his advances. This completely unexpected behavior, Alcibiades says, confused him, leaving him in a peculiar state of mind. Moreover, his confusion was such that he continually felt an extraordinary shame whenever he saw Socrates. And he now does everything he can to avoid Socrates (although he also says, somewhat contradicting himself as Plato knew drunken persons often do, that he cannot "do without his company" [219d; p. 59]).

Moreover, Alcibiades no longer acts the noble, talented, and courageous Athenian citizen he is. He now finds himself running away from Socrates. And he does so in such an undignified way that he repeatedly acts like a runaway slave. He thinks now of "the slavish quality of my life" (216a; p. 54). And he says a little person than anyone else has ever been to anyone" (219e; p. 59). He no longer can think of himself in the same way as before his friendship with Socrates became particular.

In short, Socrates has demeaned him. Socrates made him "suffer". Socrates has caused Alcibiades to suffer a very severe loss of self-respect. Socrates has not taken him, seriously as a person. Socrates has made Alcibiades, a free man, an Athenian citizen and aristocrat, a ward of Pericles himself, feel and act like a slave. Socrates has violated Alcibiades' personal dignity.

Moreover, Socrates has not just done this to him, Alcibiades, whose life he once saved on the battlefield and whose honour he once preserved and who counts himself with reason among Socrates's closest friends; Socrates has seriously offended in similar ways "many other" close friends as well. And the very same Socrates evidently intends to do the same now one of Athens' greatest artists, Agathon.

So far, then, as friendship is concerned, Alcibiades' view seems uncompromising. If speaking and acting (or not acting) in the way has

spoken and acted with his close and utterly devoted friend, Alcibiades, is what Socrates understands by true friendship, friendship not for pleasure alone and not for advantage alone but for its own sake, then on the incontrovertible evidence that Alcibiades has put in exhibit without interruption or protest by the very man concerned, for Socrates continues to remain silent silent at least Alcibiades' personal suffering in undergoing Socrates' knowing, intentional, and serious violation of his personal dignity raises very hard questions indeed about the satisfactoriness of Socrates' practice of friendship and his ideas about friendship and his ideas about friendship.

Socrates has done Alcibiades wrong, and he has done Alcibiades wrong, in contradiction with his own most considered views, knowingly and intentionally. Although he saved his life and then tried to reform that life, Socrates has not been a good and true friend to Alcibiades.

Eighth, then, Alcibiades believes that his friendship with Socrates has made him suffer a serious loss of self-respect and in this way has seriously offended his personal dignity. True friendship, he implies, always respects personal dignity.

Ethical Valency?

Generally, many philosophers today think of ethical matters as having a larger scope than moral ones. For moral matters are often, although not always, matters mainly concerned with duties and obligations, rights and responsibilities, and so on. Ethical matters, however, are often matters mainly concerned with values, hierarchies among values, goodness and its varieties, good and bad actions, and so on.

And when philosophers focus on issues concerning friendship, both ethical and moral matters seem to be involved. For the myriad practices of friendship often do include important roles for serious and sustained considerations about acting well and acting badly and so on.

In what concerns, however, the "ethical" or "moral" valency, of friendship's doings, "not-doings," "undergoings," its acts omissions and sufferings, I suspect that what should concern us most on critically reviewing Socrates' particular friendship with Alcibiades is more the ethical than the moral valency of their difficult friendship. And that is the case because the major focus here has been on neither the duties nor the obligations nor the right of Socrates' friendship with Alcibiades, however morally charged indeed are. Rather, the focus is on certain kinds of

supposed responsibilities true friends ought to have for one another.

But if on rehearsing once again Plato's dramatic story of "unrequited love" I have tried to focus most of our attention on the supposed ethical aspects of true friendship, why now introduce for discussion such an obscure, figurative expression as "ethical valency?" by way of response, note two brief points only.

First, recall the distinction between chemical valency and linguistic valency. The first, the sense of the word "valency" in chemistry, as in the example "carbon always has a valency of 4," has to do with how many electrons the element carbon has involved in or available for chemical combinations. And the second, the sense of "valency" in linguistics, has to do with "the number of grammatical elements with which a particular word, especially a verb, combines in a sentence" (ODE).

Now, second, when I speak of "the ethical valency" of friendship, of a whole set of acts and behaviours among close friends who experience together a strongly affective mutual attraction and who therefore may be exposed eventually to suffer some kind of "unrequited love," I am trying to refer to "the aptness for combination," the responsiveness or not of certain friendship as a whole to general values such as ethical friendship as a whole to general values such as ethical goodness or ethical badness. For I hold that these general ethical values are what finally determine the particular moral permissiveness and moral reprehensibility of certain acts and actions in close friendship.

Thus, I take it here rather generally that the ethical valency of certain friendship as a whole having metaphysical components (properties or predicates or "tropes"²⁷) that in certain behaviours have strong or weak propensities (power or capacities) to combine with considerations of what is ethically good and what is ethically bad. That is why I want to talk of the ethical responsiveness or non-responsiveness of certain close friendships.

More particularly, I also take it here that certain components of a close friendship rather morally positive (praiseworthy), morally neutral (indifferent), or morally negative (reprehensible) features. Accordingly, I would also like to refer figuratively to these particular component features of a close friendship as exhibiting a moral rather than an ethical valency. And that is why I would like to talk not just of the ethical responsiveness of certain friendships but also of the moral responsibilities of certain friendships.

In other words to exploit a difference between British and American English I find it usual as a Canadian to speak generally with the British

among us of the "ethical valency" of certain close friendships to refer holistically to their responsiveness or not to ethical values, but particularly with the Americans of the "moral valence" of various components within certain close friendship to refer non-holistically to the moral character of certain acts and actions within such friendship.

With these distinctions provisionally in place, I think we can now address more substantively our two initial concerns.

Friendship's Unrequited loves

In concluding, we first need to bring together our progressive approximations to answering our two main concerns here. These questions, we recall, concerned the character of Socrates' particular friendship with Alcibiades, and, more generally, the nature of true friendship.

Reviewing critically Socrates' friendship with Alcibiades, we progressively noted that: (1) both Socrates and Alcibiades, and not just Alcibiades alone, have certain reserves about their friendship: (2) from Alcibiades' perspective, Socrates has conducted his particular friendship with him in reprehensible ways: (3) moreover, Alcibiades believes that his friendship with Socrates has been deceptive: (4) Alcibiades also believes that his friendship with Socrates has shamed him by wrongly making him feel guilty of his behaviour: (5) further, Alcibiades believes that Socrates has not taken his friendship with him seriously enough: (6) and Alcibiades believes too that Socrates has abused his friendship with him by too often painfully speaking with him moralistically, about how one ought to act if one is to become a good person: (7) more, Alcibiades believes that Socrates' friendship with him has humiliated him: and finally (8) Alcibiades believes that Socrates' friendship with him has made him suffer a serious loss of self-respect and hence seriously offended his personal dignity.

We also saw that, very plausibly, Plato represents Alcibiades as telling the truth.

On this evidence then, and without turning to Alcibiades' later career,²⁸ I think we need to conclude that Plato's representation of Socrates' particular friendship with Alcibiades was not a satisfactory representation of good friendship.

But if not good, was his friendship with Alcibiades nonetheless a true friendship?

Again, reviewing critically the implications of Alcibiades' friendship

with Socrates for at least one idea of true friendship, we progressively noted that: (1) true friendship is, at least in some ways, not exclusive; (2) true friendship does not intentionally arouse important expectations that are not meant to be fulfilled; (3) true friendship does not give rise to mistaken guilt feelings; (4) true friendship is serious; (5) true friendship is not moralistic; (6) true friendship, is mutually respectful; and (7) friendship is mutually respectful in particular of personal dignity.

With at least these salient features of true friendship before us, I think we also need to conclude that Pato's represents.

So much then for a summary of our findings. I would now like to conclude by offering three suggestions for our ensuing critical discussion.

The first point is particular and concerns the moral valence of "friendship's unrequited love" in Alcibiades' unrequited love for Socrates as Plato has represented that particular friendship in the *Symposium*. My suggestion for discussion here is that Socrates seems to conduct his particular friendship with Alcibiades in such a way as to contradict one himself elsewhere and not just in the early dialogues as holding.

That is, in his relationships with his close friend, Alcibiades, Socrates' seems intentionally to go wrong (*oudeis bekon hamartanei* [Prot.345e]. Moreover, despite the unchallengeable evidence of his clearly unsuccessful moral strategy with Alcibiades (recall Plutarch's biography of Alcibiades), and whatever may have been his result with the "many others" that Alcibiades cites, at the very end of the *Symposium* Socrates' seems quite ready intentionally to do the same kind of wrong all over again, this time to his close friend, Agathon. And Socrates' seems ready to do this at the expense of Agathon's close, exclusive, and long-time friend, Pausanias.

Thus, I suggest that Socrates' occasioning his close friend's Alcibiades' unrequited love is morally reprehensible. Socrates' intentional incitement and then considered and repeated encouragement of Alcibiades' love just with a view ultimately to obliging Alcibiades to renounce that love with the noble intention of opening Alcibiades to the several goods of non-corporeal loves and perhaps even to a vision of the good itself is an instance of intentional moral wrong doing.

My main reason for making this tentative judgment however is not that in treating his close friend the way he does Socrates seems to have contradicted his own principle. Rather, I think Socrates' general behaviour with Alcibiades is morally reprehensible because it very seriously violates Alcibiades' personal dignity as a human being by making him act no longer

as a free man but as a slave.

Moreover, I also suggest that Socrates' occasioning his close friend's Alcibiades' unrequited love is also ethically reprehensible. Socrates' intentional incitement and then considered and repeated encouragement of Alcibiades' love just with a view ultimately to obliging Alcibiades to renounce that love with the noble intention of opening Alcibiades to the several goods of non-corporeal love and perhaps even to a vision of the good itself is also an instance of intentional ethical wrong doing.

My main reason for making this second tentative judgment is that the soundness of Socrates' intentions is not evident. To the contrary. Some serious considerations suggest that these intentions are not sufficiently well-founded in that they depend on highly questionable assumptions. These dubious assumptions include Alcibiades' being able to sublimate his physical and psychological frustrations effectively, and indeed his being able to effectively sublimate them in just such a way as for him to catch sight of a vision of the non-physical good itself. But such questionable assumptions and the unsound intentions to which they give rise do not constitute sufficient grounds for Socrates' putting at risk Alcibiades' own self-respect and personal dignity as he intentionally does.

My second point is general and concerns the ethical valency of "friendship's unrequited love" *tout courti*. And my suggestion for discussion here is that, however morally and ethically neutral most instances of unrequited love apparently are, at least some instances of unrequited love between moral change.

That is, some instances of apparently true friendship that intentionally result in unrequited love, provided their basic intentions are demonstrably sound and their actions selflessly carried through, seem to be ethically admirable. (Recall here Agathon's insistence in his speech on friendship having to involve the four classical virtues he lists in the order of justice, moderation, courage, and wisdom [196b-e; p. 30].) for these friendships exhibit holistically a responsiveness to a higher order of ethical values of good and evil that effectively controls the positive moral valence of the most important individual behaviours constituting those friendships.

And my third point is also general. My suggestion for critical discussion here is that what people ordinarily call a "true friendship" where we are to understand friendship neither for pleasure alone, nor for advantage alone, but "for its own sake," may be helpfully parsed with Plato's dramatic representations of the close friendship between Alcibiades and Socrates in mind. That is, close friendship "for its own sake" is a mutual and sustained

bond of affection between person that is habitually responsive to a general, objective realm of ethical values that regulates the moral valence of the important acts and actions that continue to constitute that close friendship.

With respect then to our initial two question, I conclude that, on “idealistic” grounds only, intentionally frustrating the affections one has deliberately and repeatedly encouraged in one's close friend is both morally and ethical unacceptable. And I also conclude that whatever the nature of “friendship for its own sake” might finally come to, what I have been calling in rough synonymy “true friendship” probably should be understood as banning at least such features as exclusiveness, deception, deliberate frustration, guilt, disrespect, and moralizings. And truthfulness, moral and ethical seriousness, deliberate expansive, and mutual respect especially of individual personal dignity.

With respect now to my three suggestions however one concerning anyone's similarly particular friendship with someone, and one concerning the nature of true friendship with someone, and one concerning the nature of true friendship each requires your critical scrutiny in our immediately ensuing, and I trust, friendly discussion.

Appendix: Some Cardinal Terms

“Friendship” In philosophical contexts the word “friendship” has somewhat different senses than in non-philosophical ones. Thus, in common parlance, at least where British English is spoken and written, “friendship” has to do mainly with the mutual behaviour of person who share “a bond of mutual affection, typically exclusive of sexual or family relations” (ODE).

In philosophical parlance, however, the sense of the word, “friendship,” do not typically exclude sexual or family relations. The reasons lie with the early history of philosophical reflection on friendship which begins with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Of course, these thinkers pursued their reflections inside very different societies from our own European societies today where different customs prevail. And they did so in ancient languages and in words that have related but not isomorphic semantic fields with those for the corresponding expressions in our modern languages today.

By way of appreciating the contrast between common parlance of friendship and philosophical parlance, consider this recent and rather standard philosophical description of friendship from a current reference

work. Friendship, a contemporary philosopher tells us, has to do mainly with “attachment characterized by disinterestedness and esteem. Aristotle contrasts friendship proper with relationship entered into for pleasure or advantage, 'because in them the friend is not loved being what is in himself.’”²⁹

Further, in this description of friendship, the word “love”, the same contemporary philosopher informs us, is to be understood mainly as “affection or attachment, especially sexual, and in this sense studied by philosophers since Plato, who viewed love as a desire for beauty, which should transcend the physical and even the personal, culminating in philosophy the love of wisdom itself.”³⁰

I use the word, “friendship,” here mainly in its philosophical and not in its ordinary senses. Thus by friendship I mean here the bonds of affectionate attachment including sexual attraction that tie two persons of different families closely together,

“Erotic Love” The expression, “erotic love” ordinarily refers rather narrowly as in the phrase that the ODE intriguingly cites: “her book of erotic fantasies” to a kind of love “relating to or tending to arouse sexual desire or excitement. “Thus, “Erotic love,” in somewhat different senses that Plato uses the Greek expression, *Eros*, that most translators render in English today as “desire” including “sexual desire.”

For, at least in his *Symposium*, Plato uses this corresponding Greek expression more broadly. Thus, although *Eros* as erotic love certainly includes the notion of sexual desire, *eros* may as well be used in such a way as to focus attention on love as “affectionate concern that forms part of close relationship between family member or friends.”³¹

This difference between our usual understandings today of “erotic love as sexual desire” and “erotic love” as what we might call in the *Symposium* “emotionally charged affectionate concern for mutual well-being between close friends” lies behind one of the ambiguities close readers of Plato's masterpiece have remarked. For we are not always sure whether Plato is having Socrates and Alcibiades talk about love or about desire.

I try to keep this ambiguity in mind here, while trying as well to stay reasonably clear from anachronisms. In general, then, in speaking about “love” and “erotic love” or “desire” I exclude here the idea of erotic love between family members. Rather, I mainly foreground the idea of *eros* as a strongly sexually charged affectionate concern between close friends who are not members of the same family.

"Unrequited Love" when we turn from Greek *eros* to modern, "unrequited love," we find, so far as I know, neither any corresponding ancient Greek expression nor indeed instances of this expression in the current English translation, "unrequited love" emphasize a lack of reciprocity. Thus, when transposed to the negative, the ODE writes of non-reciprocity as "[not] feel [ing] (affection or love) for someone in the same way that they feel it for oneself," as in the sentence cited as an example of this sense, "her passion for him was not reciprocated."

This description of ordinary usage, however, is not completely satisfactory. For the description involves both some shaky grammar (what is the referent of "they"?), and a somewhat ambiguous qualification, "in the same way" (sexually, non-sexually? Partly? Fully? Etc.). the description, nevertheless, does when we talk us a good sense of what we are talking about when we talk about unrequited love as unreciprocated love. Accordingly, I use the expression, "unrequited love as unreciprocated love," here to refer mainly to a strongly sexually charged affective love between close friends that is not sexually reciprocated.

So, my concern here is with whether an erotic love between two close friends that is not sexually reciprocated can merit the name of friendship for its own sake, that is, true friendship where each friend is loved neither just for what here or she is in himself or herself. In short, what roles if any unrequited love play in true friendship?

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End Notes:

1. Altruism in friendship is a complicated subject which I do not treat here. For a standard orientation on the philosophical aspects of altruism, see B. Russel, "Egoism [and Altruism]," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. R. Audi, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 255. see also Cgill, "Altruism or Reciprocity in Greek Philosophy," in C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite, and R. Seaford, eds., *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Princeton; PUP, 1970) and D. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oup, 1984). A more recent, and challenging treatment is that of D. M. Baxter, "Altruism, Grief, and Identity," *Philosophy and*

Phenomenological Research. 70 (2005), 371-383.

2. I am using the expression "idealistic" here not in any of the various philosophical senses, including Plato's, but in the ordinary sense of a close friendship that is thought of as even better than the good friendship we are familiar with in everyday life. See *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2003) hereafter cited as "ODE" (not to be confused with the older and much more extensive second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the "OED". For the uses here of crucial term such as "friendship", "erotic friendship", and "unrequited love" see the Appendix. Plato also discusses such themes in his dialogues, *Lysis* and *Phaedrus* but I do not treat either of these dialogues here
3. This is R. Warterfield's phrase from his "Introduction" to his English translation, *Plato: Symposium* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), p. xxxix. His phrase has inspired my title.
4. See A. Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), especially pp. 133-179. Kierkegaard entitled his doctor dissertation (in Danish for which received a royal dispensation, since dissertations usually were required to be presented in Latin), which he successfully defended at the end of September 1841, *Om Begrebet Ironi med Stadigt Hensyn paa Socrates (On the concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates)*.
5. See *The Letter of Teilhard de Chardin and Lucile Swan* (Washington, DC.: Georgetown UP, 1993, *Passim*. See, among others, J. Arnould, *Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), pp. 253-259
6. *Vide et plétude* (Paris: Arfuyen, 2005), especially p. 60. Yves Raguin (1912-1998) was the originator and main contributor from 1953 in Taipei to his death in 1998 to landmark *Dictionnaire Ricci de la langue chinoise* that finally appeared to world acclaim in 2001.
7. See for example, D. M. Halperin, "Plato and the Erotics of Narrativity," in J. C. Klagge and N.D. Smith, eds., *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), pp. 93-129. In his excellent "Introduction" to his translation cited below, Christopher Gill talks about "the differently characterized styles of speech and of subtle interplay between the philosophical ideas and the narrative or dramatic contexts" (p. vii), as well as "dramatic representation of characters reinforce [ing] intellectual speech and argument" (px).
8. For further presentations of Alcibiades see especially the two dialogues often attributed to Plato, the *Alcibiades* (the consensus among Plato scholars today is that this dialogue is not by Plato), and the *Second Alcibiades* (there is no consensus today as to whether *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 558-595 and 597-608. I do not try to discuss critically these dialogues here. Nor do discuss here Plutarch's celebrated presentation of Alcibiades available in, for example, the bilingual edition, *Les Vies paralleles: Alcibiade-Coriolan*, eds. R. Flaceliere et E'. Chambry (Paris: Les

- belles letters, 2002), pp. 2-107.
9. On "Sublimation" in these contexts see two references that C. Gill on his English translation, *Plato The Symposium* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), provides, G. X. Santas, *Plato and Freud: Two Theories of Loves* (Oxford:OUP, 1988), pp.169-172, and A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford:OUP, 1989), pp. 250-258.
 10. Beside C. Gill's translation, which I follow throughout, see the relatively recent translations by A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), R. Waterfield (Oxford:OUP, 1994) in the World's Classics series (mentioned above), and C. Rowe in the Aris and Phillips series (Warminster, 1998). For brief remarks on the Waterfields "Introduction" to his translation, pp. xxxvii-xl. Each of these two translation has excellent notes and bibliography which have helped me much. Note that C. Gill's translation is of K. J. Dover's Greek text in his edition, *Plato: Symposium* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), whereas R. Waterfield translates J. Burnet's Oxford Classical Text of the *Symposium* from the early part of the last century.
 11. Despite my different reading here, C. Gill's interpretation of the Socrates-Alcibiades friendship should be kept in mind. "Socrates play the game of erotic-educational love that is current in these circles," Gill writes, "as a way of arousing the interest of these gifted young men. But he does so only to subvert their expectations by *failing* to show a sexual response when given the opportunity to do so. This produces (as it has produced in Alcibiades) a mixture of humiliation, puzzlement, anger and admiration. It is also designed to stimulate the young men re-examine their understanding of what 'love' is, although Alcibiades does not go as far as doing this. This technique, if that is what it is, is similar to the way in which Socrates uses dialectical cross-examination to reduce people to confusion and to realize that they need to reconsider what they think they understand. "Gill adds in note: "This suggestion relates to Plato's *presentation* of Socrates" (Gill 1999, p. xxxviii, and p.xlv, note 82; Gill's emphases).
 12. For an extended recent discussion of the Socrates of the early dialogues, see the recent guide by T. C. Brickhouse and N. D. Smith, *Plato and the Trial of Socrates* (London: Routledge, 2004), especially pp. 97-137. In my rereading here of the exchange between Alcibiades and Socrates (and not with Diotima), I assume that, generally, Socrates holds the ethical and moral view that Plato represent him as holding in the early dialogues and not in the middle ones. Most of the ethical and moral views that Plato represents Socrates as holding in his exchanges with Diotima, I believe on the kinds of evidence on exhibit in, for example, J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford:OUP, 1993), pp. 18-20 and T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford:OUP, 1995), *passim.*, are more likely Plato's than Socrates'. By contrast, I believe (controversially) that at least some of the views that Plato represent Socrates as holding in his exchanges with Alcibiades are not just the faithful echoes of Plato's representation of Diotima's teachings and hence very Plato's own, but more likely Socrates'.
 13. There is a well-known controversy about the speech of Alcibiades between M. Nussbaum and A. W. Price. M. Nussbaum, "The Speech of Alcibiades," *Philosophy and Literature*, 3 (1979), 131-172 which appears in a revised form in her book *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge:CUP, 1986), pp. 165-199 and A. W. Price. "Martha Nussbaum's *Symposium*," *Ancient Philosophy*, 11 (1991), 285-299. See also Price's excellent book, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford:OUP, 1989). I do not try to discuss this controversy here.
 14. Issues about "symmetry" or "reciprocity (if not "exclusiveness") in Athenian particular friendships between men are also complicated. For example, the younger person's affective relationship with the older person might be an instance of *philia* at all but of *eros*. (See C. Gill's note 42 on p. 70 of his translation, and D. Konstan's work, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* [Princeton: UAP, 1994], as well as his article, "Friendship and Reciprocity," in C. Gill, N. Postlethwaite, and R. Seaford, eds., *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford:OUP, 1998), pp. 279-301.) For another example of the complications here, this time with "exclusiveness," Socrates' claim here implies a reproach to Alcibiades for inconsistently wanting a one-sidedly exclusive relationship to either Socrates or to someone else. The apparent ideal of "exclusiveness," however, does not include whatever relationship Alcibiades may also want to pursue with women. Socrates himself of course was married.
 15. The standard studies are K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978), M. Foucault, *The Uses of Pleasure*, tr. R. Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1987), and J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: 1990). The dramatic date is significant. The dramatic date was probably 416 B.C.E. when Agathon's tragedy won the Leanean Festival, Gill tells us, and just before Alcibiades was to leave Athens, as Plutarch recounts in detail, first for the catastrophic campaign against Syracuse and then, treasonably, for Sparta, and still later, again treasonably, for Persia. The date of composition, according to K. J. Dover ("The Date of Plato's *Symposium*" *Phronesis*, 10 [1965], 2-20, is probably between 384-379 B.C.E., and hence within the approximate dates of the second of Plato's writing, 387-367 B.C.E..
 16. Two types of erotic-educational relationships are at issue here. The first type is a relationship between an older male lover and a younger male beloved. This is the type that Pausanias has presented as an ideal of love in his speech. The other type that Socrates wants to promote "idealizes," as C. Gill has pointed out, "a modified (non-sexual, philosophical) form of this relationship" (Gill 1999, p. Xv).
 17. For the general Greek ethical background here see, among other, N. White,

- Individual and Conflict in Greek Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), esp. pp. 155-214. Note that Greek ethics is mainly about happiness and virtue, and not about many contemporary ethical concerns.
18. We also need to keep in mind here that Diotima has just told symposiasts, but of course not Alcibiades who has not heard her speech, that love is a philosopher (204b: p.40). On the crucial and polyvalent notion here of *eros* as desire, see C. H. Khan, "Plato's Theory of Desire," *Review of Metaphysics*, 44 (1987), 77-103.
 19. *Hubris* can mean many things. Here the expressions can mean either contempt or physical abuse. The first meaning is the pertinent one. For the sense of hubris as physical abuse in the particular contexts here would refer to rape, and Alcibiades certainly does not accuse Socrates of rape (cf. Gill, note 138, p. 81). See also M. Gagarin, "Socrates 'Hubris' and Alcibiades' Failure," *Phoenix*, 31 (1977), 22-37.
 20. Cf. Gill's remark (pp. xxxvi-xxxvii): "The pattern of loving assumed by Alcibiades is the kind of erotic-educational relationship described by Pausania, in which the lover develops the ethical character of the boyfriend in return sexual gratification (184c-185b [pp. 16-17])."
 21. We should note Alcibiades' presumably unintended irony here. What seems at first glance to be a criticism of Socrates could just as well be taken as praise. For Alcibiades himself points out that the bewitchment and spell that flute players like Socrates are believed to cause are sometime intended to bring about in listeners a particular state that renders them "ready for the gods and initiation into the mysteries" (215b; p.54). Socrates brings about similar state not just by playing the flute but by talking. Thus, given the earlier exchange between Socrates and Diotima, when Socrates plays the flute for his friends and even more when he talks with them, he could just as well be rendering them a service as rendering them a deservice.
 22. Still a further dimension of course is Alcibiades' listeners, although not Alcibiades himself, being fully aware of what Diotima has taught Socrates about love.
 23. The general frame between Apollodorus and an unknown friend that Plato has devised for the symposium introduces still further complication for representations of truthfulness and of truth (see Gill 1999, pp. xvii-xx). "Apollodorus' whole account," Gill points out, is in double indirect speech: in Greek, he frequently says, 'he (Aristodemus) said that he (e.g. Socrates) said', though this is too clumsy to convey in English translation" (p. xviii). I leave these complications aside here.
 24. See, notably, C.H. Khan, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996, *Passim*)
 25. For two recent accounts of Socrates' own views see T. Penner, "Socrates and Early Dialogues," in R. Kraut, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), pp. 121-169; and C.C. W. Taylor, *Socrates: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), pp. 45-76.
 26. Cf. D. Clay, "The Tragic and Comic Poet of the *Symposium*," *Arion*, N. S.2 (1975), 238-261.
 27. For some recent work, see for example A. Oliver and T. Smiley, "Multigrade Predicates," *Mind*, 113 (2004), 609-681.
 28. For recent discussion of these fuller contexts see, for example, J. Jirsa, "Inside Socrates: The Alcibiades I and the Alcibiades' Speech in the Symposium," paper presented at the 2005 Prague Plato Symposium.
 29. P. Gilbert, Friendship," *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. T. Honderich, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p.324.
 30. P. Gilbert, "Love," *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. T. Honderich, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p.546.
 31. See C. Gill (1999), p. X.