

As for me, I looked at Menexenus, and said ‘Son of Demophon, **207C1** which of the two of you is the older?’

‘We have different views about that,’ he said.

‘Then you’ll also dispute about which of you is the better born,’ I said.

‘Yes, absolutely,’ he said.

**207C5** ‘And about which of you is the more *beautiful*, too, in the same way.’

They both laughed at that.

‘I shan’t ask you, though,’ I said, ‘which of you is the richer; after all, the two of you are friends, aren’t you?’

‘Yes, absolutely,’ they said together.

**207C10** ‘Well, what friends have is said to be in common between them, so that on *this* subject you won’t quarrel at all – at least if you’re telling the truth about your friendship.’

They agreed.

**207D1** I was setting about asking them, after that, which of the two of them was juster and wiser. Then, as I was in the middle of doing this, someone came up and got Menexenus to go off with him, because – he said – the trainer was calling for him; I got the impression he was in the middle of sacrificing.

So Menexenus went off, **207D5** while I put a question to Lysis: ‘I suppose, Lysis,’ I said, ‘that your father, and your mother, love you very much?’

‘Yes, certainly.’

‘Well then, they would want you to be as happy as possible?’

**207E1** ‘Obviously.’

‘And does it seem to you that a person is happy if he’s a slave, and in the sort of position that prevented him from doing any one of the things he desired?’

‘Zeus, no, it doesn’t seem so to me,’ he said.

‘Well then, if your father, and your mother, love you, and desire you to become happy, clearly **207E5** they are enthusiastic in every way that you should *be* happy.’

‘Obviously,’ he said.

‘In that case do they allow you to do what you wish, and do they not tell you off at all, or prevent you from doing the things you desire, whatever they may be?’

‘Zeus! Yes, they certainly do, Socrates; they stop me doing a whole lot of things!’

‘What do you mean?’ I said. ‘They wish you to be **208A1** blessed, and they prevent you from doing what you wish, whatever that may be? I mean, tell me this: if you ever conceive a desire to ride on one of your father’s chariots, taking the reins when there’s a race on, they wouldn’t let you do it, but would prevent you?’

‘Zeus! They certainly wouldn’t let me,’ he said.

**208A5** ‘Who *would* they let do it, then?’

‘There’s a driver who gets a wage from my father.’

‘What do you mean? They hand it over to a wage-earner more than to you to do whatever he wishes about the horses, and on top of *that* **208B1** they actually pay him money?’

‘Well of course,’ he said.

‘But I imagine they hand it over to you to control the mule-pair, and if you wanted to take the whip and hit them, they’d let you.’

‘Why ever would they let me?’ he said.

‘What then,’ I said, ‘is no one permitted **208B5** to hit them?’

‘Very much so,’ he said; ‘the muleteer.’

‘And he’s a slave, or a free person?’

‘A slave,’ he said.

‘Even a slave, it seems, they think more of than you, their son, and they hand their personal possessions over to him more than to you, and they allow him to do what he wishes, whereas you **208C1** they prevent? And tell

me this further thing. Do they allow you, yourself, to control yourself, or don't they even hand this over to you?

'What an idea!' he said.

'Is there someone who controls you?'

'This person here, a guardian,' he said.

'Surely not a slave?'

'What else would he be? But he does belong to *us*,' he said.

**208C5** 'What a terrible thing,' I said '— a free person being controlled by a slave! But what does this guardian do when he's controlling you?'

'He takes me to the teacher's,' he said; 'what else?'

'Surely *they* don't control you as well, your **208DI** teachers?'

'Of course they do!'

'There's a whole collection of masters and controllers, then, that your father deliberately sets over you. But what about when you go home to your mother: in order to make you happy, does *she* let you do whatever you wish, whether with the wool or **208D5** the loom, when she's weaving? I don't for a moment suppose she prevents you from touching the blade or the shuttle or any of the other wool-working tools.'

He laughed, and said 'Zeus! **208E1** Socrates, it isn't just that she prevents me, I'd get hit if I touched them.'

'Heracles!' I said. 'Surely you haven't done some injustice to your father or your mother?'

'Zeus! I haven't, for sure,' he said.

'Well, what *is* it in return for which they so terribly prevent you from being **208E5** happy and doing whatever you wish, bringing you up from beginning to end of each day in a state of slavery to someone, and in a word doing practically none of the things you desire? The result, it appears, is that *you* don't get any benefit from the money, when there's so much of it — everyone **209A1** has more control over it than you do; neither do you get any benefit out of that body of yours, for all its nobility, but this too someone else looks after as if it were some sheep. *You* control nothing, Lysis, and you don't do a single one of the things you desire.'

'That's because I'm not yet grown up, Socrates,' he said.

'I suspect it isn't **209A5** that that's stopping you, son of Democrates, since so far as that goes, I imagine, both your father and your mother actually do hand things over to you and don't wait till you're grown up. When they wish things to be read to them or written down for them, I imagine you're **209B1** the first person in the household they assign to the task. Isn't that so?'

'Yes, it certainly is,' he said.

'Well then, here you are permitted to write whichever letter of the alphabet you wish to write first, and whichever second; and you have the same licence when it comes to reading. And when you take up **209B5** the lyre, I imagine, neither your father nor your mother prevents you from tightening or loosening whichever string you wish, or from plucking with your fingers or striking with the plectrum. Or do they?'

'Certainly not.'

'What on earth, then, Lysis, would the reason be that in these cases **209C1** they don't prevent you, whereas in the cases we were talking about just now, they do stop you?'

'I imagine,' he said, 'that it's because these are things I know, whereas the others I don't.'

'Very good,' I said; 'well done! In that case your father isn't waiting till you're grown up to hand everything over to you, but on that very day that he considers you **209C5** to be thinking better than himself, he'll hand over both himself and his possessions to you.'

'That's what I think,' he said.

'Very good,' I said. 'What about the neighbour? Won't he use the same rule for judging you as your father will? **209D1** Do you think he'll hand over the running of his estate to you, at such time as he considers you to be thinking better about estate-management than himself, or will he — do you think — preside over it himself?'

'I think he'll hand it over to me.'

'What about the Athenians? Do you think they won't hand over their affairs to you, at such time as **209D5** they see that you're thinking sufficiently well?'

'I think they will.'

'Zeus!' I said; 'in that case, what about the Great King? Would he hand things over more to his eldest son, destined to control all Asia, to throw in whatever he wished to throw into the sauce **209E1** when the meat was boiling, or to us, if we arrived at his court and showed him that *we* were thinking finer thoughts about the preparation of cooked food than his own son?'

'To us, clearly,' he said.

'And *him* he wouldn't let throw in even the smallest amount, whereas **209E5** us, even if we wished to take whole handfuls of salt, he'd let us throw them in.'

'Obviously.'

'What then if his son had something wrong with his eyes: would he let him touch his own **210A1** eyes, if he didn't consider him an expert in medicine, or would he stop him?'

‘He’d stop him.’

‘But if he thought *we* were experts in medicine, if we wanted to open up the son’s eyes and sprinkle them with a dose of ashes, even then I don’t think he’d stop us, because he’d consider us to be thinking correctly.’

**210A5** ‘What you say is true.’

‘Then is it the case that he would also hand over everything else to us more than to himself and his son, that is, anything else about which we appear to him wiser than the two of them?’

‘Necessarily so, Socrates,’ he said.

‘This is how it is, then,’ I said, ‘my friend Lysis: with respect to the things **210B1** about which we become good thinkers, everyone will hand them over to us, whether Greeks or non-Greeks, men or women, and we shall do in these cases whatever we wish, and no one will deliberately stand in our way, but we shall be at the same time free ourselves, in the cases in question, and **210B5** controllers of others, and these will be *our* things, because we shall benefit from them; with respect to the things about which we do not acquire intelligence, on the other hand, neither will anyone hand it over to us to do in relation to *them* what appears to us to be the thing to do, but everyone **210C1** will stand in our way to whatever extent they can, not only people not belonging to us, but our father and our mother, and anything else that may belong more closely to us than these, and *we* ourselves in such cases shall be subject to others, and the things in question will not belong to us, because we shall derive no benefit from them. Do you agree **210C5** that this is how it is?’

‘I agree.’

‘Will we then be objects of love to anyone, and will anyone love us, in those things, whatever they are, in which we are of no benefit?’

‘Certainly not.’

‘If *that’s* so, then neither does your father love you; nor does any other person love anyone else, to whatever extent that someone else is useless.’

‘It doesn’t appear so,’ **210D1** he said.

‘In that case, my boy, if you become wise, everyone will be friends to you and everyone will belong to you, for you will be useful and good, but if you don’t, neither anyone else nor your father will be friend to you, nor your mother nor those belonging to you. Now is it possible in these circumstances, Lysis, **210D5** to think big thoughts – in the case of things one isn’t yet thinking in at all?’

‘How could it be?’ he said.

‘But then, if *you’re* in need of a teacher, *you* aren’t yet thinking.’

‘True.’

‘Neither, then, is there anything big about your thoughts, if in fact you’re still thoughtless.’

‘Zeus!’ he said; ‘Socrates, it doesn’t seem to me that there is.’

**210E1** When I heard his answer, I glanced at Hippothales, and almost slipped up; what came into my head was to say ‘That, Hippothales, is how one *should* converse with one’s beloved, humbling him and cutting him down to size, not puffing him up, as you are doing, and praising him to pieces.’

**210E5** Well, when I saw him struggling with himself and thrown into confusion by what was being said, I remembered that he had even placed himself so as to avoid Lysis’ noticing him, so I managed to catch myself and **211A1** bite my tongue. In the meantime, Menexenus had come back and was sitting himself down in the place he’d got up from. At which point Lysis, in a very playful and friendly fashion, and without Menexenus noticing, said to me in a quiet voice ‘Socrates, what you’re saying **211A5** to me – say it to Menexenus as well!’

To which I said ‘That *you’ll* tell him, Lysis, because you were paying complete attention.’

‘Yes, absolutely,’ he said.

‘Try, then,’ I said, ‘to recall it as far as **211B1** you can, so that you can report everything clearly to him; and if you forget anything, ask me again when you come across me next.’

‘I’ll do that, Socrates,’ he said; ‘very much so, you can be sure of it. But say something else to him, so that I too can hear it, **211B5** until it’s time for us to leave for home.’

‘This I must do,’ I said, ‘seeing that you’re telling me to, as well. But make sure you come to my assistance, in case Menexenus tries to refute me; or don’t you know he’s a great one for disputing?’

‘Zeus, yes,’ he said, ‘very much so; that’s exactly why I want **211C1** you to have a conversation with him.’

‘So I can make myself ridiculous?’

‘Zeus, no,’ he said; ‘so you can give him some punishment.’

‘How’s that going to happen?’ I said. ‘It won’t be easy; he’s a clever one – **211C5** a pupil of Ctesippus’. And I tell you, he’s here, the man himself, Ctesippus: don’t you see him?’

‘Don’t worry about a thing, Socrates,’ he said; ‘just go on and have a conversation with him.’

‘A conversation is what I must have,’ I said.

**211C10** As we were saying these things to each other, Ctesippus said ‘Why are you having a private party, the two of you, and not sharing **211D1** what you’re saying with us?’

‘Of course we must share with you,’ I said. ‘There’s a part of what I’m saying which this person here doesn’t understand, and claims to think Menexenus knows about; so he’s telling me to ask him.’

**211D5** ‘So why not ask him?’ he said.

‘Indeed I *shall* ask him,’ I said. ‘So tell me, Menexenus, whatever I ask you. Since I was a boy I’ve actually always had a desire for a certain kind of possession, like everyone else, only it’s different things for different people: one person has a desire **211E1** to get horses, while for another it’s dogs, for another, gold, for another, public honours; but as for me, I don’t get excited about these things – what I’m absolutely passionate about is getting friends, and I’d wish for a good friend more than for the best example any man has of a quail or **211E5** a cock, and – Zeus! – I’d wish, myself, more for that than for the best horse and dog; and I do believe – I swear by the Dog! – more than the gold of Darius I’d much sooner get me a friend, or rather, more than getting Darius himself; that’s how much of a friend-lover I am. So **212A1** when I see the two of you, you and Lysis, I’m overcome, and call you happy because at such a young age you’re able to acquire this possession quickly and easily – you’ve acquired him as a friend like this, quickly and firmly, and similarly he’s acquired you; whereas, as for me, I’m so far away from **212A5** having the possession that I don’t even know in what way one person becomes a friend of another. But these are the very things I want to ask you about, because you’re experienced in them. So tell me: when someone loves a person, which of the two is it that **212B1** becomes a friend – the one who loves, of the one who is loved? Or the one who is loved of the one who loves? Or does it make no difference?’

‘It seems to me,’ he said, ‘that it makes no difference.’

‘What do you mean?’ I said. ‘Do both, then, become friends of each other, if just one of them loves the **212B5** other?’

‘It seems so to me,’ he said.

‘What about this: isn’t it possible for someone who loves not to be loved in return by this person that he loves?’

‘It is.’

‘And what about this: is it possible even to be hated when one loves? The sort of thing, I imagine, that lovers too sometimes think they experience from their darlings: they love **212C1** as much as anyone could, but some of them think that they’re not loved in return, while others think they’re even hated. Or doesn’t this seem true to you?’

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘very true.’

‘Well then, in such a case,’ I said, ‘one person loves and the other is loved.’

‘Yes.’

‘Which of the two of them, **212C5** then, is a friend of which? The one who loves of the one who is loved, whether he is also loved in return or is even hated, or the one who is loved of the one who loves? Or again is *neither* of them, in such a case, a friend of *neither*, unless both of them love each other?’

‘It appears, at any rate, **212D1** to be like that.’

‘In that case it seems differently to us now from the way it seemed before. For then, if one of the two loved, it seemed to us that both were friends; but now, unless both love, neither is a friend.’

‘Possibly,’ he said.

‘In that case nothing is friend to the one loving unless **212D5** it loves in return.’

‘It appears not.’

‘In that case, there aren’t horse-lovers either, when the horses don’t love them back, or quail-lovers, or for that matter dog-lovers and wine-lovers and exercise-lovers and wisdom-lovers – unless wisdom loves them in return. Or *does* each of these types love **212E1** the things in question, but without the things being friends, so that the poet lied when he said “Happy the man who has friends: children and solid-hoofed horses, hounds for the hunt, and a host abroad”?’

**212E5** ‘It doesn’t seem so to me,’ he said.

‘He seems to you to be saying the truth?’

‘Yes.’

‘What’s loved, in that case, *is* a friend to the one loving, it appears, Menexenus, whether it loves him or, even, hates him; as for example with recently born children, in some respects not yet loving, in **213A1** others even hating, when they are disciplined by their mother or by their father – nevertheless even when hating, at that moment they are most of all dearest of friends to their parents.’

‘It seems to me it’s like that,’ he said.

‘It’s not, then, the one loving that’s a friend, from this argument, **213A5** but the one loved.’

‘It appears so.’

‘And it’s the one hated, too, then, that’s an enemy, not the one hating.’

‘Evidently.’

‘Many, then, are loved by their enemies, and hated by their friends, and are **213B1** friends to their enemies and enemies to their friends, if it’s what’s loved that’s a friend and not what loves. And yet it’s highly unreasonable, my dear friend, or rather, I think, it’s actually impossible, to be enemy to friend and friend to enemy.’

'You appear, Socrates,' **213B5** he said, 'to be saying the truth.'

'Well then, if this is impossible, what loves will be friend of what's loved.'

'Evidently.'

'What hates, then, conversely, will be enemy of what's hated.'

'Necessarily.'

'Well then, it's going to turn out that we'll have necessarily to agree to the same **213C1** things as we did in the previous cases, that often a friend is friend of a non-friend, and often even of an enemy, that is, when either a person loves something that doesn't love him or he loves something that even hates him; and that often enemy is enemy of non-enemy or even of friend, that is, when either a person loves something that doesn't hate him or hates something that even loves him.'

**213C5** 'Possibly,' he said.

'So what are we going to do,' I said, 'if neither those who love are going to be friends, nor the ones who are loved, nor those who love and are loved? Shall we say that besides these, there are still others of some sort that become friends to each other?'

'I don't – Zeus!' he said: 'Socrates, I don't see any way out at all.'

**213D1** 'Is it perhaps, Menexenus,' I said, 'that we weren't inquiring in the right way at all?'

'I think so, Socrates,' said Lysis, and blushed as he said it; for it seemed to me that the words escaped without his wanting them to, because of the intensity with which he was paying attention **213D5** to what was being said, and it was clear that it was the same, too, all the while he was listening.

So, because I wished to give Menexenus a breather, and also felt delight at the other's love for wisdom, I changed things round, turning the discussion **213E1** in Lysis' direction. I said:

'Lysis, what you're saying seems true to me, that if we were investigating in the right way, we'd never be lost in the way we are now. But let's not go along this way any longer – for the investigation appears to me one of a difficult sort, like a difficult road – but **213E5** where we made the turning, that's where it seems to me we should go, investigating the things **214A1** the poets tell us; for these we regard as being as it were fathers of wisdom, and leaders. And they do have something to say about who really are friends, and the view they express isn't, I imagine, a bad one; but they do claim that it's god himself that makes them friends, by bringing them to each other. **214A5** They put it, I think, something like this: "Ever god brings like to like," **214B1** and makes him known – or have you not encountered these verses?'

'Yes, I have,' [Lysis] said.

'So haven't you also encountered the prose-writings of the wisest people saying these very same things, that like is necessarily always friend to like? These people, I think, are the ones who **214B5** converse and write about the nature of the universe.'

'What you say is true,' Lysis said.

'Well then,' I said, 'is what they say right?'

'Perhaps,' he said.

'Perhaps half of it,' I said, 'and perhaps the whole of it, but we're just not understanding. For it seems to us that at any rate so far as one bad person **214C1** and another bad person are concerned, the nearer the first approaches the second and the more he associates with him, the more of an enemy he becomes to him, since he treats him unjustly, and it's impossible, I imagine, for people who do injustice and people to whom they do it to be friends. Isn't that so?'

'Yes,' he said.

'If we looked at it this way, then, half of what is being claimed wouldn't **214C5** be true; that is, if the bad are like one another.'

'What you say is true.'

'But it seems to me that what they are saying is that the *good* are like each other, and friends, whereas the bad, by contrast, as is actually said about them, are never alike, even themselves to themselves, but **214D1** are fickle and unstable; and if anything were to be itself unlike itself, and different from itself, that thing would hardly be likely to become like or friends to anything else. Doesn't it seem like this to you too?'

'It does to me,' he said.

'This, then, is what they're saying in their riddling way, or so it seems to me, my friend – those who say **214D5** that like is friend to like: that the good person alone is friend to the good person alone, while the bad person never enters into true friendship either to good or to bad. Does it seem the same to you?'

He nodded assent.

'In that case we already have in our hands the answer to the question who those that are friends are; for the argument indicates **214E1** to us that it's whoever are good.'

'Yes, it absolutely seems so,' he said.

'And to me,' I said. 'And yet there's something in it that leaves me unhappy. So come on, by Zeus! Let's have a look at what it is that I'm suspicious about. Is the like person friend to the like to the extent that he is like him, and is such a person **214E5** useful to another such? Or rather, put it like this: what benefit would anything whatever that's like anything else

whatever be capable of having for that other thing, or what harm could it do it, that it couldn't also have for itself or do to itself? Or what could it be subjected to that it couldn't also be **215AI** subjected to by itself? Things like that – how would they be prized by each other, when there's no aid they have to give each other? Is there any way they could be?'

'There isn't.'

'And whatever wasn't prized, how would it be a friend?'

'There's no way it would be.'

'But in that case the like person isn't friend to his like; but the good to the good, **215A5** to the extent that he's good and not to the extent that he's like, could he be a friend?'

'Perhaps.'

'But what about this: wouldn't the good person, to the extent that he's good, to that extent be sufficient for himself?'

'Yes.'

'But the one who's sufficient wouldn't be needing anything, with respect to his sufficiency.'

'No question about it.'

'But the sort of person who doesn't **215BI** need a thing wouldn't prize a thing either.'

'No, he wouldn't.'

'And what he didn't prize, he wouldn't love either.'

'Certainly not.'

'But if someone doesn't love, he isn't a friend.'

'It doesn't appear so.'

'How then on our account will the good be friends to the good at all, if they're not going to miss each other **215B5** when they're away from each other (since they're sufficient for themselves even when they're apart), and they're also going to have no need for each other when they are both there? People in that sort of situation – what's going to bring it about that they make much of each other?'

'Nothing,' he said.

'But **215CI** they wouldn't be friends if they didn't make much of each other.'

'True.'

'Just look and see, Lysis, how we are being led astray! Is it even that there's a way we're being deceived *completely*?'

'How so?' he said.

'There was a time once when I heard someone **215C5** saying – and I'm just now recalling it – that as for like in relation to like, and the good in relation

to the good, they were supremely hostile to each other; and moreover he called in Hesiod as witness, saying that in fact "Potter is angry with potter, and singer with singer, **215DI** And beggar with beggar" – and for all other cases too, then, he said, it must necessarily be as in these that it is most of all the things that are most alike that are most filled with jealousy and rivalry towards each other, while the things that are most unlike must be filled with friendship: he said that the **215D5** poor person must necessarily be friend to the rich and the weak to the strong for the sake of getting their aid, and the ill person to the doctor, and that every person, in fact, who lacks knowledge must prize the one who possesses it, and love him. **215E1** And moreover he sallied out in what he said in even grander style, saying that in fact so far from its being the case that like was friend to like, it was precisely the opposite of that: it was what was most opposed that was most of all friend to what was most opposed to it. For, he said, what each **215E5** thing desires is that sort of thing, not what is like it: dry desires the wet, cold hot, bitter sweet, sharp dull, empty – filling, while the full, for its part, desires emptying, and so with the rest, along the same lines. For that which is opposed is nourishment to what is opposed to it; for what is like would derive no **216A1** benefit from like. And I can tell you, my friend, he also seemed to me a smart person, when he was saying this; for he spoke well. What about you two –' I said: 'how does he seem to do, in the view of the two of you, in what he says?'

'Definitely well,' said Menexenus, 'or at any rate so it struck me, hearing it like that.'

'Are we in that case to assert that it is opposite to opposite that is most **216A5** of all friends?'

'Yes, certainly.'

'Hold on,' I said. 'Isn't that something bizarre, Menexenus? And won't those super-wise individuals, the antilogicians, leap on us delightedly and ask us whether **216B1** enmity is something that's most opposed to friendship? What shall we reply to them? Or mustn't we necessarily agree that what they say is true?'

'Necessarily we must.'

"So," they'll say, "is enemy friend to friend, or friend friend to enemy?'"

'Neither is so,' he said.

"But is the just (a) friend to the unjust, or the **216B5** self-controlled to the licentious, or the good to the bad?'"

'It doesn't seem to me it'd be like that.'

'And yet,' I said, 'if it really were the case that a thing is friend to its friend with respect to their opposition, these too will necessarily be friends.'

‘Necessarily.’

‘In that case neither is like friend to like nor opposite to opposite.’

‘It seems not.’

**216C1** ‘But let’s go on and consider this too, whether the friend isn’t perhaps eluding us to a still greater extent, in truth being none of these things, but what is neither good nor bad simply, perhaps, becoming friend of the good.’

‘How do you mean?’ [Menexenus] said.

‘Zeus!’ I said. ‘I don’t **216C5** know – I’m dizzy myself at the impasse in the argument, and it looks as if, as the old proverb goes, “the beautiful is friend”. At any rate it seems like something soft and smooth and slippery; **216D1** which is actually why, perhaps, it is easily slipping through our fingers and getting away from us, that is, because it’s the sort of thing that does that. For I say that the good is beautiful; what about you – don’t you think so?’

‘I do.’

‘Then I say – and here I’m speaking as a prophet – that it’s the neither good nor bad that’s friend of the beautiful and good; **216D5** and as for the things with a view to which I utter my prophecy, I’ll tell you what they are. It seems to me that it’s as if there are some three kinds of things, the good, the bad, and the neither good nor bad; what about you?’

‘To me too,’ he said.

‘And that neither is the good friend to the good, nor the bad to the bad, nor the good **216E1** to the bad, just as the previous discussion too stopped us from saying; it remains, then, if indeed anything is friend to anything, that the neither good nor bad should be friend either of the good or of what is of the same sort as itself. For I don’t suppose that anything would become friend to the bad.’

**216E5** ‘True.’

‘But neither would like become friend to like – we said so just now, didn’t we?’

‘Yes.’

‘In that case what is of the same sort as the neither good nor bad won’t be friend to the neither good nor bad.’

‘It doesn’t appear so.’

‘In that case it turns out **217A1** that there’s one thing, alone, to which one thing, alone, becomes friend: the neither good nor bad becomes friend to the good.’

‘Necessarily, it seems.’

‘So, you boys,’ I said, ‘is it also leading us in the right direction, what we’re saying now? If at any rate we were to choose to consider the case of the

body **217A5** in healthy condition, it hasn’t any need of medical expertise, or of assistance; for it’s in sufficient condition, so that no one who’s in a healthy condition is friend to doctor, because of his health. Right?’

‘No one.’

‘But the sick person *is*, I imagine, because of his sickness.’

‘Obviously.’

**217B1** ‘Sickness, then, is something bad, while medical expertise is something beneficial and good?’

‘Yes.’

‘Whereas I imagine a body, just insofar as it is a body, is neither good nor bad.’

‘Just so.’

‘But a body is compelled through sickness to embrace and love medical expertise.’

‘It seems so to me.’

‘The neither **217B5** bad nor good, in that case, becomes friend of the good because of presence of bad.’

‘It appears so.’

‘But, clearly, before it, itself, becomes bad under the agency of the bad it has. For once it had become bad **217C1** it certainly wouldn’t any longer, to any degree, desire and be friend of the good; for we said it was impossible for bad to be friend to good.’

‘Yes, impossible.’

‘Consider, then, you two, what I’m saying. I’m saying that some things are themselves of such a sort as whatever it is that is present, while others are not. Just as, if **217C5** someone wanted to daub whatever it might be with a certain colour, the colour daubed on is I imagine present to the thing daubed.’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘Well then, is the thing daubed at that point of such a sort in colour as what is on it?’

**217D1** ‘I don’t understand,’ he [Menexenus] said.

‘It’s like this,’ I said: ‘if someone daubed your hair, which is golden, with white lead, would it then be white, or appear white?’

‘It would appear white,’ he said.

‘And at the same time whiteness would be *present* to it.’

‘Yes.’

‘But all the same **217D5** at that point your hair wouldn’t any more *be* white than it was before; whiteness may be present, but your hair isn’t at all either white or indeed black.’

‘True.’

‘But, my friend, at the point when old age brings this very same colour to your hair, *then* it becomes of such a sort as what is present, white by presence **217E1** of white.’

‘Obviously.’

‘Well then, that’s what I’m asking just now: whether whatever a thing is present to, i.e. what has that thing present to it, will be of such a sort as what is present? Or will it be so if it’s present in a certain way, and not if not?’

‘More the latter,’ he said.

‘The neither bad nor good, then, too, is sometimes, **217E5** with bad present, not yet bad, while there are times when it has already become such a thing.’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘So then, when it isn’t yet bad, but bad is present, *this* sort of presence makes it desire the good; but the presence that makes a thing bad deprives it at one and the same time both of its desire and of its friendship for the good. For it isn’t any longer **218A1** neither bad nor good, but bad, and we agreed that bad wasn’t friend to good.’

‘No indeed.’

‘It’s just for these reasons that we’d say that those who are already wise, too, no longer love wisdom, whether these are gods or human beings; nor, again, would we say that those people love wisdom who have **218A5** ignorance in such a way as to *be* bad, for (we’d say) no person who is bad and ignorant loves wisdom. There remain, then, those who have this bad thing, ignorance, but are not yet lacking in sense through its agency, nor **218B1** ignorant, but still think themselves not to know what they don’t know. Which gives us, then, that those who do love wisdom are those who are as yet neither good nor bad, while as many as are bad don’t love wisdom, and neither do the good; for it became clear to us in what we said before that neither is the opposite friend of its **218B5** opposite nor the like of its like. Or don’t the two of you recall?’

‘Yes, absolutely,’ they both said.

‘*Now*, in that case,’ I said, ‘Lysis and Menexenus, we’ve absolutely and completely found out what the friend is and isn’t. For what we assert about it, both in respect of the soul and in respect of the **218C1** body, and everywhere else, is that the neither bad nor good is friend of the good because of presence of bad.’

They both said they were absolutely in agreement that it was like this.

And what’s more I myself, too, was overjoyed, like a sort of hunter, **218C5** at having adequately enough in my grasp what I was hunting for. And then,

I don’t know where from, the oddest sort of suspicion came into my mind that what we’d agreed wasn’t true, and immediately feeling agitated, I said ‘Oh dear! Lysis and Menexenus, it looks as if our riches were only a dream.’

**218D1** ‘Why exactly?’ said Menexenus.

‘I fear,’ I said, ‘that it’s as if we’d met some people who were impostors – that we’ve fallen in with a form of words about the friend that are something like that.’

**218D5** ‘How’s *that*?’

‘Like this,’ I said: ‘the person who’ll be friend: is he or is he not friend to something?’

‘Necessarily,’ he said.

‘Will it be for the sake of nothing, and because of nothing, or for the sake of something and because of something?’

‘For the sake of something and because of something.’

‘That thing – for the sake of which the friend is friend **218D10** to the friend – being friend, or neither friend nor enemy?’

**218E1** ‘I don’t understand at all,’ he said.

‘That’s reasonable enough,’ I said; ‘but if I put it another way, perhaps you’ll follow, and I believe I’ll understand more myself what I’m saying: the sick person, we were saying just now, is friend of the doctor; isn’t that so?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is it then because of sickness, for the sake of health, that he’s friend of the **218E5** doctor?’

‘Yes.’

‘But sickness is a bad thing?’

‘Of course.’

‘What about health?’ I said; ‘is it a good thing, or a bad thing, or neither of the two?’

‘A good thing,’ **219A1** he said.

‘So then what we were saying, it seems, was that the body, which is neither good nor bad, because of the sickness, that is, because of the bad, is friend of medical expertise, and medical expertise is a good thing; but that it’s for the sake of health that the medical expertise has become the object of the friendship, and health is a good thing. **219A5** Is that right?’

‘Yes.’

‘And is the health something that’s a friend or something that’s not a friend?’

‘A friend.’

‘And the sickness is something that’s inimical.’

‘Yes, absolutely.’



‘So then the neither **219BI** bad nor good, because of the bad and inimical, is friend of the good for the sake of the good and friend.’

‘It appears so.’

‘So then it’s for the sake of the friend that the friend is friend, because of the inimical.’

‘It seems so.’

**219B5** ‘Well then,’ I said: ‘now that we’ve got here, boys, let’s pay attention to avoid our being deceived. I let pass that the friend has turned out to be friend of the friend, and that like turns out to be friend of *like*, which we say is impossible; but for all that, let’s consider the following, to prevent what we are saying now from deceiving **219CI** us. Medical expertise, we say, is a friend for the sake of health.’

‘Yes.’

‘Is health too, then, a friend?’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘So then, if it’s a friend, it’s for the sake of something.’

‘Yes.’

‘For the sake of some *friend*, then, if it’s going to conform to our previous agreement.’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘And then again, that too, in its turn, will be **219C5** friend for the sake of a friend?’

‘Yes.’

‘Won’t we then necessarily wear ourselves out if we go on like this, and won’t we have to arrive at some beginning, which will no longer refer to another friend, but will have come to that thing which is **219DI** a friend first, for the sake of which we say that the other things too, all of them, are friends?’

‘Agreed: necessarily.’

‘This, then is what I’m saying, that we must beware of all those other things that we said were friends, for the sake of *that* one, that like some sort of images of it they don’t deceive us, when that first one is what is **219D5** truly friend. Let’s look at it like this. Whenever anyone makes much of anything, as for example sometimes a father prefers a son to all his other things: that sort of person, for the sake of thinking **219EI** everything of the son – would he also make much of some other thing too? As for example if he noticed that he’d drunk hemlock, would he make much of wine, if he really thought this would save the son?’

‘Of course,’ [Menexenus] said.

‘So of any vessel the **219E5** wine was in, too?’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘Then does he under these circumstances make no more of anything, a ceramic cup or his own son, or again three measures of wine or the son? Or is it something like this: all the concern in such cases isn’t expended on the things that are procured for the sake of something, but on the thing for the sake of which all **220AI** such things are procured?’

‘This isn’t to deny that we often say we make much of gold and silver, but I venture that that doesn’t make it any *truer*, that other thing is what we make everything of, whatever it comes to light as being, for the sake of which both **220A5** gold and all the other things that are procured are procured. Shall we assert it to be like this?’

‘Yes, absolutely.’

‘Then does the same account apply to the friend, too? For as often as we say things are friends to us for the sake of some other **220BI** friend, it’s plainly just a word we’re using when we say it; and what is really a friend seems likely to be that very thing to which these so-called “friendships” finally lead.’

‘It does seem likely to be like this,’ he said.

‘So what is *really* a friend is not a friend for the sake of some **220B5** friend?’

‘True.’

‘This, then, we’re rid of, that the friend is friend for the sake of some friend; but is the good a friend?’

‘It seems so to me.’

‘Is it then because of the bad that the good is loved, **220CI** and is it like this: if of the three things we were talking about just now, good, bad, and neither good nor bad, two were still left, but the third, the bad, were to take itself off out of the way and affected nothing, whether body, or soul, or the other things, the ones we say, themselves **220C5** in themselves, are neither bad nor good, is it the case that then the good would not be useful to us at all, but would have become useless? For if nothing any longer harmed us, we wouldn’t need **220DI** any help at all, and in this way, given those circumstances, it would become manifest that it was because of the bad that we were attracted by and loved the good, on the basis that the good was a cure for the bad, and the bad a sickness; and if there’s no sickness there’s no need for a cure. Is the nature **220D5** of the good like this, and is it loved like this, because of the bad, by us who are between the bad and the good, and does it have no use, itself for the sake of itself?’

‘It seems,’ [Menexenus] said, ‘to be like that.’

'In that case we find that that friend of ours, the one to which we said all the rest finally led **220E1** – “friends’ for the sake of another friend” was what we said they were – doesn’t resemble them at all. For these have the name “friends for the sake of a friend”, whereas the true friend plainly has a nature that’s wholly the opposite of this; for it showed up as plainly being a friend to us for the sake of something inimical, and if the inimical **220E5** took itself off it’s no longer, it seems, a friend to us.'

'It doesn't seem so to me,' he said, 'as least if it's put as it is now.'

'Good heavens [‘By Zeus!'],' I said, 'if bad disappears, will there no longer even be any being hungry, or **221A1** being thirsty, or anything else of that sort? Or will there be hunger, if indeed there are human beings and the other sorts of living creatures, but not hunger that is *harmful*? And so with thirst, and the other sorts of desires – there will be these desires, but they won't be bad, given that bad will have disappeared? Or is the question “What, I wonder, **221A5** will there be or not be under those circumstances?” ridiculous? For who knows the answer? This much in any case we do know, that even as things are it is possible to be hungry and to be harmed, and possible too to be hungry and to be benefited. Isn't that so?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Then it's possible also to be thirsty and **221B1** to desire any of the other things of this sort and sometimes to desire them beneficially, sometimes harmfully, and sometimes neither?'

'Yes, very much so.'

'Then if bad things disappear, the sorts of things that actually aren't bad – why does it belong to them to disappear along **221B5** with the bad?'

'It doesn't at all.'

'In that case there will be the neither good nor bad desires even if bad things disappear.'

'It appears so.'

'Well, is it possible for a person desiring, and feeling passion for, the thing he desires and feels passion for not to love?'

'It doesn't seem so to me.'

'In that case even if **221C1** bad things had disappeared, it seems, there will be some friends.'

'Yes.'

'There wouldn't be, if the bad really were cause of a thing's being a friend – one thing wouldn't be a friend to another, if that had disappeared. For once a cause has disappeared I imagine it would be impossible for that thing of which this cause was cause still **221C5** to be there.'

'What you say is correct.'

'Well then, hasn't it been agreed by us that the friend loves something, and because of something; and didn't we think, at *that* point, that it was because of the bad that the neither good nor bad loved the good?'

'True.'

**221D1** 'But now, it seems, another sort of cause of loving and being loved is appearing.'

'It does seem so.'

'So is it in fact the case, as we were saying just now, that desire is cause of friendship, and that what desires is friend to that thing it desires and at such time that it desires it, and that what **221D5** we were previously saying being a friend was, was some kind of nonsense, like a poem that's been badly put together?'

'Quite likely.'

'But', I said, 'what desires, desires whatever it's **221E1** lacking. Isn't that so?'

'Yes.'

'And what is lacking, in that case, is friend of whatever it's lacking?'

'It seems so to me.'

'And what becomes lacking is whatever has something taken away from it.'

'Of course.'

'It's what belongs to us, then, that's actually the object of passion and friendship and desire, as it appears, **221E5** Menexenus and Lysis.'

The two of them assented.

'The two of you, in that case, if you're friends to each other, in some way naturally belong the one to the other.'

'No doubt about it,' they said together.

'And if, then, any one person desires any other,' I said, **222A1** 'you boys, or feels passion for him, he wouldn't ever desire, or feel passion, or love, if he didn't actually in some way belong to the one he is feeling passion for, either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form.'

'Absolutely so,' said Menexenus; but Lysis said nothing.

'Very well. **222A5** What naturally belongs to us, then – it's become evident to us that it's necessary to love it.'

'It seems so,' he [Menexenus?] said.

'It's necessary, in that case, for the genuine lover, one who's not pretended, to be loved by his darling.'

**222BI** At that Lysis and Menexenus barely somehow nodded assent, but there was no mistaking Hippothales' pleasure, which made him go all sorts of colours.

And I said, wanting to take a look at the argument, 'If belonging is different from being like, then we'd be saying something worth saying, so **222B5** it seems to me, Lysis and Menexenus, about what a friend is; but if it's actually the case that they're the same thing, like and belonging, it's not easy to discard our previous argument to the effect that like was useless to like with respect to their likeness, and to concede that what is useless **222C1** is a friend strikes a false note. So are you prepared,' I said, 'since we're intoxicated with our argument, that we should agree to say that belonging is something different from being like?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'Shall we then also lay it down that the good belongs to everyone, and the bad is **222C5** alien? Or that the bad belongs to the bad, to the good the good, and to the neither good nor bad the neither good nor bad?'

They both said it seemed to them like this, that each **222D1** belongs to each.

'In that case,' I said, 'we've fallen back into things said about friendship that we discarded the first time round; for the unjust person will be friend to the unjust and the bad to the bad no less than the good to the good.'

**222D5** 'It appears so,' he [Menexenus?] said.

'And what's more, if we say that being good and belonging are the same thing, won't the good person be friend only to the good?'

'Yes, absolutely.'

'And yet we thought we had refuted that too, ourselves; or don't you remember?'

'We remember.'

**222E1** 'What use, then, could we still make of our argument? Or is it clear that there wouldn't be any? So I need, like experts in the law-courts, to go back over everything that's been said: if neither those who are loved nor those who love nor the like nor the unlike nor the good **222E5** nor those who belong nor all the other things we've gone through – for I for one don't any longer remember, there were so many of them, but anyway if none of these things is friend, I no longer have any idea what to say.'

**223A1** When I'd said that, I had it in mind at that point to disturb some other member of the older set; and then the guardians came up, like gods of some sort, Menexenus' and Lysis' guardians, with the boys' brothers with them, and called out to tell them to leave **223A5** for home (for by now it was late). Now at first both we and the people standing around tried to

fend them off; but when they took no notice of us, addressed us angrily in broken Greek and **223B1** went on calling the boys just the same, and what's more looked to us difficult to engage with having had a bit to drink at the Hermaea festival – well, we gave in to them and broke up our get-together. But all the same I did get in, even as they were in the process of leaving, 'Now just look at us, Lysis and Menexenus! We've made **223B5** ourselves ridiculous, I, an old man, and you too. For these people here will say as they leave that we think that we're friends of one another – for I count myself too as one of you – but haven't yet been able to find out what the friend *is*.'