Introduction: overview of the erotic dialogues

1.1 ERÔS AND PHILOSOPIA

Of the three speeches in the first half of the Phaedrus, the first is delivered by Phaedrus, who attributes it to Lysias, while the second and third are given by Socrates. Socrates’ first speech argues, like Lysias’ speech, that a lover is harmful to his beloved, and that a boy should grant his sexual favors to a man who is not in love instead of to a lover. However, Socrates recants in his second speech, which praises the lover. At the end of this second speech, Socrates prays to Eros not to take away the “erotic art” (erôtikê technê) that is essential to his philosophical activities:

This palinode, dear Eros, has been given and offered in payment to you, the most beautiful and the best I am able to make, especially considering that it had to be spoken in a somewhat poetic style, for Phaedrus’ sake. In forgiveness for my previous words, and in gratitude for these, be kind and gracious, and do not in anger take away or weaken the erotic art [erôtikê technê] that you gave me. Allow me to be held in honor by the beautiful even more than now . . . [And as for Lysias,] turn him toward philosophy . . . so that his lover here [i.e. Phaedrus] may no longer be of two minds, as he is now, but dedicate his life wholly to erôs together with philosophical words. (257a3–b6)²

Erôs is also a major theme in the Socratic dialogues—those in which Socrates is protagonist—of many ancient writers other than Plato. Some characterize Socrates’ concern with erôs in a positive way. For example, in the Alcibiades of Aeschines, Socrates claims to have benefited Alcibiades “by means of erôs” (διὰ τοῦ ἐρῶν).² In the works of other writers, however, Socrates’ connection with erôs is represented in a very negative fashion. For example, Phaedo’s

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¹ Following Rowe 1988, on 257b6, I read “erôs,” not “Eros.” Throughout this study I leave erôs untranslated or I translate it as “love” or “passionate desire.” On the different senses of the Greek term see further below 1.2.

2. **Socrates’ Daimonic Art**

dialogue Zopyrus opposes Socrates’ erotic tendencies to his devotion to philosophy. Here, the physiognomist Zopyrus, reading Socrates’ character from his physical appearance, states that he is stupid and a womanizer. Socrates says that Zopyrus is right: these are his natural weaknesses, but he has overcome them by the study of philosophy.3

In Plato’s own dialogues, as in the passage from the *Phaedrus* just quoted, _erōs_ is often associated with philosophy in a positive way. In other passages and dialogues of Plato, however, _erōs_ is opposed to reason and philosophy. In the _Phaedo_, Socrates says that _erōs_ is among the affections of the body that impede wisdom (_phronēsis_) and philosophy (64c4–68c3, especially 66c2–8). In the _Republic_, Cephalus quotes with approval Sophocles’ characterization of sex (τὸ ἄφροσνεῖον) as a mad master (1.329b8–d2), Glaucon agrees that the pleasures of sex are mad (3.403a4–6), and Socrates agrees with those who characterize _Eros_ as a tyrant (9.573a4–575a7). According to Timaeus, _erōs_ is among those things that a just person must conquer (Ti. 42a6–b2), and it is one of the terrible and necessary affections of the mortal soul (69c5–d6). In _Laws_ 6.782d10–783b1, the Athenian Stranger associates _erōs_ with madness and _hybris_ and says that it is a disease that needs restraint.4 Such passages appear to suggest that a philosopher would need, like the Socrates of _Zopyrus_, to attempt to overcome erotic inclinations. How, then, can Plato’s Socrates claim, as he does in the _Phaedrus_, that erotic art is not only compatible with, but actually necessary to, philosophical activities?

I argue that Plato answers this question in a group of four dialogues: _Alcibiades I_, _Lysis_, _Symposium_ and _Phaedrus_.5 I refer to these four dialogues as “the erotic dialogues,” in part because _ordinary erōs_ (desire for sexual or other objects such as wealth or power) is a central concern in all of them. The _Symposium_ contains a series of speeches in praise of _Eros_, followed by Alcibiades’ praise of Socrates, his beloved. The _Phaedrus_ begins with three speeches about the relationship between lover and beloved – speeches that are the subject of subsequent discussions about rhetoric – and in the _Alcibiades I_ Socrates represents himself as the lover of Alcibiades. Although the central philosophical concern of the _Lysis_ is the question of what a friend is, the dramatic framework of this dialogue concerns Socrates’ demonstration to Hippothales, a young man in love with Lysis, of how a lover should treat a

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3 Φιλοσοφίας ἄρκεται: Rossetti frags. 10 (Alexander of Aphrodisias, _De fato_ 6) and 6 (Cicero, _De fato_ 10). The texts relevant to _Zopyrus_ are collected in Rossetti 1980, and discussed in Blondell 2002: 72–4, and Kahn 1996: 11. On Socrates’ physical appearance see further Chapter 4 at 4.6 and Chapter 6 at 6.3.


5 I take _Alcibiades I_ to be Plato’s own work, for reasons given in Chapter 1 n.1.
Introduction: overview of the erotic dialogues

beloved. Most important, all of these dialogues are erotic in that they depict Socrates as practicing an art or skill that is itself erotic because it shares certain characteristics attributed to the daimon Eros in the Symposium. In all four dialogues, Socrates’ art enables him, like Eros, to be marvelously skilled in the philosophical activities of searching for wisdom and beauty, and of helping others to seek these same objects of eros. A central component of the erotic art is Socratic eros: a passionate desire for the wisdom, beauty and other good things that one recognizes that one lacks.6

Socrates’ claim to have an erotic art is explicit in his prayer to Eros in the Phaedrus, quoted above. Here, Socrates states that he has a special relationship to Eros, the god who has given him erotic art. He also claims in this passage to have used his art, in the recantation speech he has just made, to exhort Phaedrus to devote himself to the life Socrates’ second speech has represented as best, and to which he himself is devoted: a life that combines philosophical words with eros (cf. 249a1–2 and 256a7–b1).7

The nature of the erotic art, and of the relationship between eros and philosophy, is clarified in the Symposium. Socrates’ teacher, Diotima, says that eros in a broad, or generic, sense is desire for any of a number of good things. For example, one kind of eros is desire for wisdom (philosophia: literally, liking, or love, for wisdom).8 According to Diotima: “Wisdom [sophia] is among the most beautiful things, and eros is concerned with beauty [or the fine: to kalon], so that it is necessary for Eros to be a philosopher” (204b2–4). Diotima goes on to substitute “the good” for “the beautiful” (204c1–3, 205e7–206a12), and to define eros as “desire for good things” (205d1–3). According to Diotima, then, philosophy is one kind of eros, eros for wisdom, something that is not only good, but also among the most beautiful things.9 This view of philosophy as one kind of eros is clarified by Diotima’s further characterization of Eros, the personification of eros. Eros is neither god nor mortal, but a great daimon (202d1), who is not the beloved but the lover (erōn: 204c1–3). He desires to become wise (sophos: 204a1–2) because he realizes that he lacks wisdom. Moreover, Eros is a marvelously skilled plotter and hunter (θηρευτής δεινός: 203d4–6) after the good and the beautiful things he recognizes that he does not possess.

6 I am indebted to an anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press for suggesting the helpful terms “ordinary eros” and “Socratic eros.”
7 Some complexities concerning the nature of philosophy in the Phaedrus are discussed in Introduction to Part III.
8 See 204d1–8, discussed further below I.1.
9 Cf. Resp. 3.402d6: “the most beautiful is the most lovable.” The relationship in Symp. between the good and the beautiful is close but not necessarily identical: see Rowe 1998, on 205c1–2, 204c1–2, 206e2–3. On eros as desire for the good see especially Chapter 1 n.9 and Chapter 2 n.68.
Socrates’ Daimonic Art

(203d4–204c6). Thus, philosophy, as practiced by Eros, is not simply one kind of erōs. It also includes marvelous skill in searching for the objects of erōs.

Socrates concludes his speech with a declaration of his own devotion to this Eros and to ta erōtīka, matters with which Eros is concerned:

Diotima spoke and I am persuaded. Being persuaded I attempt to persuade others that . . . one could not easily acquire a better co-worker for human nature than Eros. And so I say that every man should honor Eros, and I myself honor ta erōtīka and am especially devoted to these matters, and I urge others to be so also. Both now and always I praise the power and courage of Eros as much as I am able. (Symp. 212b1–8)

In this passage, Socrates claims to be especially devoted both to Eros, the daimōn who provides the greatest benefits for humans, and to ta erōtīka, and he urges others to be similarly devoted. Elsewhere in this dialogue Socrates claims to have an erotic art, just as he does in the Phaedrus, saying that he is marvelously skilled in ta erōtīka (ἔπιγνον τὰ ἐρωτικὰ: 198d1–2), and that he knows (ἐπιστοδεῖον) nothing other than ta erōtīka (177d7–8). In the Symposium Socrates does not explicitly claim to have been given erotic art by Eros. However, the claim, unusual for him, to have knowledge, and his special devotion to the philosopher-daimōn whom he himself resembles suggest that Eros may be his patron here, just as he is in the Phaedrus.

Although Plato’s Socrates does not explicitly claim to have erotic art in the Lysis and Alcibiades I, he is nevertheless characterized as practicing it, especially by being particularly devoted to erōs and by exhorting and advising others in respect to ta erōtīka. In the Lysis, Socrates represents himself as devoted from childhood to a particular object of erōs (ἐξηχόν... ἐρωτικὸς): the acquisition of good friends (211e2–3). He also states that, although he is inferior in other respects, a god has given him the ability to recognize lover and beloved (204b8–c2). Socrates implicitly claims to have an erotic art when he tells Hippothales how someone who is wise (sophos) in ta erōtika treats a beloved (206a1–2), and says that he might be able to give a demonstration of this treatment by questioning Lysis (206c5–7, 210e2–5). He does not need to exhort Hippothales to become devoted to erōs, as he exhorts his audience in the Symposium, for he knows that the young man is already far gone in love (204b5–8). In giving his demonstration, however, Socrates is portrayed as using erotic art to show Hippothales how to become wise concerning ta erōtīka.
Introduction: overview of the erotic dialogues

In *Alcibiades I*, Socrates is himself in love with a particular individual, for he claims to be the only lover of Alcibiades’ soul (131d5–e5, 131e10–11). He is so devoted to this object of love that he has closely and continually observed Alcibiades for many years before speaking to him (103a1–4, 106e4–9). Socrates’ erotic art is shown in this dialogue in large part by means of his unique ability, as the lover of Alcibiades’ soul, to help the young man acquire the object of Alcibiades’ passionate desire: the “greatest power” in the city, which, Socrates demonstrates, is conferred not by tyranny, but by self-knowledge and self-care (105b4, d3–4, e4–5, 124a7–b6). He exhorts Alcibiades in respect to *ta erôtika* when he urges the young man to become as beautiful as possible (131d7) in soul, and says, moreover, that by doing so Alcibiades will remain Socrates’ beloved (131d1–132a2). Socrates does not explicitly say that Eros has given him erotic art, but he does claim to have received divine encouragement to approach Alcibiades (103a4–b2, 105e5).

In the *Lysis* and *Alcibiades I*, the term *philosophia* and its cognates play a much less important role than they do in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Nevertheless, philosophy in the *Lysis* and *Alcibiades I*, as in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, is represented as requiring Socratic *erôs*, a passionate desire to attain as much wisdom as it is possible for one to attain.10 In the *Lysis*, those who “philosophize” are said to be people who desire (*epithumein*; 217e7–9) one kind of good: wisdom. These people are those who, like Eros in the *Symposium*, do not think they know what they in fact do not know (*Lys.* 218a2–b3). That this desire can be passionate is shown by the association of *erôs* with *epithumia* (desire) at *Lysis* 211d7–e8, 221b7–8 and 221e7–222a7. When Socrates uses his erotic art to question his young interlocutors, he induces *aporia* (impasse), which leads them to recognize that they lack wisdom. He thereby encourages them to desire passionately to acquire this good thing. While the term “*philosophia*” and its cognates do not occur in *Alcibiades I*,11 in this dialogue also love for wisdom is an important concept. Socrates uses his erotic art to persuade his beloved, Alcibiades, that the true object of Alcibiades’ *erôs* is the power conferred by self-knowledge and self-care (*epimelein*), that is, by caring for the soul and striving to know oneself (for example, 124a7–b3). Self-knowledge and self-care, like *philosophia* in other dialogues, require a passionate desire (e.g., θρόνου: 131d7–8) to acquire as much wisdom and virtue as one can.

In each of the four erotic dialogues, then, Socrates is characterized as practicing what is called in the *Phaedrus* an “erotic art,” or “skill” that

10 Good recent surveys of the vexed question of the possibility of attaining wisdom are provided by Detel 2003 and Yonezawa 2004: 1–6. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this study.

11 According to Brandwood 1976.
Socrates’ Daimonic Art

is essential to his philosophical activities. It is this *érotikê technê* that distinguishes Plato’s Socrates from the sophists, who claim knowledge they do not have; from ordinary lovers of boys, horses, gold and honor; and from the Socrates portrayed by other Socratic writers. Plato’s Socrates is a uniquely powerful and fascinating figure in large part because of his unique erotic skill.

There are five components to Socrates’ “art,” or “skill,” emphasized to different degrees in the erotic dialogues:

1. Socrates claims to be under the patronage of, or devoted to, Eros and to *ta érotika*: the wisdom, beauty, and other good things that are the objects of the passionate desire (*erōs*) that is the sphere of this god or daimôn.

2. He recognizes that he himself lacks wisdom and other good things.

3. Under the influence of *erōs* (see (1)), he has a passionate desire (Socratic *erōs*) for the wisdom and the other good things he recognizes that he lacks.

4. He is marvelously skilled (δεινὸς τὰ ἐρωτικά: *Symp.* 198d1–2) in the search for as much wisdom and other good things as he can attain.

5. As an essential part of the skill he has in pursuing his own search, Socrates is also marvelously skilled at helping others to acquire erotic art. That is, Socrates is skilled in helping others to become devoted to Eros and *ta érotika*, to recognize their own lack of wisdom and other good things, to desire these good things passionately, and to become skilled both in seeking to attain as much of them as they are able, and in helping others to acquire the erotic art.

These five components are all closely interconnected. The preoccupation with beauty and other good things associated with Eros (component (1)) induces in Socrates, first, the recognition of his own lack (component (2)), followed by the desire to repair the lack (component (3)); finally, the desire and the lack together are complemented (components (4) and (5)) by his skill in prosecuting his own search, which also includes the skill of enlisting others in the same search.13

By exhorting others and helping them to recognize their own lack of wisdom, and to desire passionately the wisdom they lack, as component (5) requires, Socrates is himself engaging in a passionate striving to attain as

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12 Socrates’ *érotikê technê* differs significantly from lovers’ hunting by means of gifts that is called *érotikê technê* in *Soph.* 222d5–e3. I disagree with Balmard 2001: 232 in connecting the two.

13 His skill includes the ability to affect others, but is not limited to this, as suggested by Yunis 2005: 121: “Socrates’ claim to be an erotic expert (*érotikê* . . .) refers to his ability to affect men like Alcibiades, Charmides, and perhaps Phaedrus with his passion for inquiry and philosophy.”
Introduction: overview of the erotic dialogues

much wisdom as possible. The way in which he seeks wisdom is by exam-
in ing himself and others by means of question and answer (dialectic), as he
explicitly states, for example, in Alcibiades I 127e4–7. Dialectic, moreover, is
a non-competitive and mutually beneficial activity that requires, and helps
to create, friendly relationships among interlocutors. In helping others to
search for wisdom, Socrates creates or increases the friendly feelings that
are an especially important issue in the Lysis and Phaedrus.

Socrates’ art, then, is essentially both philosophical and erotic together,
in that it helps him to seek the wisdom and other good things that are
the objects of his passionate desire. However, philosophy, as Socrates is
represented as practicing it in the erotic dialogues, is not simply one form
of erōs. Instead, Socratic erōs (component (3) above) is one of several
components of the erotic art that allows Socrates, like Eros, to practice
philosophy with marvelous skill. The kind of skill involved in component
(5) also has a dimension more closely connected with ordinary erōs for
another person. To help someone else seek wisdom is to benefit and act
as a friend to the person examined, and also can, but does not always,
lead an older partner to become or continue to be the erastēs (lover) of an
individual young person who has a beautiful soul. Thus, in Alcibiades I,
Socrates, the erastēs of Alcibiades’ beautiful soul, says that his own love will
not cease as long as Alcibiades goes on improving (131d4–132a2). In this
dialogue, Socrates’ erōs for Alcibiades’ soul helps the young man to become
better.

Socrates’ art can be characterized as “daimonic” as well as “erotic” in that
each of the five components of this art is associated with the characteristics
attributed to the philosopher Eros in the Symposium. This daimon, a being

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14 On the differences between dialectic and eristic see below n. 31 and Chapter 2 n. 47.

15 My account, arrived at independently, of Socrates’ erotic art is similar in some respects to the
characterization given by Scott and Welton 2008 of Socratic philosophy as “an art of love” (136),
although my approach to this topic is very different (see Preface n. 7). However, I disagree in two
major respects with Scott and Welton’s views on Socrates’ erotic art. First (190), they identify
Socrates’ erotic art with the “true art” of rhetoric, whose practitioner can explain all it does with
reference to the good of the subject (Grg 464–465a). I argue below (I.3 and Introduction to Part III)
that Socrates’ erotikē tekhnē differs significantly from craft-knowledge of this kind. Second, Scott
and Welton claim that in the Symposium “Socrates’ awareness of his ignorance is inseparable from
some partial recollection of the Forms” (186). I believe that this view relies too heavily on material
from dialogues other than the Symposium (see below n. 17).

16 On philosophy as a form of erōs see Kahn 1987: 96–7; Nehamas 2007a: 6–7 and 2007b: esp. 131;
Pakaluk 2004: 108; Ruprecht 1999: 103; Sier 1997: 82–3; de Strycker and Slings 1994: 64; Wohl
2002: 160–1 and n. 91, on Grg 483b4–5. According to Rowe 2009: 139 “erōs, properly understood, is
philosophy.”

17 The interconnections among Eros, Socrates and philosophy are discussed at length by Scott and
Welton 2008, who argue that “philosophy is fundamentally erotic” (3). I agree with much of what
neither god nor mortal, but in between both (202d8–c1), to whom Socrates claims to be devoted (212b6), is himself devoted to, and passionately desires, ta erôtika: the beauty, wisdom, and other good things he recognizes that he lacks (203c4–204a7); he is a “marvelously skilled hunter” after these things (203d4–8); and he is the best co-worker for human nature in its striving to attain wisdom (212b2–4). Indeed, Socrates is portrayed in these dialogues as a daimonic figure, who, like Diotima’s Eros (Symp. 202d13), is called daimonion (Alcibiades, at Symp. 219c1). He resembles not only Eros, but also a satyr, a being who, like Eros, is a daimôn.  

1.2 erôs, sex and interpersonal love

The daimonic qualities of Socrates’ art can help to clarify further the sense in which it is erotic. In the first place, his skill is not erotic in a sexual sense. As James Davidson points out, the English term “erotic” has acquired sexual connotations not present in the Greek terms erôtikos and erôтика, which refer instead to “love” in a broad sense. With this difference in mind, I begin with Diotima’s discussion of erôs in the Symposium, in which she first calls attention to the fact that the term “erôs” and its cognates are used in two senses:

we separate off one kind of erôs and apply to it the name which belongs to the whole; we call it “erôs,” and for the other kinds we use other names. (205b4–6)

Diotima then defines “erôs”:

To sum up, the whole of desire for good things and for happiness is “the supreme and treacherous erôs,” to be found in everyone; but those who direct themselves to it in all sorts of other ways, in business, or in their love of physical exercise, or in philosophy, are neither said to be “in love” nor to be “lovers,” while those who proceed by giving themselves to just one kind of erôs have the name of the whole, “erôs” – and they’re the ones who are “in love,” and “lovers.” (205d1–8)  

they say about the intermediate state of all three entities, although my own interpretation differs in many respects. In particular, I question their attempt, explained at length in their Appendix, to fill out the account of Eros given by Diotima in the Symposium by means of psychological and metaphysical theories drawn from other dialogues.

18 On Socrates’ resemblance to Eros see Chapter 4 at 4.6; on his satyr-like characteristics see 4.2, 4.6 and Chapter 6 at 6.3.

19 Davidson 2007: 35, who comments further: “Socrates is the archetype of the erôtikos man because he is permanently besotted (with knowledge, with handsome young men) and never manages to achieve a finality, not because he was ‘an erotic philosopher’ in the modern sense of the term – someone who converses about sex, or who gives lectures wearing fishnet stockings and a red silk basque” (36).

20 Rowe’s translations, 1998, adapted.
Introduction: overview of the erotic dialogues

According to Diotima, then, “erêos” has a broad sense, referring to desire for good things of all kinds, and a more restricted sense, used of only one kind of desire. Scholars often refer to these two senses of “erôs” as “generic” and “specific,” respectively.21 Diotima gives helpful examples of generic erôs in the passage quoted above, but in characterizing specific erôs she simply refers to the way in which people speak. Although there are many disagreements about how to interpret Diotima’s distinction, most scholars agree that specific erôs in this passage has a sexual component.22

However, Diotima’s distinction is not simply one between desires with and without a sexual component, as Paul Ludwig’s recent detailed analysis of Greek usage helps to show. In Homer, “erôs” does not necessarily refer to sexual desire, or even to a particularly strong desire, but includes the desires to eat (e.g., Il. 1.469), weep, dance and make war: “Homeric eros seems to mean mere desire of any kind, for any object or aim, no matter how mundane, no matter how intense or lacking in intensity.”23 According to Ludwig, then, Diotima’s generic erôs resembles Homeric erôs in referring to a “mere desire of any kind.”24 Her specific erôs, however, differs from the Homeric kind of generic erôs not only in its association with sexual desire, but also in being intense and passionate.25 According to Ludwig, there is also a third category of usage, one “transferring (literally or metaphorically) the passionate intensity of the specific eros to a wider range of objects found only in generic eros.”26 For example, in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon 341–2, Clytemnestra says: “Let not an eros first fall upon the army...to ravage what they ought not.”27 Ludwig’s third category, then, would seem to include cases comparable to the English use of “lust” to characterize passionate desire for such non-sexual objects as power and wealth. In interpreting individual passages, Ludwig concludes, it is important, but often difficult, to distinguish sexual from broader uses of “erôs,” and to determine what degree of passionate intensity is involved.28

What Ludwig calls the “transferred” sense of “erôs” can help us to understand the sense in which Socratic erôs is “erotic.” Plato often uses the term “erôs” and cognates to refer to passionate desire for non-sexual objects. The Laws mentions erôs for wealth (831c4, 870a2–6), and a “divine erôs” for temperate and just pursuits (711d6–7). In the Republic Plato writes of

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23 Ludwig 2002: 124–6; quotation: 126. In quoting, I preserve Ludwig’s use of italics to refer to the Greek word “erôs,” and his lack of italics in using the modern English word “eros” (7 n.5).
24 Ibid. 127; cf. 145. 25 Ibid. 127. 26 Ibid. 128. 27 Ibid. 133, his translation. 28 Ibid. 128.
lovers (erastas) of rule (521b4) and of ἔρως for poetry (607e7, 608a5), while in the Phaedrus Socrates says that his interlocutor, Phaedrus, is in need of a fellow “lover [erastos] of speeches” (228c1–2). In Theaetetus 169b5–c2, Socrates states that he has a strong “sickness,” consisting in a “terrible ἔρως” for discussions. Alcibiades is said to have ἔρως for renown (Alc. I 124b3–6), and in the Statesman, the Eleatic Visitor discusses ἔρως for peace (307e5–6). The contexts of these passages suggest that the term “ἔρως” is used by Plato to indicate an intensity of desire for non-sexual objects that is closer to sexual passion than to a “generic” desire for such objects as food.

Especially when Plato uses “ἔρως” and cognates to refer to love of wisdom or truth the term is often used of an intense desire that is explicitly compared to sexual passion. The vision of the lover who arrives at the sight of truth in the Symposium is described in sexual terms (211e4–212a7), as is the lover’s eagerness to see the “plain of truth” (248b6) in the Phaedrus (251a1–252c2). The Phaedo compares “lovers [erastai] of wisdom [phronēsis]” to lovers of sexual objects (66e2–3, 68a2–8). In the Republic, Socrates characterizes an ἔρως of reality (490a8–b7) by means of an elaborate metaphor of sexual intercourse and generation that lends sexual overtones to a later passage in which he speaks of the “ἔρως for true philosophia” that comes “from some true divine inspiration” (499b8–c1), and asks if philosophers are not lovers (erastai) of being and truth (501d1–2). In the erotic dialogues, then, Socrates’ ἔρως for wisdom and other good things is a desire as passionate as sexual desire. His art is erotic in part because it includes this passionate desire.

In the erotic dialogues, Plato also uses erotic vocabulary and themes in adapting for his own purposes Greek conventions concerning interpersonal love. One especially important convention is that of the “erotic-educational relationship,” in which an older lover (erastês) seeks to educate and improve a younger beloved (erômenos) in exchange for the younger man’s sexual favors. This relationship is reflected especially clearly in the speech of Pausanias in the Symposium.29 The negative aspects of this convention are highlighted in the first two speeches of the Phaedrus – that attributed to Lysias, and Socrates’ first speech. In both speeches, a lover is said to seek only his own physical pleasure, while harming the object of his lust.30

29 I borrow the phrase “erotic-educational relationship” from Gill 1999: xv. On Pausanias’ speech as exemplifying one kind of Greek love, “Athenian love,” see Davidson 2007: 418–45. In his discussion of the multiplicity of homoerotic relationships in ancient Greece, Davidson decisively refutes the view, argued for in Dover’s influential study (1989, originally published 1978), that a single kind of relationship constitutes “the” norm. Skinner 2005 also calls attention to the great variety of love relationships in antiquity.

30 See further Chapter 1.