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LATO'S
SOCRATES
AS
EDUCATOR



GARY ALAN SCOTT

Plato's
Socrates
as Educator

SUNY Series in Ancient Greek Philosophy

Anthony Preus, Editor

Plato's Socrates as Educator

Gary Alan Scott

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For my parents,
Leila and Harold,
with love and appreciation.

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Socrates From this point of view do you see any salvation that will suffer the born philosopher to abide in the pursuit and persevere to the end? Consider it in the light of what we said before. We agreed that quickness in learning, memory, courage, and magnificence were the traits of this nature.

Adeimantus Yes.

Then even as a boy among boys such a one will take the lead in all things, especially if the nature of his body matches the soul.

How could he fail to do so? he said.

His kinsmen and fellow citizens, then, will desire, I presume, to make use of him when he is older for their own affairs.

Of course.

Then they will fawn upon him with petitions and honors, anticipating and flattering the power that will be his.

That certainly is the usual way.

How, then, do you think such a youth will behave in such conditions, especially if it happens that he belongs to a great city and is rich and wellborn therein, and thereto handsome and tall? Will his soul not be filled with unbounded ambitious hopes, and will he not think himself capable of managing the affairs of both Greeks and barbarians, and thereupon exalt himself, haughty of mien and stuffed with empty pride and void of sense?

He surely will, he said.

And if to a man in this state of mind someone gently comes and tells him what is the truth, that he has no sense and sorely needs it, and that the only way to get it is to work like a slave to win it, do you think it will be easy for him to lend an ear to the quiet voice in the midst of and in spite of these evil surroundings?

Far from it, said he.

And even supposing, said I, that owing to a fortunate disposition and his affinity for the words of admonition one such youth apprehends something and is moved and drawn toward philosophy, what do we suppose will be the conduct of those who think that they are losing his service and fellowship? Is there any word or deed that they will stick at to keep him from being persuaded and to incapacitate anyone who attempts it, both by private intrigue and public prosecution in the court?

That is inevitable, he said.

Is there any possibility of such a one continuing to philosophize?

None at all, he said.

Do you see, then, said I, that we were not wrong in saying that the very qualities that make up the philosophical nature do, in fact, become, when the

environment and nurture are bad, in some sort the cause of its backsliding, and so do the so-called goods—riches and all such instrumentalities?

No, he replied, it was rightly said.

Such, my good friend, and so great as regards the noblest pursuit, is the destruction and corruption of the most excellent nature, which is rare enough in any case, as we affirm. And it is from men of this type that those spring who do the greatest harm to communities and individuals, and the greatest good when the stream chances to be turned into that channel, but a small nature never does anything great to a man or a city.

Plato, *Republic*, Book VI (494a–495b; Shorey trans.)

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List of Abbreviations

PLATO'S DIALOGUES

<i>Alc. I</i>	<i>Alcibiades I (or Major)</i>
<i>Alc. II</i>	<i>Alcibiades II (or Minor)</i>
<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apology of Socrates</i>
<i>Charm.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
<i>Crit.</i>	<i>Critias</i>
<i>Cri.</i>	<i>Crito</i>
<i>Euthyd.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Euthyp.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>
<i>Grg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Hi. Ma.</i>	<i>Hippias Major</i>
<i>Hi. Mi.</i>	<i>Hippias Minor</i>
<i>La.</i>	<i>Laches</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysis</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menexenus</i>
<i>Parm.</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philebus</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Statesman</i>
<i>Prot.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Soph.</i>	<i>Sophist</i>
<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>

WORKS BY ARISTOTLE

<i>Eud. Eth.</i>	<i>The Eudemian Ethics</i>
<i>Nic. Eth.</i>	<i>The Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	<i>Politics</i>
<i>Rhet.</i>	<i>Rhetoric</i>

Introduction

Despite his ceaseless efforts to purge his fellow citizens of their unfounded opinions and bring them to care for what he believes are the most important things, Plato's Socrates rarely seems to succeed in his pedagogical, or "psychagogical," project with the characters he encounters in the dialogues.¹ More often than not, his target interlocutors leave their conversations with the philosopher wholly unchanged by the experience, hence it is doubtful whether, in Plato's depiction of him, this divinely appointed physician of the soul could ever be judged to have had a measurable, lasting effect on another person. If some kind of noticeable turnaround in a character's way of life is the standard by which one is to assess Socrates' ultimate effect on those with whom he converses, it could be argued that this great gadfly never succeeds in improving any of his would-be pupils in the conversations that Plato dramatizes.² In fact, it might be concluded from evidence about the later careers of historical characters such as Charmides and Alcibiades that more young men were made worse than made better by this philosopher's counsel.³

Indeed, it remains one of the enduring enigmas surrounding Plato's characterization of Socrates, that the Socrates who speaks and acts in these dialogues is so much less successful—as either a teacher or a student of the characters he meets—than the historical Socrates appears to have been with the people *he* encountered. After all, the historical Socrates could have claimed at least to have engendered the careers of Plato, Xenophon, and several other writers of Socratic conversations whose works have not survived, to have given rise to a number of what would later be called Socratic schools, and to have constituted enough of a political threat to cause himself to be put to death by

the city that he spent his life trying to serve. What is more, Plato's literary Socrates fails to turn souls toward a life of philosophical self-examination, despite being far better outfitted with argumentation—to say nothing of the arsenal of other, extraargumentative devices with which he is equipped as a result of Plato's decision to present his philosophy in dramatic dialogue form, and especially as a result of his decision to write the *kind* of dialogues he writes—than any flesh-and-blood philosopher could have been. And Plato's Socrates experiences with his targets only the faintest hint of the success in the drama of the dialogues that this same Socrates has had on their audiences for nearly 2,400 years.

Recognizing the peculiar disparity between this literary character and the historical Socrates, one is immediately faced with a set of interrelated questions: Why does Plato choose to portray his Socrates as so dramatically less successful than the historical Socrates may be presumed to have been? Did he mean for his audience to regard his Socrates as a complete failure in his ordained roles as gadfly and midwife in the dialogues? If not, in what sense, and to what degree, does Plato think his Socrates succeeds in benefitting or improving others, something he has the philosopher criticize Pericles (and others) for failing to do? How would his Socrates improve the young, and what will be his new kind of educational strategy, or *paideusis*? In what sense does Plato think Socrates is engaged in teaching, and in what sense is the philosopher just not supposed to be viewed as a teacher? The audience of these dialogues also cannot help but wonder to what extent Socrates is genuinely optimistic that he will learn from his interlocutors, and to what extent the philosopher is just trying to draw out his more reticent conversation partners. And further, one wonders, to what degree is failure in the argumentation and dramatic action of the dialogues necessary as a way for Plato to succeed on another level with his own audience?

Many recent interpreters have stressed the need to take seriously the dramatic dialogue form in which Plato presents his philosophy, arguing that its form is inseparable from the content of Platonic philosophy and from Plato's conception of how philosophy, in general, should be practiced. That Plato's dialogues create and show as much as they *assert* necessitates that we strive to grasp a dialogue's meaning on several levels.⁴ In addition to working simultaneously on discursive and dramatic levels, a specific conversation between Socrates and an interlocutor may have at least three distinct audiences, and what is said and done in the primary conversation may therefore need to work in as many as four different senses at once:

1. between Socrates and his target interlocutor;
2. between these primary interlocutors and any third parties gathered and "listening in";

3. between the primary conversation (in 'real time') and anyone who might hear about the conversation or hear it rehearsed, or who might be rehearsing it themselves later;
4. between Plato and his audience.

The *Symposium* furnishes an illustrative example. When Socrates cross-examines Agathon after the latter has delivered his rhetorical *tour de force*, the primary conversation is occurring between Socrates and Agathon. Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, and Aristodemus would all be examples of third parties, in sense #2. Apollodorus, as our narrator, is rehearsing (for the second time in a few days) the framed dialogue, related to him by Aristodemus. Both Apollodorus and Aristodemus then, along with their future auditors, would be third parties as meant in sense #3. Anyone who ever heard Plato's *Symposium* read or performed, or who read it themselves, would be the audience in sense #4. Now in several dialogues Socrates is alone with his interlocutor. In such cases, the dialogue only needs to work in sense #1 and sense #4, but all of the dialogues involve at least these two levels. This book will be primarily concerned with what happens on the first level, on the level of the dramatic action and the arguments presented therein. The goal of this focus, however, shall be to determine how what happens on the level of the dramatic action is supposed to be construed and judged by Plato's audience.

In an attempt to locate signs of the philosopher's success with a targeted character within the drama of the dialogues, I endeavored to find examples in which Socrates achieves some positive outcome in his role as pedagogue or psychagogue to others. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether he purports to be, Socrates is not greatly successful with his targets. He plainly achieves more satisfactory results in his role as teacher with Meno's slave boy than he does with Meno himself, even though the latter is the philosopher's main concern in the dialogue bearing his name. Like Euthyphro and others, Meno proves to be unteachable, because he never acknowledges that he has anything to learn, and this conceit of wisdom bars him from learning from the philosopher. With other highly combative interlocutors—such as Callicles and Polus—Plato's audience will not even have its hopes aroused for the character's psychic improvement. Callicles cannot maintain the pretense of being amicably disposed toward Socrates as long as he clings to his desire to win the argument at all costs. He must either drop the veil of friendliness or abandon the attempt to dominate Socrates.⁵ Toward some promising characters—Glaucon, Adeimantus, Simmias, and Cebes, for instance—Socrates does not directly aim his well-honed arrows, for he does not really engage these characters in one of his patented psychic examinations. And since examining their lives directly is not his main objective, encounters such as these furnish

scanty evidence concerning the philosopher's overall effect on his target interlocutors.⁶

Moreover, while there is surely a group of followers—including Apollodorus, Aristodemus, and perhaps Hippocrates—portrayed as self-anointed disciples, Plato is surely not holding out these characters as laudable examples of the effectiveness of Socrates' educational methods.⁷ Such characters seem to imitate only the philosopher's superficial mannerisms and eclectic idiosyncrasies, and they appear dedicated to the hortative aspect of his practice, to the exclusion of its other dimensions. As one commentator writes of Apollodorus, "He lacks only the placard with the message 'The day of judgment is at hand.'"⁸ The zeal displayed by such disciple types provides no evidence either of Socrates' beneficial effect on others, and Plato seems to have therefore disqualified this class of characters from receiving more sustained or more substantive attention from the philosopher.

This book is a study of two exceptional cases, *Lysis* and *Alcibiades*, characters who are featured in dialogues belonging to a special class of conversation in which Socrates *does* enjoy some degree of success in bringing about a dramatic turnaround in his target. In each of the dialogues in this group—*Lysis*, *Alcibiades I*, and *Charmides*—the ugly, old philosopher sets out as the pursuing lover of a beautiful young man, only to end up as the beloved object of the youth's adoration by the end of the conversation. Perhaps more than in any other type of dialogue, these "erotic" conversations demonstrate how literary and rhetorical tools are used to augment, enact, or complicate Socrates' arguments in his cross-examinations of unsuspecting characters. What is more, these few dialogues exhibiting the erotic reversal dramatize Socrates' first encounters with the most vulnerable interlocutors he engages anywhere in the Platonic corpus; and before these youths, Plato has Socrates unveil the full arsenal of weapons at his disposal. So these cases afford us perhaps the best glimpse of Socratic education in practice, for in them the target interlocutors receive a dramatic lesson from Socrates.

The initial approach to these young men will be seen to involve a seductive arousal and a powerful chastening aimed at desires specific to each of them. To arouse and chasten them, Plato fashions for Socrates a strategy constructed around a whole cornucopia of dramatic and rhetorical devices: from irony and hyperbole to Socrates' sometimes outrageous sounding claims; from the philosopher's uncanny ability to assess an interlocutor's character to the *ad hominem* challenges to that character; from his citations of the poets to his own opportunistic introductions of myths and stories; and from his use of narrative to his attribution of ideas to dreams, oracles, and divination. Plato's strategy in these few extraordinary dialogues appears designed to show Socrates "seducing" these young men as a way of galvanizing them into taking an active role

in their own self-improvement. Socrates attempts to disclose to these ambitious youths an aperture to their own freedom. Therefore, these dramatic portrayals of his approach have the further effect of exemplifying a rare, positive outcome of an encounter with Socrates.

The way in which Plato has the wily philosopher approach these ambitious, aristocratic, beautiful, and promising young men is at once interesting and problematic: interesting because Socrates deploys a distinctive kind of Eros to accomplish the striking role reversal with these boys, and problematic because some of the tactics he uses to complete his extraordinary seduction of them are at least questionable. These are curiously—but by no means incidentally—erotic conversations, with interlocutors who would seem to fulfill all of the prerequisites to serve as good subjects for Socrates' philosophical approach: they are nobly born and gifted, well-educated, handsome, and seemingly teachable youths when Socrates first encounters them. And they have not yet had to commit themselves to a particular way of life, although each one aspires to a position of power and authority. Socrates encounters them at just the right time for his approach to have a chance of succeeding. And last, each is suddenly smitten with Socrates in the course of his initial conversation with him. In this way, these dialogues show how normally passive and conceited youths could be transformed into active (and sometimes quite aggressive) pursuers of Socrates. If his educational approach was ever going to be successful in improving a target interlocutor in some discernible way, then the dialogues exhibiting the erotic reversal between Socrates and a beautiful boy—*Lysis*, *Alcibiades I*, and *Charmides*—seemed like the best places to look for evidence of that success.

In other cases, the main characters lack one of the essential traits for teachability, or else something clouds the reader's view of Socrates' effect on them. Some characters are recalcitrant or incorrigible; others, such as Laches, Nicias, and Crito, are old or not beautiful, and thus Socrates' conversations with them lack the vital, erotic subtext exhibited by the dialogues studied here.⁹ Even if he had been successful with them, Socrates' improvement of people who were already some kind of expert or presumed expert (in the arts, for example, or in rhetoric or mathematics) or of people who were already older and set in their ways would not be so easy to detect. In contrast, his young partners in these erotic conversations are ambitious aristocrats, well-educated heirs to political office in the city. They all aspire to become rulers, and they are therefore likely to be drawn to the Sophists, those itinerant teachers of rhetoric and practitioners of eristic disputation who are criticized by Socrates and cast by Plato as the irresponsible intellectuals of the day. The philosopher's approach to these young, promising men presents them with an alternative path to knowledge and excellence (*aretē*) at a most opportune time.

Now, following a period of twenty-seven years, during which Athens was at war almost constantly, and on the heels of the postwar overthrow of Athenian democracy by a group of thirty oligarchs, some of whom were relatives of Plato, it is not difficult to imagine a heated debate raging within the city about its future direction and about who should bear responsibility for the events of the immediate past. At least part of Plato's objective in writing his dialogues would have been to contribute his response to this debate and hopefully, thereby, to vindicate Socrates and philosophy in the face of antiintellectualist forces and rampant scapegoating. In the face of events that Plato must have regarded as a stain on the city sufficient to tarnish its former greatness, the debate over how to tell the story of these past events must surely have grown heated and acrimonious in the late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C.E. After Socrates' death, the question "Who improves the young?" would have sparked considerable debate over the question concerning how the city's youth were to be educated. Should Athens institute greater discipline, such as that that existed in Sparta, or is martial courage not to be regarded as the most essential element in the education for citizenship? Could Athens commit itself anew to traditional values, in light of the tragedies of its recent past, or had it suffered a loss of innocence, straying so far from its own ideals that even another Pericles could not restore it to its former greatness? In the wake of Athens' losses in the war and the subsequent debate about what went wrong and where to go from here, Plato's view of education and politics must have formed in response to these turbulent events of his young adult life. Questions such as these would not have been simply matters of intellectual curiosity but issues of vital concern that would have been passionately debated before and after Socrates' death. People would have asked, to whom should Athenian parents send their sons for the vital education in citizenship and virtue that defines the *paideia* of a free person? To the poets? To the Sophists? To the generals? To the politicians? To the businessmen? What would be the form of the new *paideusis*, and what would be the leading values it would attempt to confer?

If Plato had wanted to exhibit the differences between the various paths to knowledge and excellence available at this time, he might have crafted his dialogues to contrast the practices of the irresponsible intellectuals with those of his own alternative type, personified by Socrates, the paradigmatic practitioner of the fledgling vocation called philosophy. And since all of his dialogues are set in the past, this historical dimension—which includes, at least, dramatic dates, settings, and his self-conscious employment of anachronism—creates a debate between the quasihistorical settings and characters of these dramas and what his audience would have known about the individual histories of the various personae featured in them. It is therefore impossible to

appreciate fully Plato's dialogues without familiarizing oneself with the social and intellectual climate within which he is writing and the specific historical periods within which his dramas are set. In view of his project of conspicuously engaging in the cultural battles over the history of the period, it is inevitable that Plato's philosophical beliefs will be embedded within a set of social and intellectual concerns that today would be reserved for the social historian. In contrast, it is important to appreciate how thoroughly Plato's notion of philosophy is woven into the interdisciplinary fabric of his world. Hence the erotic dialogues to be explored here promise to be especially revealing for the sharpness with which they set in relief Socrates' peculiar behaviors and practices, and for the way in which they differentiate both his philosophizing and brand of education from the approaches of the competition.

Two of the three target interlocutors in these conversations exhibiting the erotic reversal meet additional criteria that make them exceptional. Most striking of these is that Socrates' success with Lysis and Alcibiades is more pronounced than it is with Charmides. Both of them experience the perplexity (*aporia*) that is the potentially positive outcome of a Socratic refutation; both are revealed to have grandiose ambitions (at least commensurate with their noble birth and education), and most important, both pledge, more or less explicitly, to learn what needs to be learned in order to become self-ruling, prudent individuals. In all of the dialogues, only Lysis and Alcibiades manifest such a marked turnaround at the end of their very first conversations with the philosopher. Therefore, they will be the characters in the narrow class to be isolated and focused on in this book. These two young men seem to make perfect targets for Socrates' methods, appearing to meet all of the conditions necessary for the philosopher's approach to work well. And since each experiences a dramatic turnaround through his interaction with the erotic Socrates, a more thorough inspection of these conversations should be most helpful in clarifying the philosopher's overall objectives with those best and brightest youths that he approaches in conversation. Examining these two cases in detail should allow the results of his educational strategy to be evaluated under the most propitious conditions.

Unlike Theaetetus, for example, whose natural inclination toward mathematics predisposes him toward knowledge, and who is characterized as resembling Socrates in important ways already, Lysis and Alcibiades display no such predisposition or likeness. They will have to be enticed or provoked into entirely new pursuits. When Socrates first approaches them, they are barely able to suppress their desire to rule the world, regarding themselves as capable, ready, and entitled to do so. Their naive arrogance makes Socrates' chastening fairly easy to effect, and this humbling moment within each dialogue secures a crucial foothold on the way to the eventual erotic reversal. More decisive

than the simple reversal of roles, however, is that, by the end of these conversations, Socrates succeeds in evoking from both boys acknowledgments of their ignorant, slavish condition and pledges to follow his advice. Each boy seems to recognize that he is ill equipped to attain his lofty goals without further preparation. Each is chastened by the older, wiser philosopher, responds well to the humbling lesson, and is then praised by Socrates for the philosophical nature that he exhibits, before positively affirming his readiness to follow Socrates. This certifies in each case that, at least during one conversation, these young men experience an appreciable benefit from the erotic turnaround. And that in itself makes Lysis and Alcibiades exceptional in Plato's dialogues.

The restrictive focus of this book means that its primary concern will not be with Socrates' adversarial conversations with Sophists or rhetoricians. What follows instead is an examination of the philosopher's methods with his most vulnerable interlocutors in all of the dialogues, because these encounters provide both the clearest view of these methods and the best opportunity to see growth or improvement in the characters he targets.¹⁰ Through this exploration, it will be possible to disclose how Socrates' "extraargumentative" devices both augment and complicate the philosopher's argumentation. The results of these case analyses will then enable me to speculate about what Plato wants to illustrate through the qualified success of Socrates' approach in these two extraordinary instances. From this investigation, it should be possible first to ascertain and then to assess the philosopher's overall purpose with at least the teachable characters he encounters in the dialogues. The dramas to be examined here supply good reasons for suspecting that Socrates' ultimate effect, not only with Lysis and Alcibiades, but perhaps with all of those "best and brightest" young men he engages in conversation, may be to facilitate something similar to what modern philosophers will call *empowerment*, though this is not a term that Socrates or Plato would have used. The examination of Socrates' first approach to each of them will show how Socrates attempts to confer a kind of freedom upon these two youths.

To interpret Socratic Eros, in general, and Socrates' unconventional tactics in these two specific cases, Socrates' conversational practices will have to be situated against the background of the dominant conventions that they appear designed to counterpose and place in question. Two of these conventions will be shown to be especially anathema to the philosopher's approach: the first is the market economy governing teaching as the Sophists practiced it, and the second is the conventional ethos of freedom. By contrasting Socrates' own behavior in these dialogues with other practices dominant at the time, we can see how the philosophical concepts emerge through these contrasts when they are carried out through reasoned inquiry. I believe that such an approach to these dialogues is vital to any attempt to determine what Plato

may have thought or believed. Perhaps it is just by having Socrates act against the background of the contemporary social order without adopting the prevalent intellectual currency that Plato thought he could throw the philosopher's uniqueness into sharpest relief and thereby move his audience from its conventional understanding of certain concepts and practices to a more philosophical understanding of them.

In addition to the way Socrates' behaviors in the dialogues call into question both the conventional notion of teaching and some assumptions about freedom that were prevalent in the late fifth and early fourth centuries, his way of practicing philosophy calls into question a host of traditional Athenian assumptions about sex and gender. The conventional conception of gender roles prevalent in Socrates' time can be seen not only in the dialogues of Plato—especially *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Alcibiades I*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*—but also in the writings of Aristotle, in the playwrights, and in the extant speeches of various orators. Throughout this examination of these two cases, we shall contrast the alternatives that might be adduced from Socrates' own behavior with the conventional behaviors that the philosopher's practices seem designed to supplant. Although it will not be possible to explore Greek homoerotic practices fully within the scope of this book, the analysis to follow will make reference to aspects of these practices that illuminate something vital about why Plato has his characters act as they do.¹¹ It will be the conventional ethos governing the homoerotic distinction between lover and beloved that underwrites the context for the dramatic action in the conversations with Lysis and Alcibiades. However, it is worth reminding ourselves in advance that Plato can have Socrates enact a reversal of traditional homoerotic roles only because the ethos governing these roles would have been well known, even taken for granted, by his fourth-century audience. In Plato's dramatic twist on the conventional practice of *sunousia*, the ugly, old philosopher slowly becomes the object of love by these youths, while the formerly complacent boys are somehow animated and transformed into active lovers through their encounter with him.

The lines along which classical Athenian social relations were stratified provide other essential information for interpreting the words and deeds of Plato's characters, especially Socrates. It is a striking feature of social interaction in Plato's time, and one that will be most relevant for the present investigation, that even among citizen-men of relatively equal age, wealth, and education, there seem nevertheless to have been ample opportunities for assessing one's relative advantage vis-à-vis others. Where a modern reader might assume a virtual equality (*isonomia*) among Athenian citizens, there persists a tendency on the part of the characters populating the literature, history, and philosophy of the period to place greater stress on the asymmetry in

human relations than on the relative equality in them. Plato's dialogues are no exception, as we shall see. This social milieu, within which the distances between people are constantly being measured in various ways, permeates the dramatic action of the dialogues, and Plato is able to illustrate important dimensions of the issues under discussion by having his characters behave in one way rather than another. Hence Socrates is sometimes depicted inverting, sometimes contravening, and sometimes merely modulating aspects of conventional behaviors and practices. Context will be crucial in determining what Plato might be trying to show his audience in any particular instance. This principle will guide our interpretation of specific problems or questions. It might, however, be helpful to outline in advance some other distinctive features of conventional Athenian social roles that will be central to our study.

It is by now a commonplace to say that in Athenian society men enjoyed far greater privilege than women, citizens than non-citizens, free persons than slaves, and adults than children. This social stratification furnishes the basis for further distinctions applied among citizen-men. It seems to have made a great difference, for example, whether one acted like a free man or a slave, like a man or a woman, like an adult or a child. But social relations were further stratified to such a degree that even among men sharing the same status conditions, it would matter further whether one behaved in their roles as a lover (*erastēs*) or a beloved (*eromenos*), an active agent or a passive recipient, a manly man or a soft man, a benefactor or a beneficiary. Whether one was beautiful or ugly provided another significant point of contrast and that Socrates was ugly (famous for being short and pot-bellied, having a thick nose, a bulging forehead, and protrusive eyes) is about the only feature common to the varied portraits of him by the several authors of Socratic conversations. It was of no small importance, either, whether one acted honorably or shamefully (nobly or ignobly), and with courage or like a coward. Clearly, within such a matrix, one of the two ways of behaving is always celebrated while the other is disparaged. To determine Plato's own views on the many topics discussed in the dialogues, the ways in which his characters act will need to be viewed and interpreted against the background of contemporary Athenian behaviors and practices. The contrast between Socrates' behavior in his first approach to Lysis or Alcibiades, for example, and the behavior of a typical Athenian *paiderastēs* should illuminate something vital about Plato's conception of the philosophical Eros, about his assessment of the Socratic form of education, and about his estimation of the manner in which classical Athenian principles were actually instantiated in practice.¹²

Chapter 1 establishes the context for the examination of the two specific cases by providing a working conception of Socratic education, exploring how it is supposed to function and contrasting its goals with other models of ped-

agogy. Any investigation into Socratic education is immediately faced with the question of whether, or in what sense, Socrates can properly be called a teacher. The analysis in Chapter 1 begins by testing Socrates' suitability for the roles both of teacher and student while attempting to provide a coherent interpretation of his most prominent disclaimers that he is (or has ever been) anyone's teacher. Even if one restricts the definition of teaching so that Socrates' actions toward others in the dialogues would not qualify him for the job as it would have been conceived by his jurors, it seems unmistakable that Socrates is engaging in an educational process of some kind with many of his interlocutors. Since the dispute inevitably turns on how one defines "teaching," Chapter 1 examines several possible definitions on the way to assessing the suitability of various terms as a description of how Socrates acts as an educator and a student. That Plato places Socrates' practice of philosophy outside of the prevalent market economy will be shown to be key to the demarcation of Socratic education from the Sophists' brand of teaching, and of philosophy, in general, from sophistry. Chapter 1 concludes that keeping Socrates' educational approach free from economic exchange is central to Plato's characterization of Socrates' distinctive practice. This stance also will be crucial for establishing the pre-commercial context within which Plato seems to think philosophy can be best undertaken. Where Athenian conventions prescribe elaborate rituals for giving and receiving gifts—from offerings to the gods to payments and bribes to the city's leaders—Socrates is framed by Plato as someone who gave a gift to those with whom he conversed without accepting anything in return. He is portrayed at his trial both as a gift to the city and as one who eschews gifts, fees, and payments for his conversations. Now if human relations in fifth-century Athens were conceived, for the most part, within such a cultural milieu of gift or market exchange, contrasting these practices with those of Socrates' should illuminate important conditions for the proper practice of philosophy, in Plato's view. Comparing and contrasting a Socratic model of education with professional teaching based upon a market model will establish essential parameters for understanding Socrates' behavior in the dialogues to be studied here.

Chapters 2 through 4 evaluate the three texts that furnish the evidence for Socrates' effect on the two characters who are the focus of this study: (1) Socrates' conversation with Lysis; (2) the inaugural conversation with the young Alcibiades in *Alcibiades I*; and (3) Alcibiades' speech in praise of Socrates in *Symposium* (*Symposium* 212d–223b).¹³ The specific means by which Plato keeps Socrates' practices free from market relations turn out to be central also to a new conception of freedom. Socrates will be seen to refuse not simply payments and gifts but any diminution of his self-sufficiency or self-mastery, anything that would undermine his *sophrosunē* (sound-mindedness)

and cause him to *transact* philosophy out of a desire for gain, honor, or anything else that would reduce his conversational activity to a mere instrumental good. Since freedom, in a sense similar to the modern notion of empowerment, will be shown to be one of the key results of Socrates' first encounters with Lysis and Alcibiades, and since Socrates' behavior in the dialogues also seems designed to illustrate a conception of freedom quite different from the conventional Athenian one, Chapter 5 returns to the problem of freedom in connection with Socratic education to reevaluate the successes and failures of Socrates in the dialogues.

The emergence of freedom as a practice (*askēsis*) requiring training (*taxis*) around which Socrates' conception of philosophy revolves leads one to wonder about the apparent incompatibility of this freedom with certain kinds of social and political relations. Does Socrates' concern with maintaining his freedom cause him to assume his precarious political posture? Does the indomitable philosopher perfect his freedom at the price of intimacy or friendship, as commentators such as Gregory Vlastos and Martha Nussbaum have charged?¹⁴ Will Socrates be able to square the care of the self with the concern for the city? More implausible still is the way that Socrates' devotion to the practice of freedom, coupled with his repeated counsels to others to take more trouble over themselves, positions him as a paradoxical caretaker of others. The philosopher cuts an unlikely figure as a philanthropist. And many learned scholars have entertained the sobering possibility that Socrates did not really care for the improvement of other people's souls.¹⁵ This concluding chapter offers some final reflections concerning Socrates as a teacher and suggests reasons for Plato's decision to depict Socrates as he does, and through the character and example of this philosopher, to portray an alternative model for human relationships.