



Socratic Charis: Philosophy without the Agon

Lisa Atwood Wilkinson

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Socratic Charis: Philosophy without the Agon Lisa Atwood Wilkinson

This book explores the possibility that Plato's *philosophia* is influenced by non-*agonal* practices and values that historically and philosophically antedate the *agonal* practices of the Athenian *ekklesia*. The author surveys literature concerning the predominance of *agonal* in ancient Greek culture, the values associated with oral poetic performance as a *religious* practice, and the ubiquitous character of the gift practice known as *xenia* in the ancient world. The author compares the structure of the *agon* to the structure of other ancient practices, and reasons that while agonistic practices are oppositional and binary, poetic and social practices are narrative and plural and exemplify, alternative to the *agonal*, the value of *charis*—*grace*. Reading Socratic speech and Socratic inquiry in terms of *charis* illuminates the narrative structure of Plato's portrayal of *Socrates* and precludes one-dimensional analyses of Plato's writings as philosophically agonistic and *demonstrative*. Rather the value of Socratic *charis* illustrates the value of genuine dialogue, and the author suggests how revaluing Socratic dialogue in light of *charis* can be relevant to current thinking about philosophy, politics, and the *agon*.

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